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Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

⑪ Publication number:

**0 030 859
B1**

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EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION

⑬ Date of publication of patent specification: **31.10.84**

⑭ Application number: **80304507.9**

⑮ Date of filing: **12.12.80**

⑯ Int. Cl.³: **C 11 D 1/14, C 11 D 3/065,
C 11 D 3/08, C 11 D 11/02**

⑰ **Process for making detergent compositions.**

⑱ Priority: **14.12.79 GB 7943219**

⑲ Date of publication of application:
24.06.81 Bulletin 81/25

⑳ Publication of the grant of the patent:
31.10.84 Bulletin 84/44

㉑ Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB IT

㉒ References cited:
**FR-A-2 271 283
GB-A-1 414 064
US-A-3 849 346**

㉓ Proprietor: **UNILEVER PLC**
Unilever House Blackfriars P O Box 68
London EC4P 4BQ (GB)
㉔ **GB**

㉕ Proprietor: **UNILEVER NV**
Burgemeester s'Jacobplein 1 P.O. Box 760
NL-3000 DK Rotterdam (NL)
㉖ **DE FR**

㉗ Inventor: **Clarke, Keith**
612 New Chester Road
Bromborough Wirral Merseyside (GB)
Inventor: **Davies, Richard Llewellyn**
59 Chorley Way
Bebington Wirral Merseyside (GB)
Inventor: **Nicholls, Derek**
16 Whitegates Crescent
Willaston Wirral Merseyside (GB)

㉘ Representative: **Mole, Peter Geoffrey et al**
UNILEVER PLC Patents Division P.O. Box 68
Unilever House
London EC4P 4BQ (GB)

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Courier Press, Leamington Spa, England.

EP 0 030 859 B1

Description

This invention relates to a process for the production of a detergent powder.

Conventionally, the detergent active material in spray-dried detergent powder is sodium alkylbenzene sulphonate. However, manufacturers of detergent powders continue to investigate the viability of alternative detergent active materials and have persisted in research and development despite the fact that in very few compositions it is possible to make a simple substitution for one detergent active compound for another and retain the same essential properties. This latter statement applies both to the processing of the composition and to the properties to be expected from it.

One detergent active compound which we have investigated is sodium secondary alkane sulphonate, but when we have simply substituted it for sodium alkylbenzene sulphonate in a standard formulation which also contained nonionic surfactant and soap we have found that the resultant spray-dried powder cakes badly and is discoloured. Indeed we have come to associate the presence of nonionic surfactant together with sodium secondary alkane sulphonate with discolouration of the powder during spray-drying.

This discolouration problem is referred to in Belgian Patent Specification No. 866,238 and also in German Patent Specification No. 25 04 276, where it is said to result from interaction between the alkane sulphonate and certain fluoroescers or optical brighteners.

British Patent No. 1,498,534 also relates to compositions containing alkane sulphonates and alkali metal silicates, but is not concerned with the discolouration problem.

We have now discovered that by careful selection of processing and formulation parameters it is possible to manufacture a detergent powder containing secondary alkane sulphonate as the basic detergent active component without encountering problems in the flow and caking properties of the powder or of discolouration.

Accordingly, the invention provides a process for the production of a non-caking, free-flowing, soap-free spray-dried detergent powder comprising a secondary alkane sulphonate together with sodium tripolyphosphate, sodium silicate and optionally a nonionic surfactant which process comprises forming an aqueous crutcher slurry and spray-drying it, characterised in that, in combination:

(a) the secondary alkane sulphonate contains from 13 to 19 carbon atoms in its alkane chain and is present in an amount of 4—30% by weight, based on the weight of the powder produced;

(b) the sodium tripolyphosphate is hydrated, is present in an amount of 10—45% by weight, based on the weight of the powder produced, and has a number average crystal size of less than 25 μm ;

(c) the sodium silicate is present in an amount of from 4—14% by weight, based on the weight of the powder produced and has a mole ratio $\text{SiO}_2:\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ of from 4:1 to 1:1;

(d) the nonionic surfactant, if any, is present in an amount of less than 3.5% by weight, based on the weight of the powder produced;

(e) the water content of the slurry is from 35—40% by weight and

(f) the temperature of the slurry prior to spray-drying is from 85 to 95°C.

Preferably, the number average crystal size of the sodium tripolyphosphate is not more than 10 μm .

For sale in humid countries, the detergent composition will be packed in a package manufactured from a substantially vapour-impermeable material, for example a material laminated or coated with polyethylene or with wax.

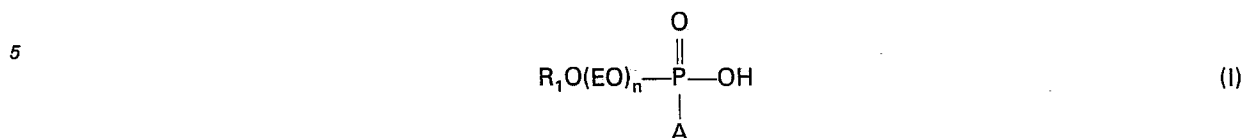
Whilst we consider that detergent powders containing secondary alkane sulphonate are satisfactory across the whole chain length of C_{13} — C_{19} , we prefer to use a C_{14} — C_{17} alkyl material. Whatever the chain length of the alkyl group, the secondary alkane sulphonate is present in an amount of from 4 to 30%, preferably for economic reasons, from 7 to 25%, and most preferably from 10 to 14% by weight of the composition.

As defined above, the invention relates to spray-dried detergent powders containing only small amounts of nonionic surfactant, i.e. less than 3.5%. When such small amounts of nonionic surfactant are present, the anti-foaming effect of soap is inadequate and we prefer to use a non-soap anti-foam in order to obtain compositions suitable for use in automatic (front-loading) washing machines, the anti-foams may be incorporated in the slurry and spray-dried with the other crutcher slurry components, or they may be added to the spray-dried powder by a post-dosing technique.

The non-soap anti-foam can be any material not based on soap which exhibits the property of reducing foam produced by anionic surfactants. Typical of non-soap anti-foams are alkyl phosphoric acids and their salts, both used alone and used in conjunction with waxes or hydrophobic oils such as mineral and vegetable oils. Silicone anti-foams and derivatives of nitrogen-containing heterocyclic compounds such as s-triazine may also be used.

In general, the non-soap anti-foams may be present in the compositions in amounts from 0.05%, which would be the minimum amount which could possibly be effective, to 5%, which would be the practical maximum having regard to the extreme efficacy of the majority of non-soap anti-foams, to their expense and to the necessity for keeping as much room in the composition as possible for other components.

In greater detail, the alkyl phosphoric acids which may be used, optionally in sodium, potassium, calcium or magnesium salt form, have the following general formula:



where A is —OH or $\text{R}_2\text{O}(\text{EO})_m-$, R_1 and R_2 are the same or different $\text{C}_{12}-\text{C}_{24}$, preferably $\text{C}_{16}-\text{C}_{22}$, straight or branched chain, saturated or unsaturated alkyl groups, especially $\text{C}_{16}-\text{C}_{18}$ linear saturated groups and m and n are the same or different and are 0 or an integer of from 1 to 6. Preferably A is —OH and n is 0, so that the compounds are the monoalkyl phosphoric acids, preferably with linear alkyl groups.

In practice, the alkyl phosphoric acids are commonly mixtures of both mono- and di-alkyl phosphoric acids, with a range of alkyl chain lengths. Predominantly monoalkyl phosphoric acids are usually made by phosphorylation of alcohols or ethoxylated alcohols, when n or m is 1 to 6, using a polyphosphoric acid. Phosphorylation may alternatively be accomplished using phosphorus pentoxide, in which case the mixed mono- and di-alkyl phosphoric acids are produced. Under optimum reaction conditions only small quantities of unreacted materials or by-products are produced, and the reaction products can advantageously be used directly in the detergent compositions.

When a mixture of alkyl phosphoric acid and wax is to be used as the non-soap anti-foam compound the wax may be of synthetic, mineral, vegetable or animal origin.

The waxes should normally melt at a temperature between about 20°C and about 120°C, preferably not more than about 90°C and especially in the range of about 30°C to about 70°C, i.e. lower than the maximum intended wash temperatures for the detergent compositions. When waxes having melting points above the maximum intended wash temperatures are used they should be adequately dispersed in the wash liquor by suitable incorporation in the original detergent compositions.

The preferred waxes are of mineral origin, especially those derived from petroleum, including microcrystalline and oxidised microcrystalline petroleum waxes, petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) and paraffin waxes. Petroleum jelly is correctly a semi-solid wax, usually having a pour point about 40—45°C, but it is for convenience here grouped with other solid waxes. Synthetic waxes such as Fischer-Tropsch and oxidised Fischer-Tropsch waxes, or Montan waxes, or natural waxes such as beeswax, candelilla and carnauba waxes may be used if desired. Any of the waxes described may be used alone or in admixture with other waxes. The waxes should be readily dispersible in the detergent liquor but not soluble therein and, preferably, they should not have very high saponification values, e.g. not in excess of about 100. It is advantageous to include emulsifying or stabilising agents for the waxes in the detergent compositions.

Examples of suitable oils which may be used if desired are vegetable oils such as sesame oil, cottonseed oil, corn oil, sweet almond oil, olive oil, wheat germ oil, rice bran oil, or peanut oil, or animal oils such as lanolin, neat's foot oil, bone oil, sperm oil or cod liver oil. Any such oils used should of course not be highly coloured, of strong odour or other wise unacceptable for use in a detergent composition.

It is an essential feature of the compositions of this invention that they contain from 10—45% by weight of hydrated sodium tripolyphosphate and that the number average crystal size of this material is less than 25 μm , preferably less than 10 μm . When compositions containing lower amounts of sodium tripolyphosphate, or in which the average crystal size is greater than 25 μm , are prepared, they are found to have a soft appearance and to have unsatisfactory flow properties in that there is an unacceptably high "threshold" before they begin to flow at all. Similarly, compositions containing lesser amounts of silicate than 4—14% have also been found to cake badly.

A discovery we have made which is relevant to the processing aspect of this invention is that by correct choice of the appropriate composition parameters specified above, it is possible to reduce the water content of the crutcher slurry to as little as 35% by weight, typically 35—40% by weight. Lower amounts of water have resulted in a slurry which is not easily atomised, but in view of the fact that the normal slurry water content would be 40—45% by weight, reduction of up to 25% in the amount of water which has to be evaporated during spray-drying represents a very substantial saving.

A second discovery, which is also relevant to the processing aspect of this invention, is that the higher the temperature of the crutcher slurry, the more free-flowing the spray-dried powder produced. Consequently, we specify a temperature of from 85 to 95°C, preferably 90 to 95°C, for the slurry. As sodium tripolyphosphate is present in the slurry it is essential to ensure that the temperature does not rise above 95°C, since above that temperature hydration is prevented and hydrolysis is accelerated, possibly resulting in powders which flow poorly and are prone to caking. Sodium ortho- and pyrophosphates are amongst several suitable detergency builders which are well known and are suitable for use with tripolyphosphates. Many more have been described in the literature, especially in recent patent specifications, on replacements for these phosphate based materials. Other detergency

builders which may be mentioned by way of example are alkali metal carbonates, especially sodium carbonate, alkyl methyl polyphosphonates, e.g. sodium ethane-1-hydroxy-1,1-diphosphonate, alkyl metal amine carboxylates such as sodium nitrilotriacetate and sodium ethylenediamine tetraacetate, alkali metal ether carboxylates, such as sodium oxydiacetate, sodium carboxymethyloxysuccinate, sodium carboxymethyloxymalonate and homologues thereof, alkali metal citrates, alkali metal mellitates and salts of polymeric carboxylic acids, such as sodium polymaleate copolyethylenemaleate, polyitaconate and polyacrylate. When sodium carbonate is used as a detergency builder, it is advantageous to have present some calcium carbonate having a surface area of at least about 10 m²/g, as described in UK Patent 1,437,950.

Another type of detergency builder which can be used, either alone or in admixture with other builders, is a cation exchange material, especially a sodium aluminosilicate such as described in UK Patent 1,429,143 or in Netherlands Patent Application 7403381. Preferred materials of this type have the formula:



and may be amorphous or crystalline, with some bound water usually in an amount of about 10—30% depending on the drying conditions used. Such sodium aluminosilicate materials should, of course, be very finely divided so as to minimise deposition on the fabrics during washing.

The amount of the detergency builder which is used is normally from about 10% up to about 80% by weight of the composition, preferably about 10% to about 60%, and the ratio by weight of the detergency builders to the detergent active compounds which are used is generally from about 10:1 to about 1:5 parts by weight.

The detergent compositions of the invention may also include any of the conventional optional additives in the amounts usually employed in detergent compositions. Examples of these additives include powder flow aids such as finely divided silicas and aluminosilicates, anti-redeposition agents such as sodium carboxymethylcellulose and the cellulose ethers, oxygen-releasing bleaching agents such as sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate, per-acid bleaches and precursors thereof such as tetraacetylenediamine, chlorine-releasing bleaching agents such as trichloroisocyanuric acid and alkali metal salts of dichloroisocyanuric acid, fabric softening agents such as clays of the smectite and illite types, anti-ashing aids, starches, slurry stabilisers such as copolyethylenemaleic anhydride and copolyvinylmethylether maleic anhydride, usually in salt form, slurry hydrotropes such as sodium toluene sulphonate, inorganic salts such as sodium sulphate and, usually present in very minor amounts, fluorescent agents, perfumes, enzymes such as proteases and amylases, germicides and colourants, the detergent compositions usually have an alkaline pH, generally in the region of pH 9—11, which is achieved by the presence of alkaline salts.

The invention is illustrated by the following Example in which parts and percentages are by weight except where otherwise indicated.

Example

Three detergent powders A, B and C were prepared by slurry making, spray-drying and dry-dosing techniques and under the spray-drying conditions described below. Their formulations were as follows:

		% By weight		
		A	B	C
5	Sodium C ₁₄₋₁₇ secondary alkane sulphonate	14.0	14.0	7.5
	Tallow alcohol 18EO	—	—	3.5
10	Sodium salt of C ₁₈₋₂₂ saturated and unsaturated fatty acids	—	—	4.0
	Sodium tripolyphosphate	33.0	33.0	33.0
15	Sodium silicate (alkaline)	6.0	6.0	8.0
	Sodium sulphate	17.0	19.0	7.0
	Sodium carboxymethyl cellulose	0.5	0.5	1.0
20	Ethylene diamine tetraacetic acid	0.1	0.1	0.1
	Coconut monoethanolamide	2.0	—	—
25	Sodium toluene sulphonate	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Fluorescer	0.37	0.37	0.3
	Sodium perborate tetrahydrate	19.0	19.0	27.0
30	Calcium salt of C ₁₆₋₁₈ monoalkyl phosphate mixed with petroleum jelly (20:80)	—	1.5	—
	Moisture	—balance to 100—		
35	Sodium tripolyphosphate crystal size (μm)	10—20	<10	<10
	Spray-drying conditions			
	Air inlet temperature	300—320°C		
40		A	B	C
	Slurry water content	38	40	43
	Slurry temperature	80	90	80
45	Moisture content of spray-dried powder (%)	5	11	13
	Properties of spray-dried powder			
50	Dynamic flow rate (ml/s)	71	100	92

Powder C, which contains a relatively large amount of nonionic surfactant and which is consequently not within the scope of this invention was yellow in colour.

55 Powder A, which is free of nonionic surfactant, but which was spray-dried at a slurry temperature of only 80°C was not disclosed but had an unsatisfactory dynamic flow rate.

Powder B, which is in accordance with the invention was white and had satisfactory dynamic flow rate and caking characteristics.

Storage behaviour of spray-dried powder

60 After storage in wax laminated cartons the caking characteristics of the spray-dried powders were assessed visually, with the following results:

	Temperature	Relative humidity	% Of powder caked		
			A	B	C
5	20°C	90%	25	0	50
	28°C	70%	25	0	25

These results show the clear superiority of powder B in accordance with the invention.

Claims

1. A process for the production of a non-caking, free-flowing soap-free spray-dried detergent powder comprising a secondary alkane sulphonate together with sodium tripolyphosphate, sodium silicate and optionally a nonionic surfactant with process comprises forming an aqueous crutcher slurry and spray-drying it, characterised in that, in combination:

(a) the secondary alkane sulphonate contains from 13 to 19 carbon atoms in its alkane chain and is present in an amount of 4—30% by weight, based on the weight of the powder produced;

(b) the sodium tripolyphosphate is hydrated, is present in an amount of 10—45% by weight, based on the weight of the powder produced, and has a number average crystal size of less than 25 μm ;

(c) the sodium silicate is present in an amount of from 4—14% by weight, based on the weight of the powder produced and has a mole ratio $\text{SiO}_2:\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ of from 4:1 to 1:1;

(d) the nonionic surfactant if any, is present in an amount of less than 3.5% by weight, based on the weight of the powder produced;

(e) the water content of the slurry is from 35—40% by weight and

(f) the temperature of the slurry prior to spray-drying is from 85 to 95°C.

2. A process in accordance with claim 1 wherein the aqueous crutcher slurry comprises a nonionic surfactant.

3. A process in accordance with claim 1 or claim 2 wherein a non-soap anti-foam is incorporated into the aqueous crutcher slurry and spray-dried.

4. A process in accordance with any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the non-soap anti-foam is added to the spray-dried powder by a post-dosing technique.

5. A process in accordance with any one of claims 1 to 4 wherein the crutcher slurry is adjusted to, or spray-dried at, a temperature of from 90—95°C.

Patentansprüche

1. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines nicht-zusammenbackenden, freifließenden, seifenfreien, sprühgetrockneten Reinigungsmittelpulvers enthaltend ein sec.-Alkansulfonat zusammen mit Natriumtripolyphosphat, Natriumsilikat und gegebenenfalls einem nichtionischen oberflächenaktiven Stoff, wobei eine wässrige Seifenmischeraufschlämmung gebildet und diese sprühgetrocknet wird, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß in Kombination:

(a) das sec.-Alkansulfonat 13 bis 19 Kohlenstoffatome in seiner Alkankette enthält und in einer Menge von 4 bis 30 Gew.-%, bezogen auf das Hergestellte Pulver, anwesend ist;

(b) das Natriumtripolyphosphat hydratisiert wird, in einer Menge von 10 bis 45 Gew.-%, bezogen auf das Gewicht des hergestellten Pulvers, anwesend ist und eine Zahlendurchschnitts-Kristallgröße von weniger als 25 μm besitzt;

(c) das Natriumsilikat in einer Menge von 4 bis 14 Gew.-%, bezogen auf das Gewicht der hergestellten Pulvers, anwesend ist und ein Molverhältnis $\text{SiO}_2:\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ von 4:1 bis 1:1 aufweist;

(d) der nichtionische oberflächenaktive Stoff, sofern anwesend, in einer Menge von weniger als 3,5 Gew.-% bezogen auf das Gewicht des hergestellten Pulvers, vorliegt;

(e) der Wassergehalt der Aufschlämmung 35 bis 40 Gew.-% beträgt und

(f) die Temperatur der Aufschlämmung vor dem Sprühtrocknen 85 bis 95°C beträgt.

2. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 1, worin die wässrige Seifenmischeraufschlämmung einen nichtionischen oberflächenaktiven Stoff enthält.

3. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 1 oder 2, worin ein nichtseifenhaltiges Antischaummittel zu der wässrigen Seifenmischeraufschlämmung zugesetzt und sprühgetrocknet wird.

4. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3, worin das nichtseifenhaltige Antischaummittel dem sprühgetrockneten Pulver durch eine Nach-Dosierungstechnik zugesetzt wird.

5. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, worin die Seifenmischeraufschlämmung auf eine Temperatur von 90 bis 95°C eingestellt wird oder bei dieser Temperatur sprühgetrocknet wird.

Revendications

1. Procédé de production d'une poudre détergente séchée par pulvérisation non agglutinante, à

écoulement libre et exempt de savon, comprenant un alcane-sulfonate secondaire ensemble avec le tripolyphosphate de sodium, le silicate de sodium et facultativement un surfactif non ionique, procédé qui consiste à former ou bouillie aqueuse—dite "crutcher slurry"—et à la sécher par pulvérisation, caractérisé en ce qu'en combinaison:

- 5 (a) l'alcane-sulfonate secondaire contient de 13 à 19 atomes de carbone dans sa chaîne alcane et est présent à raison de 4 à 30% en poids par rapport au poids de la poudre produite;
- (b) le tripolyphosphate de sodium est hydraté, est présent à raison de 10 à 45% en poids par rapport au poids de la poudre produite et présente une dimension moyenne de cristaux en nombre de moins de 25 microns;
- 10 (c) le silicate de sodium est présent à raison de 4 à 14% en poids par rapport au poids de la poudre produite et son rapport molaire $\text{SiO}_2:\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ est de 4:1 à 1:1;
- (d) le surfactif non ionique éventuel est présent à raison de moins de 3,5% en poids par rapport au poids de la poudre produite;
- (e) la teneur en eau de la suspension est de 35 à 40% en poids; et
- 15 (f) la température de la suspension avant le séchage par pulvérisation est de 95 à 95°C.
2. Procédé selon la revendication 1, dans lequel la bouillie aqueuse comprend un surfactif non ionique.
3. Procédé selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans lequel on incorpore un agent non savonneux anti-mousse dans la bouillie aqueuse et on sèche par pulvérisation.
- 20 4. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, dans lequel on ajoute l'agent non savonneux anti-mousse à la poudre séchée par pulvérisation par une technique de post-dosage.
5. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel on règle la bouillie à une température de 90 à 95°C ou on la sèche par pulvérisation à cette température.

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