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OXIDE INCLUSION DEFECTS IN Al-Si-Mg CAST ALLOYS

X. CAO^{1,2} and J. CAMPBELL¹

¹Department of Metallurgy and Materials, University of Birmingham,
Birmingham, United Kingdom
²Aerospace Manufacturing Technology Centre,
Institute for Aerospace Research, National Research Council Canada,
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

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Abstract — Oxide films on the surface of liquid aluminum alloys are entrapped in castings to form stable solid inclusions as a consequence of surface turbulence. The oxide film defects are highly damaging to aluminum alloy castings because of their nature as cracks. The oxide films or particles observed in Al-11.5Si-0.4Mg cast alloys include Al₂Mg₃, Al₂O₃, MgO and SiO₂. The paper discusses the identification, main features and formation mechanisms of oxide inclusions in Al-11.5Si-0.4Mg cast alloys combined with an overview of the oxide inclusions from a number of publications to summarize the central importance of oxide films in the development of the structure of Al-Si cast alloys. To produce reliable castings, the removal of oxide films from aluminum melts and the avoidance of the entrapment of oxide films during metal melting, delivering, transferring and pouring remain a great challenge for the metal casting industry.

Résumé — Les films d'oxyde à la surface d'alliages d'aluminium liquides sont piégés dans les moulages formant ainsi des inclusions solides et stables comme conséquence de la turbulence superficielle. Ces films d'oxyde sont extrêmement nuisibles aux moulages d'alliage d'aluminium à cause de leur nature en forme de fissures. Les films d'oxyde ou les particules observés dans les alliages moulés d'Al-11.5Si-0.4Mg incluent Al₂Mg₃, Al₂O₃, MgO et SiO₂. Ce document discute de l'identification, des principales caractéristiques et des mécanismes de formation des inclusions d'oxyde dans les alliages moulés d'Al-11.5Si-0.4Mg. On fait également une revue des inclusions d'oxydes à partir de plusieurs publications, résumant l'importance essentielle des films d'oxyde dans le développement de la structure des alliages moulés d'Al-Si. Afin de produire des moulages fiables, la suppression des films d'oxyde des bains d'aluminium ainsi que la prévention de leur piégeage lors de la fonte du métal, de la livraison, du transfert et du coulage restent un grand défi pour l'industrie de moulage du métal.

INTRODUCTION

Oxides in liquid aluminum are stable solid inclusions. Some oxides are in the form of extended or convoluted films together with their entrained layer of air and are nearly neutrally buoyant, which greatly impedes their separation from the aluminum melts. Thus, liquid aluminum usually suffers from oxide films present in copious quantities as is now well demonstrated in some recently published accounts [1,2]. If care is not taken to remove such suspended debris in the melts and to avoid the re-entrapment of oxides during melting, delivering, transferring and pouring of liquid metal, they can lead to a variety of problems [1,3].

1. Loss of fluidity and feeding properties. As a result, the amount of microshrinkage may increase.

2. Increase in porosity. Gas coated films (inclusions) act as

sites for the initiation of hydrogen bubbles or shrinkage cavities.

3. Increase in the tendency for hot tearing. The folded oxide films can be opened during freezing to create hot tears or may remain in the frozen castings as cracks.

4. Leakage defects. Folded oxide films can provide leakage paths by connecting wall to wall in castings. Bubble trails and non-wetted confluences of melt fronts are also particularly troublesome with respect to leak tightness.

5. Poor machinability. Extremely hard and brittle oxides usually lead to a poor machined surface finish and increase tool wear and damage.

6. Reduction in the mechanical properties of castings. Oxide films as cracks in castings introduce structural weakness causing the reduction and scatter of strength, ductility or fatigue resistance. The large and uncontrolled

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