

Processing used Aluminium Production Granular Filters to Produce Concrete

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the findings of experimental studies on the involvement in the processing of spent filters from ash and slag waste used in the refining of primary aluminum as a filler for concrete production. The processing of spent granular filters was conducted in three stages. The first stage involved the preliminary processing of filter grains to remove aluminum scrap. The second stage entailed the metallurgical processing of separated aluminum scrap through remelting in an induction crucible furnace and subsequent refining. The third stage focused on the production of a concrete mixture comprising crushed spent filter grains, quartz sand, bauxite sludge, screenings of crushed rocks with a fraction of 20 mm–30 mm, and Portland cement. This mixture was used to create samples of building products. The test results indicate that the tensile strength of the concrete samples for building products ranges from 20.89 MPa to 37.75 MPa, depending on the Portland cement content. This strength corresponds to that of heavy concrete.

Keywords-metallurgy; aluminum; ecology; granular filters; recycling

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, numerous studies have been conducted globally on the purification of primary aluminum from impurities of heavy non-ferrous metals, including vanadium, which is associated with the deterioration in the quality of raw materials for the production of anodes for aluminum electrolyzers [1-8]. In the aforementioned works, the authors conducted comprehensive studies to ascertain the mechanism of formation of vanadium intermetallic compounds during the treatment of aluminum melt with boron. Authors in [2] demonstrated that the chemical reactions occurring in the Al-V-B system are highly complex and that the system is most thermodynamically stable when the operating temperature for electrolysis and pouring of aluminum is between 950 °C and 650 °C, resulting in the formation of vanadium diboride (VB₂) compounds. The kinetics of the chemical reactions involved in

the formation of VB₂ compounds during the refining process with Al-B-based ligatures is characterized by a low rate due to the formation of an insoluble ring of reaction products consisting of VB₂. As the melt holding time increases to 720 minutes, the thickness of the ring increases from 1 μm to 20 μm [2-4]. Authors in [5] employed boric acid (H₃BO₃) as a refining agent for aluminum from vanadium, with the addition of the acid to the electrolysis bath. The implementation of this methodology in industrial settings may potentially lead to reduced durability of the electrolyzer bottom and diminished current efficiency in the aluminum electrolysis process, due to the accumulation of vanadium intermetallic compounds formed on the electrolyzer bottom. Authors in [6] infused boric acid into the anode mass during the production of baked anodes and during aluminum electrolysis. This resulted in the transfer of boron into the aluminum melt, which contributed to a reduction in the vanadium content within the melt. This method is

similarly flawed in comparison to the previous method. The technology of refining primary aluminum from vanadium impurities with boron-containing materials, Al-B ligature and boric acid H_3BO_3 , outside the electrolysis bath was examined in [7, 8]. The specific studies revealed a reduction in the vanadium content by an average of 55–78% in the metal mass, an uneven distribution of vanadium in the ladle volume following the refining process, and the challenge of separating vanadium intermetallic compounds and refined aluminum in the ladle using conventional techniques. The latter was evidenced by the fact that settling for four to seven hours yielded no positive outcome. One of the most promising methods of cleaning primary aluminum from impurities, in conjunction with flux refining, is filtration. A review of the literature on the thermodynamic foundations of filtration processes [9–15], reveals that the efficiency of separating inclusions varies significantly depending on the filter material and the filtration scheme employed.

Authors in recent studies [9, 10] propose a Reaction-Crystallization Mechanism (RCM) for melt filtration. The RCM scheme comprises the following stages: the delivery of the impurity to be removed to the filter surface and the component that binds it, their adsorption on the filter surface, and a chemical reaction between them. Subsequently, a non-metallic or phase is released, which can accumulate on the surface, or be absorbed into the filter pores. However, the use of ceramic filters results in the generation of a considerable quantity of new waste at primary aluminum production facilities, in the form of used filters. The environmental factor is of significant importance, exerting considerable influence on the development of individual metallurgical technologies worldwide, including in Kazakhstan. In the last few years, the Republic of Kazakhstan has enacted foundational legislation that charts the course for the advancement of metallurgical enterprises in the following domains [16-18]: the necessity for the development of a green economy and the creation of closed production cycles, coupled with the development of an effective waste management system. This system should facilitate the constant circulation of materials throughout the production and consumption processes, thereby eliminating the accumulation of waste in the environment. Authors in [7, 13] examined a comprehensive technology for refining primary aluminum from vanadium and other metallic impurities using flux and filtration refining based on boric acid. The findings of the studies indicate that the comprehensive technology for refining raw aluminum from vanadium using boric acid (H_3BO_3) in a ladle with subsequent filtration enables a reduction in the content of non-ferrous metal impurities in primary aluminum. Laboratory studies have demonstrated a reduction in the concentration of vanadium by 47.7%, copper by 17.6%, magnesium by 47.5%, manganese by 50.0%, and silicon by 97.9% in primary aluminum subjected to flux refining with H_3BO_3 and a subsequent near-complete removal of the reaction products of non-ferrous metal impurities with boron, based on the findings of the filtration process [7, 13].

In these studies, the material used for the production of filter grains was Ekibastuz coal ash, which is primarily composed of SiO_2 and Al_2O_3 , as presented in Tables I and II.

TABLE I. CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF EKIBASTUZ COAL ASHES (%)

SiO_2	Al_2O_3	Fe_2O_3	FeO	TiO_2	CaO	MgO	SO_3	loi.	Hygr. water	CO_2	$\leq SiO_2$
46.7	25.2	6.58	0.66	1.28	7.66	3.1	1.26	3.41	0.57	3.96	26.7

TABLE II. PHASE-MINERALOGICAL COMPOSITION OF EKIBASTUZ COAL ASHES, WT. (%) (AVERAGE)

Glass phase	Amorphized clay substance	Iron oxides	Feldspar, quartz, pyroxene	Corundum, mullite, cristobalite	Calcite	Carbonaceous particles
30	25	9	10	7	8	11

The results of the conducted studies indicate that the filtration refining process results in the formation of a considerable quantity of waste in the form of spent grains with a diameter of 15 mm–25 mm and aluminum scrap. The mean filter consumption was found to be 0.2%–0.5% of the mass of the poured metal. Consequently, during the production of primary aluminum at the Kazakhstan Electrolysis Plant JSC, where up to 268 thousand tons per year are produced, the mass of the spent filters will amount to up to 1,340 tons. As indicated in [18], the remuneration for the emissions of pollutants from stationary sources of this category of waste, ash and slag, in the Republic of Kazakhstan is approximately \$7 US per ton. The total annual fee for emissions of 1,340 tons of this waste is therefore approximately \$10,000 US. A review of the literature reveals that ash, slag, and other waste materials with similar chemical and mineralogical compositions are frequently used in the production of building products [19–31]. Authors in [19, 22] examine the practices of Ecostroy NII-PV LLC in processing man-made waste from the energy and metallurgy industries of the Pavlodar region of the Republic of Kazakhstan for use in the manufacture of building products. The technology employed uses local waste materials, including ash and slag waste from the combustion of Ekibastuz coal, bauxite sludge from the Pavlodar Aluminum Plant, and steelmaking slag. These materials exhibit distinctive chemical and granulometric compositions, as well as binding properties, when compared to analogous mixtures. The existing literature [20, 23–26, 28] addresses the issue of steel smelting and its concomitant formation of steelmaking slags. Moreover, authors in [20] addressed the topic of incorporating primary steelmaking slag into processing, specifically the extraction of cast iron and the subsequent production of slag, which was used in the manufacture of building products. Primary steel slag is not currently employed in the production of building products due to its high iron content, with its use being confined to road construction.

Authors in [21] explored the technological processes involved in the production of expanded clay granules from coal mining waste. The authors posit that the production of granular porous fillers based on crushed fractions of igneous rocks—basalt, granite, and syenite, as well as artificial materials of various origins, is a promising path of research. The findings of the studies indicated that the optimal range of waste in expanded clay was 4.0%–6.0%, with the optimal heating temperature being 1150°C. This resulted in the production of samples with a bulk density of 0.337 t/m³–0.348 t/m³ and a compressive strength, under the aforementioned conditions, of

1.37 MPa-1.51 MPa. Authors in [27] presented the results of obtaining clinkers from sulfate-resistant and road cement during production tests. The present paper analyses the use of man-made waste, lead slag, and coal mining waste, as a clay component and additive. The paper identifies patterns of influence of the batch compositions and firing modes on the chemical and mineralogical composition and quality of clinkers and cements, thereby enhancing the operation of a rotary kiln, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and optimizing fuel consumption. The strength of the factory and experimental cements was evaluated at 3, 7, and 28 days post-production, as well as following steaming. The physical and mechanical characteristics and structure of cements were subjected to rigorous examination. Low-energy cement mixtures were developed and subjected to testing. Authors in [29] examined the optimization of a three-component raw mix for the production of mixed cement. The optimization was conducted using the ROCS software package, developed by scientists from the Belgorod State Technological University (BSTU), which is designed to calculate and optimize multi-component raw mixes for cement production. The optimal composition of the raw mixes was thus determined. The cement prepared by mixing 57% of regular, 40% of low-basic clinker, and 3% gypsum exhibited enhanced strength, with increases of 7.4% and 27.7%, respectively, in comparison to the strength of the standard cement. Authors in [30] modeled the chemical and phase transformations occurring in the aWaelz process-slag-carbon system, within a temperature range of 1700 K-2100 K and at a pressure of 0.1 MPa. It was determined that the maximum quantity of iron that can be incorporated into condensed Fe_3Si ranges from 34.7% at 1800 K to 99.9% at 2100 K, while in Fe_3Si_3 , this range is from 47.7% at 1900 K to 45.6% at 2000 K. As temperature increases further, iron begins to transition into the gas phase. In comparison to iron, silicon is more challenging to extract and begins to transition into the gas phase as the temperature increases. The extent of transition of non-ferrous metals, including zinc, cadmium, and lead, into the gas phase is 99.99% across the entire temperature range. The modeling enabled an investigation into the potential for producing ferrosilicon from non-ferrous metallurgical waste via electric arc furnace smelting. Authors in [31] presented a physicochemical study of technogenic waste produced by the mining and metallurgical industries, specifically tailings resulting from the processing of non-ferrous metal ores. In particular, the current state of the mining and metallurgical industry, the problems of formation of technogenic waste, and the sampling of technogenic raw materials in the form of tailings of beneficiation of non-ferrous metal ores with technogenic mineral composition are considered. The methods of studying technogenic waste are presented, including granulometric analysis (using sieve analysis), chemical analysis, electron microscopy (using a JSM-6490LV scanning electron microscope), and X-ray phase analysis (using an ARL X'TRA A X-ray diffractometer). As a result of a series of studies, the coordinates of the corner points of the geological section of the tailings dump were established. This was achieved through the application of physicochemical methods of analysis to technogenic waste from the beneficiation of the mining and metallurgical industry. A review of the scientific literature revealed that the issue of recycling spent filters from

aluminum production remains unresolved and necessitates further investigation to identify optimal processing options for their usage in the metallurgical industry. This article addresses the potential for incorporating spent filters from ash and ash-slag waste, which are currently used in the refining of primary aluminum, into the production of concrete for the manufacture of building materials.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The study focused on granular filters derived from the combustion of Ekibastuz coal in North-East Kazakhstan. The filters were obtained from the ash of the coal after it was heated in coal-fired power plants. The processing of spent granular filters was conducted in three stages:

- The preliminary processing of the filter grains involved the removal of aluminum scrap, as shown in Figure 1. This entailed grinding the granules in a drum mill and classifying the metallic and non-metallic parts of the processed material.
- The separated aluminum scrap was then subjected to metallurgical processing through remelting in an induction crucible furnace. Refining was conducted using the integrated technology described in [7].
- A concrete mixture was obtained based on crushed spent filter grains, quartz sand, bauxite sludge, and screenings of crushed rocks with a fraction of 20 mm–30 mm, with Portland cement added to produce samples of building products.



Fig. 1. General view of used filters.

In an effort to reduce the reliance on quartz sand, crushed spent filter grains were employed as a filler for the concrete mixture, with a maximum volume of 30% of the total material consumption. This approach was based on the findings of earlier studies [19-21]. The water-to-cement ratio was set at 0.35. The production of construction samples and products was conducted at EcostroyNII-PV LLP through the usage of the vibration pressing method on the Rifey-Udar-SDA production line. This method has been extensively employed at the aforementioned facility, and has been developed to incorporate innovative solutions in the field of industrial waste utilization in production [19, 22]. The construction products were subjected to testing at the Incom Company LLP laboratory, complying with the GOST ISO/IEC 17025-2019 standard.

III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table III presents the compositions of the concrete mixtures. To facilitate the assessment of the samples, supplementary cube molds with dimensions of 100 mm × 100 mm × 100 mm were fabricated, as seen in Figure 2. In this study, the density and strength of the samples were determined. The density of the concrete samples was determined in accordance with the standards set forth in GOST 12730.1-78, and the results of this analysis are presented in Table IV. The compressive strength of the concrete was determined using a P-10 press at a concrete age of 28 days, as displayed in Figure 3, and the test results are outlined in Table V.

TABLE III. CONCRETE MIXTURE COMPOSITIONS USING SPENT GRANULAR FILTERS

Concrete mix batch number	Mass fraction of cement (%)	Mass fraction of sand (%)	Mass fraction of spent granular filters ASW (%)
1	40	60	0
2	35	55	10
3	30	50	20
4	25	45	30
5	20	40	40



Fig. 2. Samples for testing.

TABLE IV. DENSITY OF CONCRETE SAMPLES

Sample mark	Mass fraction of spent granular filters ASW (%)	Density, g/cm ³	Concrete class
1	0	2.61	Heavy concrete
2	10	2.39	
3	20	2.19	
4	30	1.95	
5	40	1.86	

TABLE V. CONCRETE STRENGTH CLASS

Sample mark	Strength, kg/cm ²	Strength, MPa	Concrete strength class	Concrete grade by strength
1	385	37.75	B30	M400
2	327	32.06	B25	M350
3	307.6	30.16	B25	M350
4	235.3	23.07	B20	M250
5	213.1	20.89	B15	M200



Fig. 3. Determination of the strength of the samples.

The test results indicate that the tensile strength of the concrete samples of building products ranges from 20.89 MPa to 37.75 MPa, with the strength dependent on the Portland cement content, classified as heavy concrete.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the conducted experimental studies indicate that it is feasible to use spent filters from ash and ash - slag waste as a filler in the production of concrete for building products. The metallurgical processing of aluminum scrap derived from the grains of spent filters can be achieved through remelting in an induction crucible furnace, followed by the refinement of the metal. The test results indicate that the tensile strength of concrete samples for building products ranges from 20.89 to 37.75 MPa, depending on the Portland cement content (between 20 and 40%), and corresponds to the heavy concrete classification.

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