Description

Image



Caption

1. Decorative ceiling plaster work © Richard Needham at en.wikipedia [CC BY-SA 3.0] 2. Teeth models of gypsum for dental applications © Humusak at Pixalbay [Public domain] 3. Joint fracture of a hand © Condesign at Pixalbay [Public domain]

The material

Plaster of Paris is exactly that: a plaster that, originally, came from Paris, France. It is made by calcining the mineral gypsum, CaSO4.2H2O, at about 180℃, driving off water to give the anhydrite 2CaSO4.H2O. When mixed with water it rehydrates and sets to a hard, white solid. It is used to make molds and casts for ceramics and sculptures, to make pre-cast ornamental plasterwork on ceilings and cornices, and for orthopedic bandages or casts. In medieval and renaissance times gesso (plaster of Paris mixed with glue) was applied to wood panels or canvas as the ground for tempera paintings.

Composition (summary)

2CaSO4.H2O, Gypsum

General properties

Density	73.7	-	112	lb/ft^3
Price	* 0.658	-	0.939	USD/lb
Date first used	1730			

Mechanical properties

Young's modulus	0.653	-	1.16	10^6 psi
Shear modulus	* 0.29	-	0.725	10^6 psi
Bulk modulus	* 0.435	-	0.798	10^6 psi
Poisson's ratio	0.25	-	0.3	
Yield strength (elastic limit)	* 0.145	-	0.653	ksi
Tensile strength	* 0.145	-	0.653	ksi
Compressive strength	2.03	-	2.9	ksi
Elongation	0			% strain

Hardness - Vickers		1	-	3	HV
Fatigue strength at 10^7 cycles		0.247	-	0.29	ksi
Fracture toughness		0.0091	-	0.0127	ksi.in^0.5
Mechanical loss coefficient (tan delta)		0.1	-	0.3	

Thermal properties

Melting point	*	572	-	932	°F
Maximum service temperature		230	-	356	°F
Minimum service temperature		-99.4	-	-9.4	°F
Thermal conductor or insulator?		Poor insulator			
Thermal conductivity		0.231	-	0.347	BTU.ft/h.ft^2.F
Specific heat capacity		0.143	-	0.239	BTU/lb.°F
Thermal expansion coefficient		4.44	-	5.56	µstrain/°F

Electrical properties

Electrical conductor or insulator?		Poor insulator			
Electrical resistivity	*	1e8	-	1e10	µohm.cm
Dielectric constant (relative permittivity)	*	5	-	9	
Dissipation factor (dielectric loss tangent)		0.001	-	0.01	
Dielectric strength (dielectric breakdown)	*	50.8	-	102	V/mil

Optical properties

Transparency	Opaque

Critical Materials Risk

High critical material risk?	No

Processability

Moldability		4	-	5	

Durability: water and aqueous solutions

Water (fresh)	Limited use
Water (salt)	Limited use
Soils, acidic (peat)	Limited use
Soils, alkaline (clay)	Limited use
Wine	Limited use

Durability: acids

Acetic acid (10%)	Unacceptable
Acetic acid (glacial)	Unacceptable
Citric acid (10%)	Unacceptable
Hydrochloric acid (10%)	Unacceptable

Hydrochloric acid (36%)	Unacceptable
Hydrofluoric acid (40%)	Unacceptable
Nitric acid (10%)	Unacceptable
Nitric acid (70%)	Unacceptable
Phosphoric acid (10%)	Unacceptable
Phosphoric acid (85%)	Unacceptable
Sulfuric acid (10%)	Unacceptable
Sulfuric acid (70%)	Unacceptable

Durability: alkalis

Sodium hydroxide (10%)	Limited use
Sodium hydroxide (60%)	Limited use

Durability: fuels, oils and solvents

Amyl acetate	Excellent
Benzene	Excellent
Carbon tetrachloride	Excellent
Chloroform	Excellent
Crude oil	Unacceptable
Diesel oil	Excellent
Lubricating oil	Excellent
Paraffin oil (kerosene)	Excellent
Petrol (gasoline)	Excellent
Silicone fluids	Excellent
Toluene	Excellent
Turpentine	Excellent
Vegetable oils (general)	Excellent
White spirit	Excellent

Durability: alcohols, aldehydes, ketones

Acetaldehyde	Excellent
Acetone	Excellent
Ethyl alcohol (ethanol)	Excellent
Ethylene glycol	Excellent
Formaldehyde (40%)	Excellent
Glycerol	Excellent
Methyl alcohol (methanol)	Excellent

Durability: halogens and gases

Chlorine gas (dry)	Limited use
Fluorine (gas)	Limited use

O2 (oxygen gas)	Excellent
Sulfur dioxide (gas)	Unacceptable

Durability: built environments

Industrial atmosphere	Unacceptable
Rural atmosphere	Unacceptable
Marine atmosphere	Unacceptable
UV radiation (sunlight)	Excellent

Durability: flammability

Flammability	Non-flammable

Durability: thermal environments

Tolerance to cryogenic temperatures	Unacceptable
Tolerance up to 150 C (302 F)	Excellent
Tolerance up to 250 C (482 F)	Unacceptable
Tolerance up to 450 C (842 F)	Unacceptable
Tolerance up to 850 C (1562 F)	Unacceptable
Tolerance above 850 C (1562 F)	Unacceptable

Geo-economic data for principal component

Annual world production, principal component	1.16e8	-	1.17e8	ton/yr
Reserves, principal component	2.95e9	-	3.05e9	l. ton

Primary material production: energy, CO2 and water

Embodied energy, primary production	226	-	250	kcal/lb
CO2 footprint, primary production	0.186	-	0.206	lb/lb
Water usage	* 1.17	-	1.29	gal(US)/lb

Material processing: energy

Grinding energy (per unit wt removed)	* 295	-	326	kcal/lb

Material processing: CO2 footprint

Grinding CO2 (per unit wt removed)	* 0.204	-	0.225	lb/lb

Material recycling: energy, CO2 and recycle fraction

Recycle	✗	
Recycle fraction in current supply	0.1	%
Downcycle	✓	
Combust for energy recovery	✗	
Landfill	✓	
Biodegrade	✗	

Toxicity rating	Non-toxic
A renewable resource?	✖

Supporting information

Technical notes

In use plaster of Paris is mixed with half its weight of water. It remains usable for 20 minutes, starts to set after 30 and is solid after one hour.

Typical uses

External and internal molded decoration on walls and ceilings, as a mold material for casting low-melting metals, and as medical casts and splints.

Links

Reference
ProcessUniverse
Producers