

## Bismuth Chromate in Delay Compositions

R.G. Sarawadekar and S. Jayaraman

*Explosives Research & Development Laboratory, Pune-411 008*

### ABSTRACT

Barium chromate is used as a secondary oxidiser in delay compositions which slows down the rate of the reaction. The composition containing barium chromate, potassium perchlorate and sulphur along with the binder, gives inverse burning rates up to 4.5 s/cm. If barium chromate is substituted by bismuth chromate hydrate, the rate of reaction is slowed down further to 11.8 s/cm. Various compositions were prepared by changing the percentage of barium chromate and bismuth chromate. The energy of activation was determined to be 14.5 kcal/mole for the composition with 40 per cent bismuth chromate. The explosion temperature for a delay of 5 s was observed as 480 °C. These compositions were subjected to impact and friction sensitivity tests to determine the safety aspects. This paper presents the results of burning rate, calorimetry, explosion temperature and the sensitivity data of some delay compositions containing bismuth chromate.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Pyrotechnic compositions containing potassium perchlorate as oxidiser are widely used as delay compositions. Since potassium perchlorate is a powerful oxidiser, the overall reaction is very vigorous with metal powders and hence barium chromate is used as a secondary oxidiser. The composition containing sulphur, potassium perchlorate and barium chromate is one such composition. It is interesting to study the effect of bismuth chromate on the characteristics of the composition containing barium chromate, potassium perchlorate and sulphur. A number of compositions have been prepared by changing the percentages of bismuth chromate and barium chromate.

### 2. EXPERIMENTAL

#### 2.1 Materials

Bismuth chromate hydrate is prepared by the usual method reported in the literature<sup>1,2</sup>. A solution of bismuth nitrate pentahydrate (58.2 g in 450 ml of 2N  $HNO_3$ ) is kept in a flask at 80 °C. Potassium dichromate (26.47 g) dissolved in 600 ml water, is added dropwise

with constant stirring to the bismuth nitrate solution. Addition is completed in 30 min and it is further stirred for 15 min. Chemical analysis is carried out by determining bismuth as bismuth phosphate. The bismuth value corresponds to the formula  $Bi_2O_3 \cdot 2CrO_3 \cdot H_2O$  or  $Bi(OH)CrO_4$ .

Potassium perchlorate of average size (11  $\mu m$ ) and barium chromate (1.0  $\mu m$ ) have been used. The sulphur has an average particle size (125  $\mu m$ ) and nitrocellulose lacquer is used as the binder. The mixing is carried out by sieving the ingredients together through an appropriate sieve behind a safety screen.

#### 2.2 Measurements

Thermal analysis was carried out on SETARAM TG-DTA Model 92 in air employing 10 °C/min heating rate and maximum temperature up to 1000 °C. About 50 mg sample was loaded in alumina crucible. Reaction exothermicities were determined in air using Parr adiabatic automatic bomb calorimeter Model 1240.

The burning rate of these mixtures was measured by firing the compositions pressed in lead tubes with

bunsen burner and the time was recorded using an electronic timer.

X-ray diffraction patterns were recorded on Philips x-ray diffractometer using *Cu-K* radiations and *Ni* as filter at room temperature. Infrared spectra were recorded in *Nujol Mull* at room temperature, on Perkin Elmer spectrophotometer Model 693. Ignition delay time was measured with the help of the apparatus described earlier<sup>3</sup>.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Characterisation of Bismuth Chromate

Thermal analysis of potassium perchlorate is described earlier<sup>4</sup> and that of barium chromate is given by Clement Duval<sup>5</sup>.

Figure 1 shows DTA, TG and DTG curves of bismuth chromate. DTA curves show four endothermic peaks at 332, 520, 868 and 938 °C. The first endotherm appears to correspond to dehydration and the second peak corresponds to the loss of half molecule of oxygen. The third endotherm is also due to the loss of second half molecule of oxygen, while the fourth peak is due to fusion. On further heating up to 1000 °C, the material decomposes into two different products, one red  $\text{Bi}_2\text{O}_4$  and the other  $\text{Cr}_2\text{O}_3$  green in colour. The probable course of reaction is given as

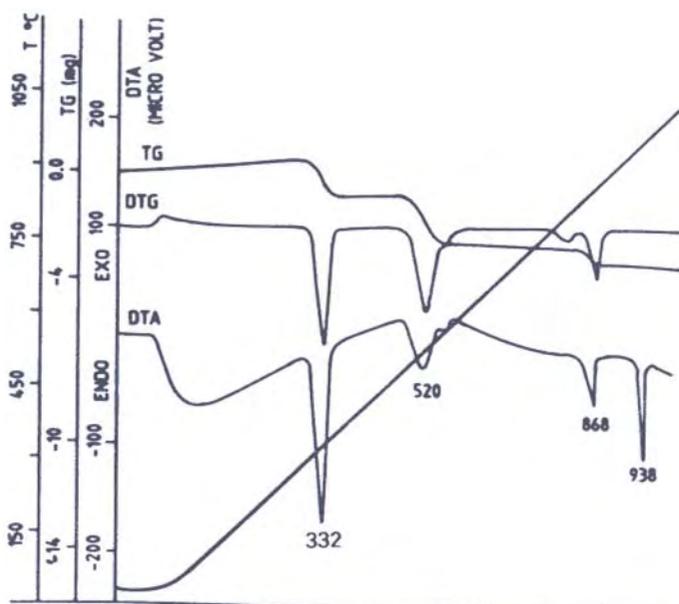
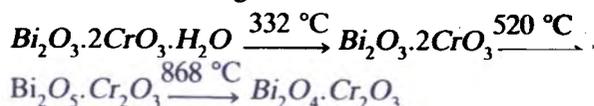


Figure 1. Thermoanalytical curves of bismuth chromate.

The above stages are supported by TG data as shown in Table 1. For further confirmation, about 3 g bismuth chromate was kept at 350, 550 and 820 °C for 2 hr and

Table 1. Thermoanalytical data of bismuth chromate hydrate

DTA endo-thermic peak temp (°C)	TG % loss		DTG peak temp (°C)	
	Temperature (°C)	Observed		Calculated
332	310	2.06	2.6	332
520	480	5.77	5.0	520
868	851	7.42	7.3	868

1 g residue was taken out at each stage. X-ray diffraction patterns of these different slags are given in Fig. 2. At 350 °C, bismuth chromate loses water of crystallisation

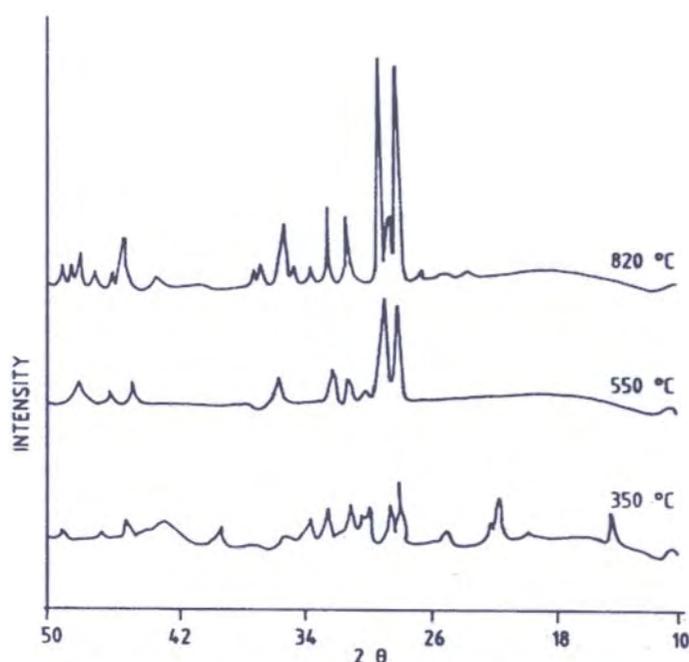


Figure 2. X-ray diffraction patterns of bismuth chromate slags.

but the crystalline form remains the same. On further heating at 550 and 820 °C, it loses half molecule of oxygen at each step, without change in its crystalline nature. The data for *d* values and *I/I*<sub>0</sub> is given in Table 2. Infrared spectra of bismuth chromate and its slags at different temperatures are shown in Fig. 3. It is seen that the tetrahedral symmetry of chromate group is not observed in the infrared spectrum of bismuth chromate. In addition, there is a peak at 730  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  which indicates *Cr-O-Cr* linkage. Thus, it appears that the material must be a dichromate.

Table 2. X-ray diffraction data of decomposition products of bismuth chromate

350 °C			550 °C			820 °C		
$d \text{ \AA}$	$I/I_0$	$hkl$	$d \text{ \AA}$	$I/I_0$	$hkl$	$d \text{ \AA}$	$I/I_0$	$hkl$
6.1456	44	111	3.1728	100	310	3.1728	100	310
4.0733	72	211	3.0972	100	311	3.0578	100	311
4.0008	33	210	2.9760	15	-	2.8464	30	222
3.5309	22	220	2.8732	30	211	2.7592	32	320
3.1728	100	310	2.7859	36	320	2.6649	35	321
3.0972	66	311	2.5224	30	400	2.5474	28	400
2.8642	66	222	2.0204	26	422	2.4531	12	410
2.7592	44	320	1.9664	15	431	1.9959	25	430
2.6649	33	321	1.8863	29	432	1.8862	15	432

Simple cubic -  $a = 10.03 \text{ \AA}$ ,  $n = 8$ ,  $v = 1003.027 \text{ \AA}^3$ ,  $d = 5.31192 \text{ g/cm}^3$

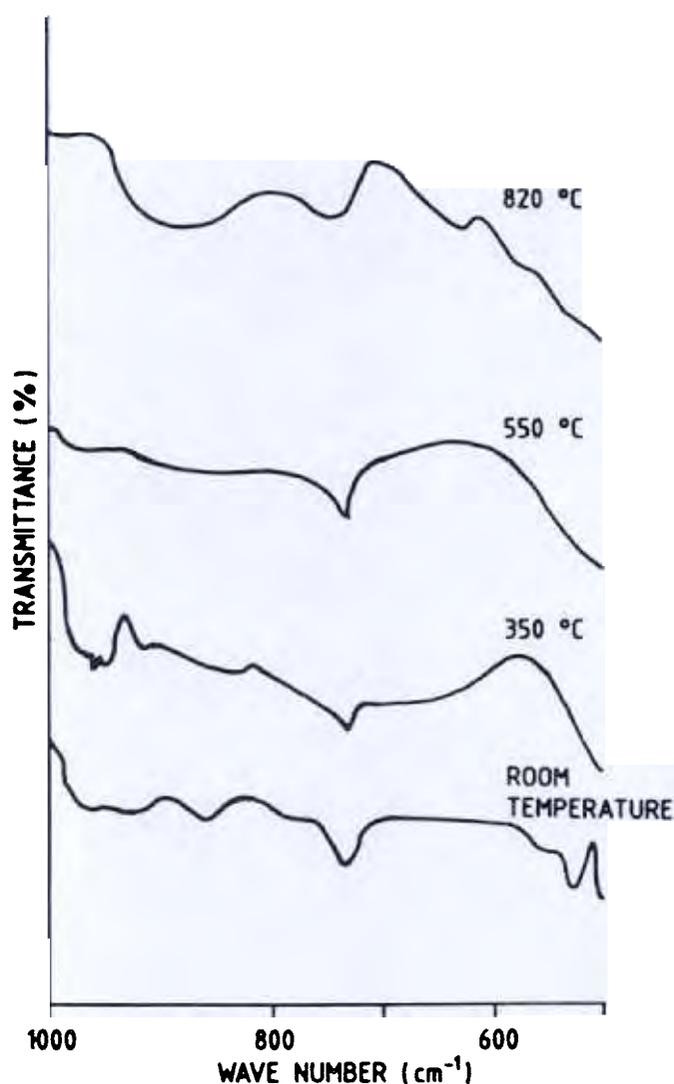


Figure 3. Infrared spectra of bismuth chromate.

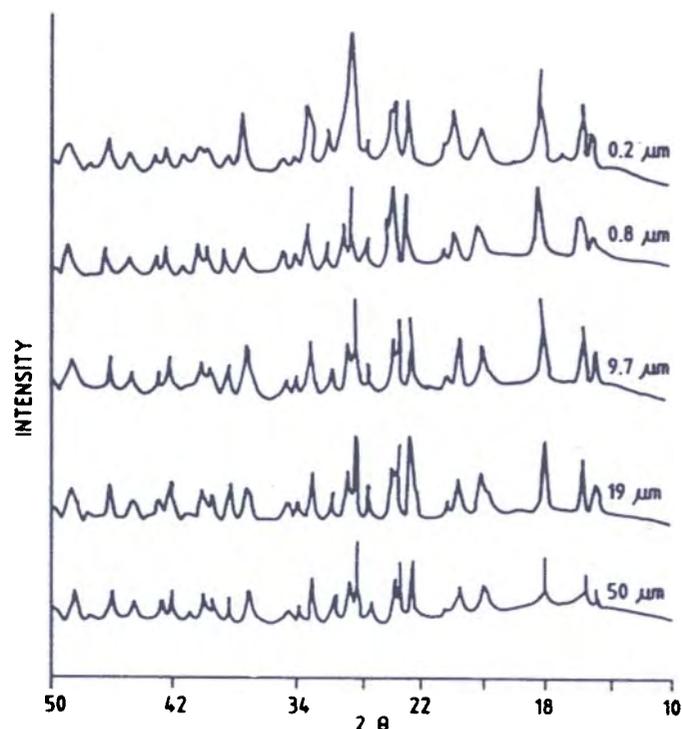


Figure 4. X-ray diffraction patterns of bismuth chromate.

The bismuth chromate prepared under different temperature conditions was studied by x-ray diffraction as shown in Fig. 4. In all the cases the same monoclinic crystals have been obtained.

### 3.2 Delay Compositions

#### 3.2.1 Burning Rate

Using the above bismuth chromate, several compositions were prepared. The system containing 8

**Table 3. Data on compositions containing sulphur (8%), potassium perchlorate (8%) and nitrocellulose (2 parts).**

Composition no	Bismuth chromate (%)	Barium chromate (%)	IBR (s/cm)	Cal-val (cal/g)	Impact (2 kg) (cm)	Friction (kg)
	0	84	4.56	268	38	21.6
	14	70	7.92	296	136	21.6
	24	60	9.0	249	107	19.2
	34	50	8.88	270	91	21.6
	40	44	7.45	258	79	16
	54	30	9.27	272	97.5	16.8
	64	20	9.0	274	92	24
	74	10	8.6	247	101	19.2
	84	0	11.8	240	98	19.2

per cent potassium perchlorate, 8 per cent sulphur and 84 per cent barium chromate was chosen for the study. The barium chromate was progressively substituted by bismuth chromate. The compositions were granulated using 2 parts of nitrocellulose as binder. Table 3 shows the data on inverse burning rate, calorific value in air, height of 50 per cent explosion and friction sensitivity for these compositions. As barium chromate is substituted by different percentages of bismuth chromate, the composition becomes slower and slower. When barium chromate is completely replaced by bismuth chromate, the composition has an average inverse burning rate of 11.8 s/cm. However, ignition of this composition is difficult and the composition does not propagate in lead tube for lengths of more than 5 cm.

Compositions 2 to 8 show almost same inverse burning rate of about  $8.5 \pm 0.5$  s/cm, while composition 5 shows a burning rate of 7.45 s/cm. Table 4 shows the

**Table 4. Effect of particle size**

Composition no	Particle size ( $\mu\text{m}$ )	BR (cm/s)	IBR (s/cm)	Impact 50% height (cm)	Friction (kg)
10	0.2	0.18	5.6	96	16
11	0.8	0.16	6.3	88	24
12	2.5	0.13	7.5	79	16
13	8.0	0.11	8.7	102	36

Composition : bismuth chromate 40% ; barium chromate 44% ; sulphur 8% ; potassium perchlorate 8% ; nitro cellulose 2 parts over the dry mix.

burning rate, impact and friction sensitivity data of the compositions containing bismuth chromate of different particle sizes. It is observed that as the particle size of bismuth chromate increases the burning rate decreases. Inverse burning rates show clear variation from 5.6 to 8.7 s/cm. The impact sensitivity data shows marginal variation in the height of 50 per cent explosion. The composition is reasonably safe for handling. Friction sensitivity data indicates that these compositions are sensitive to friction, but the sensitivity is not very high. Composition 13 is insensitive to friction up to 36 kg.

### 3.2.2 Bomb Calorimetry

The heat of combustion is determined in air. The composition containing only bismuth chromate gives 240 cal/g, while the composition containing only barium chromate gives 268 cal/g. The composition which gives less heat output burns slowly. Other compositions containing both the chromates show variation in heat of combustion from 296 to 247 cal/g.

### 3.2.3 Sensitivity

The results of impact and friction sensitivity measurements are presented in Table 3. Composition 1 is very sensitive to impact and the addition of bismuth chromate reduces the impact sensitivity considerably as seen from the table. The friction sensitivity of these mixtures is found in the range of 16 to 24 kg. It is seen that these compositions are not very sensitive to friction and can be used with reasonable precautions.

### 3.2.4 Time to Ignition

Table 5 shows the data for energy of activation and explosion temperature for delay time of 5 s. These values are obtained by plotting log of time to ignition against reciprocal of absolute temperature<sup>7</sup>. Energy of activation of the composition containing only barium chromate is found to be 3.2 kcal/mole. It increases with increase in bismuth chromate up to 24 per cent and suddenly decreases to 8 kcal/mole for 34 per cent bismuth chromate. It increases to 21 kcal/mole up to 64 per cent bismuth chromate and then a decrease to 17 kcal/mole for 84 per cent.

Table 5. Time to ignition data

Composition with bismuth chromate (%)	Energy of activation (kcal/mole)	Explosion temperature for 5 s (°C)
0	3.20	490
14	13.60	484
24	16.70	467
34	8.03	513
40	14.52	480
59	16.70	458
64	21.64	457
79	16.00	452
84	17.12	476

It can be seen that the substitution of barium chromate by bismuth chromate results in sudden increase in the activation energies of these compositions which may at least partly explain the slower burning rates of these compositions.

Explosion temperatures data for a delay of 5 s have been computed from the same plot of logarithm of time to ignition against reciprocal of absolute temperature. It is seen that the substitution of barium chromate by bismuth chromate does not affect the explosion temperature to an appreciable extent.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

(a) It is noticed that bismuth chromate shows three endotherms at different temperatures. This

absorption of heat will lead to reduction in burning rates which is also reflected in the heat of combustion data. Bismuth chromate decomposes at around 1000 °C. The slags show the formation of  $Bi_2O_4$  and  $Cr_2O_3$ .

- (b) The compositions containing bismuth chromate are reasonably safe for handling.
- (c) From time to ignition data, it can be concluded that these compositions containing mixtures of barium chromate and bismuth chromate can be easily ignited and give sustained burning.
- (d) The system gives a fairly constant rate of burning over a wide range of proportion of bismuth chromate and barium chromate and can be easily adopted for practical application.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Cox, A.J. On the chromates of mercury, bismuth and lead. *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1906, **28**(2), 1694-710.
- 2 Pattison Muir, M.M. On a method of estimating bismuth volumetrically. *J. Chem. Soc.*, 1876, **29**(1) 483-88.
- 3 Durgapal, U.C.; Dixit, A.S. & Sarawadekar R.G. Study of zirconium-potassium perchlorate pyrotechnic system. In Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Pyrotechnics Seminar, IIT Research Institute, Chicago, Illinois. 11-15 July 1988. pp.209-26.
- 4 Sarawadekar, R.G. & Bankar, N.S. Thermal studies on tantalum-potassium perchlorate system. In Proceedings of the Eighth International Pyrotechnics Seminar, Colorado, USA, 1982. pp.574-87.
- 5 Duval, C. Sur La thermogravimetric-des-precipies analytiques. *Anal. Chim. Acta.*, 1947, **1**, 341-63.
- 6 Aurivillius, A & Lowenhielm, A. The crystal structure of the orthorhombic modification of  $BiOHCrO_4$ , a refinement of the structure of monoclinic  $BiOHCrO_4$ . *Acta. Chem. Scand.*, 1964, **18**, 1937-57.
- 7 Srivastava, R.S.; Agarwal S.P. & Bharagava H.N. Explosive properties of manganese nitrophenates. *Combustion and Flame*, 1979, **35** (1), 125-30.