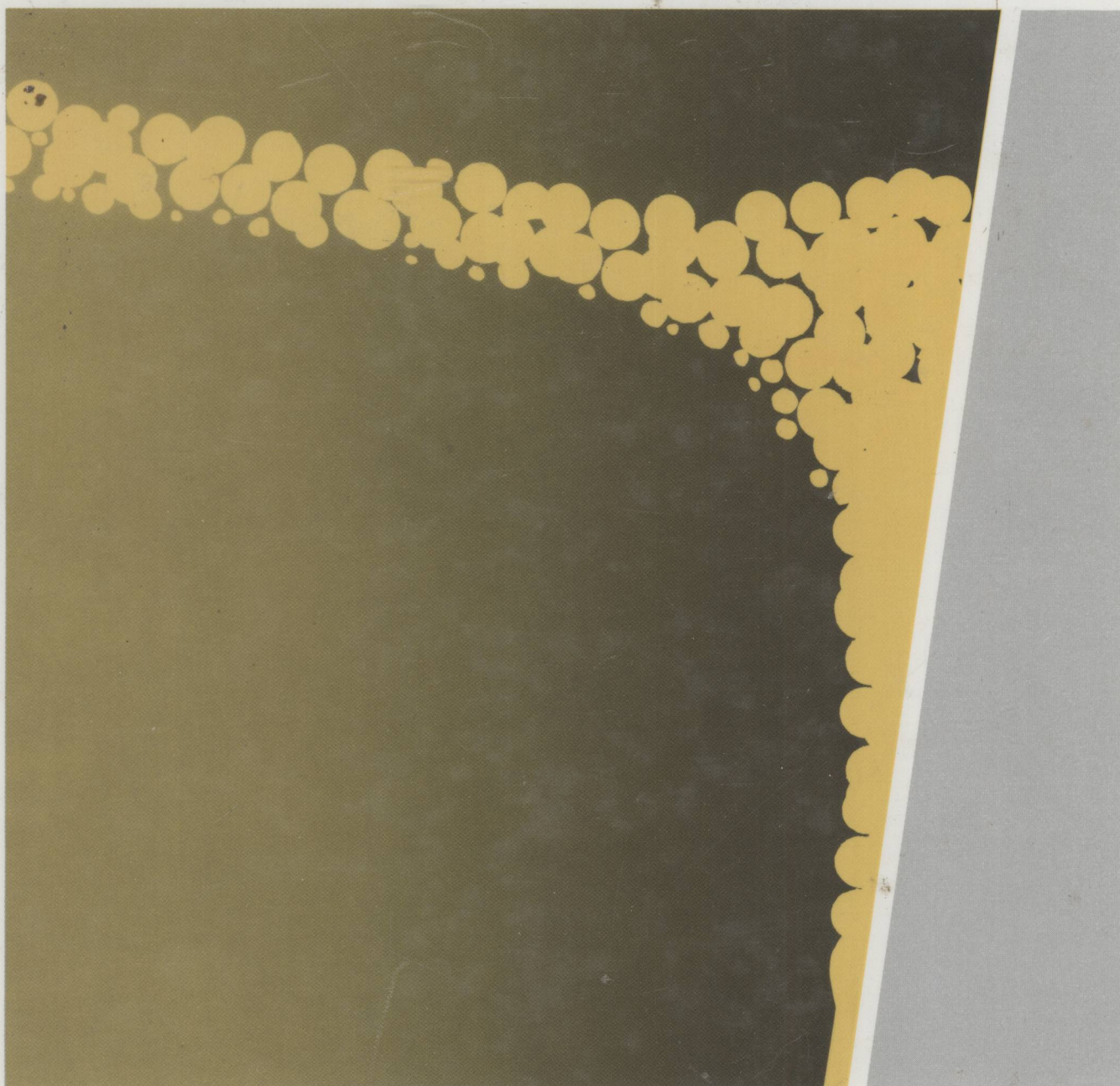




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Thermal Spray Research and Applications

edited by Thomas F. Bernecki
Conference Proceedings



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THERMAL SPRAY RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS

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FOREWORD

More than 1600 people from 25 countries attended the technical sessions, tutorials, and exposition at the third annual National Thermal Spray Conference in Long Beach, California on May 20-25, 1990. This conference was held in conjunction with AeroMat'90 which allowed participants of NTSC'90 to interface with the individuals and organizations at the cutting edge of aerospace technology. Thermal spray is a rapidly growing worldwide technology base that holds many of the answers to the demanding requirements of coatings performance. One of the highlights of the conference was increased participation as a result of Glasnost.

Included in these proceedings are most of the papers presented at the conference. I would like to thank the authors and those who volunteered their time for peer review. The reviewers were the following: A. Adamski, T. Bernecki, D. Crawmer, M. Dorfman, H. Herman, F. Hermanek, D. Houck, J. Jonkouski, R. Kaufold, F. Longo, R. Miller (SPT), R. Miller (NASA) L. Moskowitz, J. Nerz, E. Novinski, S. Rangaswamy, J. Reardon, W. Riggs II, S. Safai, G. Schubinsky, M. Smith, R. Smith, P. Stanek, D. Varacalle.

The next National Thermal Spray Conference will be held May 4-10, 1991 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Thomas F. Bernecki

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROCESSING SCIENCE

(Invited Paper) A New Look at the Thermal and Gas Dynamic Characteristics of a Plasma Jet	1
<i>E. Pfender, W.L.T. Chen, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN; R. Spores, Air Force Astronautical Lab., Edwards Air Force Base, CA</i>	
Designing Parameters of Spraying Plasma Torches	11
<i>Ph. Roumilhac, J. F. Coudert, P. Fauchais, Laboratoire de Thermodynamique et plasma, Limoges Cedex, France</i>	
Temperature Evolution of Plasma-Sprayed Niobium Particles Impacting on a Substrate	19
<i>C. Moreau, P. Cielo, M. Lamontagne, S. Dallaire, J.-C. Krapez, National Research Council Canada, Boucherville, Québec, Canada; M. Vardelle, Université de Limoges, Limoges, France</i>	
Occurrence of Tungsten Plasma in Plasma Spraying of WC/Co	27
<i>B. A. Detering, J. R. Knibloe, T. L. Eddy, INEL, Idaho Falls, ID</i>	
LTE and Non-LTE Gas Temperatures in Loaded and Unloaded Plasmas During Spraying of NiAl Powders	33
<i>T. L. Eddy, B. A. Detering, G. C. Wilson, INEL, Idaho Falls, ID</i>	
Simultaneous Measurement of Ni-Al Particle Size, Velocity, and Temperature in Atmospheric Thermal Plasmas	39
<i>J. R. Fincke, W. D. Swank, INEL, Idaho Falls, ID</i>	
Measurement of Air Entrainment in Plasma Jets	45
<i>J. R. Fincke, R. Rodriguez, C. G. Pentecost, INEL, Idaho Falls, ID</i>	
(Invited Paper) Plasma Spray Gun Particle Distribution Measurements Using Laser/2-D Imaging Techniques	49
<i>W. C. Roman, M. Winter, A. A. Rotunno, United Technologies Research Center, East Hartford, CT; K. Fessenden, Pratt and Whitney, East Hartford, CT; W. Willen, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY</i>	
Modeling/Optimization of the Plasma Spray Process	59
<i>M. A. Hedges, R. Taylor, University of Manchester, Manchester, England</i>	
Characterization of a D.C. Plasma Torch with Axial Injection of Powders	65
<i>M. Vardelle, A. Vardelle, P. Fauchais, Université de Limoges, Limoges, France; I. Saray, Eotvös University, Budapest, Hungary</i>	
Arc Stability Criterion for Vacuum Arc Spraying	71
<i>H.-D. Steffens, M. Wewel, University of Dortmund, Dortmund, FRG</i>	
Effect of Different Factors on Plasma Spraying Efficiency and Metallization Pattern	77
<i>Yu. Borisov, A. Murashov, A. Saakov, E. O. Paton Electric Welding Institute, Kiev, USSR</i>	
Comparison of Temperature Curve Calculations and Measurements in Coating-Substrate Composites During Plasma Spraying	87
<i>U. Balting, O. Knotek, R. Elsing, RWTH Aachen, Aachen, FRG; T. Cosack, MTU München, München, FRG</i>	

VENDOR'S SESSION

Spherical Reacted YSZ Powders for Improved Thermal Spray Properties	93
<i>D. B. Ott, TAM Ceramics, Inc., Niagara Falls, NY;</i>	
<i>B. A. Kushner, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY</i>	
Automation for Low Pressure Plasma Spray Production Facilities	99
<i>P. J. Meyer, Electro-Plasma, Inc., Irvine, CA</i>	
Extended Service Life with an Aluminum Composite Non-Skid Coating	105
<i>C. Lane, Duralcan USA, San Diego, CA; R. Sulit, Sulit Engineering, Del Mar, CA</i>	
Quality Essentials: Control of Thermal Spray Coatings	109
<i>E. C. Oswecki, General Plasma, Inc., East Windsor, CT</i>	
State of the Art Arc Spray Technology	113
<i>David R. Marantz, Daniel R. Marantz, Flame-Spray Industries, Inc.,</i>	
<i>Port Washington, NY</i>	

ABRADABLES

Improving Abradable Coatings Using Wear Mechanism Mapping and Microstructural Modelling	119
<i>M. O. Borel, Sulzer Innotec AG, Winterthur, Switzerland; R. K. Schmid,</i>	
<i>Sulzer Innotec AG, Winterthur, Switzerland; A. R. Nicoll, Plasma Technik AG,</i>	
<i>Wohlen, Switzerland</i>	
A New Engineered Abradable Seal Coating—Properties and Performance	125
<i>R. A. Miller, S. Rangaswamy, Sulzer Plasma Technik, Inc., Troy, MI;</i>	
<i>M. O. Borel, Sulzer Innotec Ltd., Winterthur, Switzerland; A. R. Nicoll,</i>	
<i>Plasma Technik AG, Plasma Technik AG, Wohlen, Switzerland</i>	
Process Parameter Impact on the Physical Properties of an Advanced Abradable Coating	151
<i>E. R. Novinski, A. J. Rotolico, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY;</i>	
<i>E. J. Cove, General Electric Co., Lynn, MA</i>	

WEAR/EROSION

Material Characteristics and Performance of WC-Co Wear-Resistant Coatings	159
<i>T. P. Slavin, United Technologies Research Center, East Hartford, CT;</i>	
<i>J. Nerz, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY</i>	
Vacuum Plasma Spray Deposition of WC-Co	165
<i>Z. Z. Mutasim, R. W. Smith, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA;</i>	
<i>L. Sokol, Sermatech International, Inc., Boynton Beach, FL</i>	
Rolling Fatigue Behavior of Plasma Sprayed Coatings on Aluminum Alloy	171
<i>S. Tobe, S. Kodama, H. Misawa, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Tokyo, Japan;</i>	
<i>K. Ishikawa, Tokyo Metallikon Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan</i>	
Comparison of the Erosive Wear Behaviour of Vacuum Plasma Sprayed and Bulk Alumina	179
<i>R. Kingswell, AEA Technology, Oxfordshire, U.K.; D. S. Rickerby, Rolls-Royce plc.,</i>	
<i>Derby, U.K.; K. T. Scott, S. J. Bull, AEA Technology, Oxfordshire, U.K.</i>	

CORROSION

Zinc-Silicate Composite Thermal Spray Coatings for the Corrosion Protection of Steel	187
<i>R. P. Krepski, Internet Technology, Georgetown, PA</i>	
Thermal Spraying - Recent Developments for Underwater Application	193
<i>A. Ohliger, P. Szelagowski, H-G. Schafstall, GKSS Research Centre, Geesthacht, FRG</i>	
Characteristics of Ni-Cr Alloy Coatings Produced by Flame-Jet Spraying	201
<i>J. Morimoto, A. Yamaguchi, Y. Arata, Kinki University, Osaka, Japan;</i> <i>A. Ohmori, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan</i>	
Structure and Electrochemical Behavior of Vacuum-Plasma Sprayed Titanium and Plasma-Beam Alloyed Titanium Coatings	207
<i>H.-D. Steffens, M. Dvorak, University of Dortmund, Dortmund, FRG</i>	
Protective Spray Coating Against Stress Corrosion Cracking of Austenitic Stainless Steel	211
<i>N. Tani, Nagasaki Institute of Applied Science, Nagasaki, Japan; K. Kamachi, Kinki University, Osaka, Japan; T. Shibata, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan;</i> <i>S. Oki, S. Gohda, Kinki University, Osaka, Japan; G. Ueno, Kanmeta Engineering Co. Ltd., Osaka, Japan</i>	
High Temperature Oxidation Properties of Thermal Sprayed Ni-Cr-Al Multi-Layer Coatings	215
<i>S. Oki, K. Kamachi, S. Gohda, Kinki University, Osaka, Japan;</i> <i>Y. Hirato, Japan Casting Engineering Co., Ltd., Osaka, Japan</i>	
Raney Nickel Electrode Layers Produced by Vacuum Plasma Spraying	221
<i>R. Henne, V. Borck, M. v. Bradke, G. Schiller, W. Weber, DLR Institute for Technical Thermodynamics, Stuttgart, FRG</i>	

SURFACE TREATMENT POST-SPRAY

Beneficial Effects of Austempering Post-Treatment on Tungsten Carbide Based Wear Coatings	227
<i>W. J. Lenling, Fisher-Barton, Inc., Watertown, WI; M. F. Smith, J. A. Henfling, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM</i>	
Post-Treatment of Plasma Sprayed WC-Co Coatings by Hot Isostatic Pressing	233
<i>H. Ito, R. Nakamura, Kurume College of Technology, Japan; M. Shiroyama, T. Sasaki, Nippon Tungsten Co., Ltd., Japan</i>	
Gastight Plasma Sprayed Sealings for HIP Diffusion Bonding of Materials	239
<i>D. Stöver, H. P. Buchkremer, R. Hecker, W. Mallener, Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Jülich, FRG</i>	

PRE-SPRAY

Pretreatment of Substrates by Using Reversed Transferred Arc in Low Pressure Plasma Spray	245
<i>A. Itoh, K. Takeda, M. Itoh, M. Koga, Nippon Steel Corporation, Kitakyushu-City, Japan</i>	
Automatic Blast Finishing - A Controlled Process for Surface Preparation	253
<i>B. McHugh, Guyson Corporation of USA, Saratoga Springs, NY</i>	

The Effect of Thermal Cyclings on the Interfacial Structure of Al_2O_3 onto Ti Substrate with or without TiO_2 on the Surface	259
<i>K. Shinohara, Ehime University, Matsuyama, Japan; T. Yoshioka, R. Sasaki, Nippon Coating Industries, Ltd., Amagasaki, Japan</i>	
Bonding of Ceramics to Metals with Activated Coating Layers Made by Plasma Spraying	265
<i>A. Ohmori, Z. Zhou, Welding Research Institute of Osaka University, Osaka, Japan; A. Suzumura, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan; Y. Arata, Kinki University, Osaka, Japan</i>	
An Analytical Methodology to Predict the Coating Characteristics of Plasma-Sprayed Ceramic Powders	271
<i>D. J. Varacalle, Jr., INEL, Idaho Falls, ID</i>	

COATING CHARACTERIZATION AND EVALUATION

Experiences with a Hydraulic Adhesion Tester for Quality Control of Thermal-Sprayed Aluminum Coatings for Long Term Submerged Service in the Ocean	285
<i>W. H. Thomason, R. G. Ivie, Conoco Inc., Ponca City, OK</i>	
Metallographic Preparation of Plasma Sprayed ZrO_2 Coatings Sprayed under Varying Conditions	291
<i>M. Rückert, Struers A/S, Copenhagen, Denmark; J. Wigren, J. Svantesson, Volvo Flygmotor, Trollhättan, Sweden</i>	
Corrosion Behaviour of Vacuum Plasma Sprayed Titanium Coatings	297
<i>E. Lugscheider, Lehr- und Forschungsgebiet Werkstoffwissenschaften, RWTH Aachen FRG; J. P. Kaltefleiter, Siemens AG, München, FRG; D. A. Jäger, Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Jülich, FRG</i>	
Image Analysis Applied to Thermal Sprayed Coatings	303
<i>D. B. Fowler, Struers, Inc., Westlake, OH; W. Riggs, General Electric Co., Cincinnati, OH; J. C. Russ, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC</i>	
Powder Production Methods, Size and Powder Morphology and How It Affects The User	321
<i>J. B. Huddleston, Metallurgical Technologies, Inc., Pearland, TX</i>	
(Invited Paper) The Need for Standardization of Testing Techniques in the Thermal Spray Industry	325
<i>C. C. Berndt, Monash University, Clayton, Australia</i>	
Residual Stress in Plasma Sprayed Metallic and Ceramic Coatings	331
<i>M. Gudge, AEA Technology, Oxfordshire, U.K.; D. S. Rickerby, Rolls-Royce plc, Derby, U.K.; R. Kingswell, K. T. Scott, AEA Technology, Oxfordshire, U.K.</i>	
Study on Elastic Constant and Residual Stress Measurements During Ceramic Coatings	339
<i>R. Kawase, Ariake National College of Technology, Fukuoka, Japan; K. Tanaka, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan; T. Hamamoto, Hitach Zosen Corporation, Osaka, Japan; H. Haraguchi, Koei Seiko Ltd., Fukuoka, Japan</i>	
Thermal Pulse Video Thermograph of Sprayed Coatings - An Inspection Technique for Bond Quality	343
<i>J. M. Milne, K. T. Scott, AEA Technology, Oxfordshire, U.K.</i>	

SPRAY FORMING AND COMPOSITES

Thermal Spraying as a Method of Producing Rapidly Solidified Materials	351
<i>K. Murakami, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan; S. Nakazono, Mitani Metal Corporation, Osaka, Japan; H. Asako, T. Okamoto, Y. Miyamoto, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan; H. Matsumoto, Osaka Sangyo University, Osaka, Japan</i>	
Plasma Spray Consolidation of Ni-Al Intermetallics	357
<i>S. Sampath, B. Gudmundsson, R. Tiwari, H. Herman, State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY</i>	
Vacuum Plasma Spray Forming NARloy-Z and Inconel 718 Components for Liquid Rocket Engines	363
<i>R. R. Holmes, D. H. Burns, NASA, Marshall Space Flight Center, AL; T. N. McKechnie, Rocketdyne Division of Rockwell International, Huntsville, AL</i>	
Plasma Sprayed Refractory Metal Structures and Properties	369
<i>R. W. Smith, Z. Z. Mutasim, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA</i>	
Low Pressure Plasma Sprayed Bulk Superalloy UDIMET 700: Mechanical Properties and Microstructure	375
<i>D. Stöver, Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Jülich, FRG; D. Moulatsiotis, Lehr- und Forschungsgebiet Werkstoffkunde, RWTH Aachen, FRG; W. Diehl, Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Jülich, FRG; E. El-Magd, Lehr- und Forschungsgebiet, RWTH Aachen, FRG; R. Hecker, Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Jülich, FRG</i>	
The Microstructure of Fiber-reinforced Plasma Sprayed Coatings	383
<i>J. H. Yi, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia; C. C. Berndt, State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY</i>	
Thermal Spray Forming of Particulate Composites	393
<i>R. Tiwari, H. Herman, State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY; K. A. Kowalsky, D. R. Marantz, Flame-Spray Industries, Inc., Port Washington, NY</i>	
Studies on Thermal Spray Bonding of Ceramics to Metals (Report 3) - Application to Composite Laminated Thermal Spray Coating	401
<i>H. Ogawa, Meijo University, Nagoya, Japan; A. Ohmori, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan</i>	
A New Type of MMC Prepreg Using Si-Ti-C-O Fiber Fabricated by Air Plasma Spraying	407
<i>N. Nakagawa, Y. Ohsora, Ube Industries Ltd., Yamaguchi-ken, Japan; T. Yamamura, A. Ohmori, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan</i>	

BIOMEDICAL APPLICATIONS

(Invited Paper) Plasma-Sprayed Hydroxylapatite Coatings for Biomedical Applications	413
<i>J.G.C. Wolke, C.P.A.T. Klein, V. de Groot, University of Leiden, Leiden, The Netherlands</i>	
(Invited Paper) Overview of Problems Surrounding the Plasma Spraying of Hydroxapatite Coatings	419
<i>D. H. Harris, APS-Materials, Inc., Dayton, OH</i>	
Physical and Mechanical Characterization of Porous Coatings for Medical and Dental Devices	425
<i>V. Sahay, P. J. Lare, H. Hahn, Artech Corporation, Chantilly, VA</i>	
Storage of Grit Blasted Biomedical Components: Effects on Ti6Al-4V Porous Coating Bondstrength	431
<i>G. Tackett, J. Huber, APS Materials Inc., Dayton, OH</i>	
Processes for Fabricating Hydroxylapatite Coatings for Biomedical Applications	433
<i>S. J. Yankee, B. J. Pletka, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI; H. A. Luckey, Materials Engineering Ltd., St. Joseph, WI; W. A. Johnson, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, MI</i>	

EQUIPMENT AND PROCESSES

The Application of Advanced Plasma Coating to Hot Parts for Heavy-Duty Gas Turbine	439
<i>K. Takahashi, I. Tsuji, N. Hirota, H. Kawai, K. Takeishi, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd., Hyogo, Japan</i>	
Electromagnetically Coalesced Multi-Arc Plasma Torch with True Axial Powder Feed	443
<i>D. R. Marantz, Flame-Spray Industries, Inc., Port Washington, NY</i>	
Process for Producing Plasma Sprayed Carbide-Based Coatings with Minimal Decarburization and Near Theoretical Density	451
<i>W. J. Lenling, Fisher-Barton, Inc., Watertown, WI; M. F. Smith, J. A. Henfling, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM</i>	
(Invited Paper) Development of Mass Production Technology of Arc Spraying for Automotive Engine Aluminum Alloy Valve Lifters	457
<i>M. Nakagawa, K. Shimoda, T. Tomoda, M. Koyama, Toyota Motor Corporation, Aichi, Japan; Y. Ishikawa, T. Nakajima, Otai Iron Works Corporation, Aichi, Japan</i>	
Plasma Spray Booth Equivalency	465
<i>W. L. Riggs, General Electric Co., Cincinnati, OH; D. Crawmer, Battelle Memorial Institute, Columbus, OH</i>	
Laser Thermal Spraying	485
<i>M. Yoneda, A. Utsumi, T. Yano, J. Matsuda, M. Katsumura, MITI Government Industrial Research Institute, Kagawa, Japan; A. Ohmori, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan</i>	
Parameter Optimization of Alumina-Titania Coatings by a Statistical Experimental Design	491
<i>R. B. Heimann, D. Lamy, T. N. Sopkow, Alberta Research Council, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada</i>	

CERAMICS

A Joint Study on Properties of Plasma Sprayed Alumina Coating	497
<i>K. Kamachi, S. Goda, S. Oki, Kinki University, Osaka, Japan; M. Magome, Osaka Industrial University, Osaka, Japan; K. Ueno, S. Sodeoka, Government Industrial Research Institute, Osaka, Japan; G. Ueno, Kanmeta Eng. Co., Osaka, Japan; T. Yoshioka, Nihon Coating Co., Osaka, Japan</i>	
Manufacture and Properties of Plasma Sprayed Cr_2O_3	503
<i>T. Gößmann, H. G. Schütz, D. Stöver, H. P. Buchkremer, D. A. Jäger, Inst. für Angewandte Werkstofforschung, Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Jülich, FRG</i>	
Photoelectrochemical Properties of Plasma Sprayed TiO_2 Coatings	509
<i>A. Ohmori, K. C. Park, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan; Y. Arata, Kinki University, Osaka, Japan</i>	
High Power Plasmaspraying of Oxide Ceramics	517
<i>D. Gansert, Bender Machine, Vernon, CA; E. Lugscheider, U. Müller, Material Science Institute, RWTH Aachen, FRG</i>	
Applicability of Thermally Sprayed Zirconia Coatings to Casting Mold Dressings	521
<i>Y. Shimizu, M. Sato, M. Kobayashi, T. Ikeda, Shinshu University, Nagano, Japan</i>	

Manufacture of Ceramic Spray-Coated Plates Having Improved Adhesive Strength	527
<i>M. Murakawa, S. Watanabe, Nippon Institute of Technology, Saitama, Japan</i>	
The Effect of the Chamber and Spraying Parameters of the LPPS Method on the Structure of Mullite Coatings	533
<i>J. Disam, Schott Glaswerke, Mainz, FRG; A. Sickinger, Electro-Plasma, Inc., Irvine, CA; V. Wilms, COATEC, Schlüchtern, FRG</i>	

THERMAL BARRIER COATINGS

Thermal Barrier Coatings on Incoloy 909	539
<i>K. Cushnie, J.A.E Bell, Inco Limited, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada; G. D. Smith, Inco Alloys International, Inc., Huntington, WV</i>	
Improvements in Thermal Barrier Coatings for Gas Turbine Components	545
<i>J. Verrier, Foseco PLC, Stafford, U.K.; P. Chandler, Plasma-Technik, U.K.; P. Greenfield, GEC-Alsthom, Leicester, U.K.; P. Morrell, Rolls Royce, Derby, U.K.; W. Steen, Z. Liu, University of Liverpool, U.K.; J. Cotton, British Ceramic Research, U.K.</i>	
Influence of the Torch-Substrate Relative Movements and Cooling of the Coatings During Spraying on the Mechanical Properties of TBCs	551
<i>D. Bernard, E.T.A.S., Auger, France; P. Fauchais, University of Limoges, Limoges, France</i>	

HVOF

Deposition of Coatings Using a New High Velocity Combustion Spray Gun	561
<i>R. W. Kaufold, A. J. Rotolico, J. Nerz, B. A. Kushner, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY</i>	
High Velocity Flame Spraying of Chromium Oxide and Aluminum Oxide	575
<i>H. Kreye, U. Granz-Schnibbe, Universität der Bundeswehr, Hamburg, FRG</i>	
Influence of Microstructure on the Morphology of Mirror-finished Thermally Sprayed Coatings	581
<i>H. Nakahira, Y. Harada, K. Tani, Tocalo Co., Ltd., Kobe, Japan</i>	
HVOF: Particle, Flame Diagnostics and Coating Characteristics	587
<i>K. A. Kowalsky, D. R. Marantz, Flame-Spray Industries, Inc., Port Washington, NY; M. F. Smith, W. L. Oberkamp, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM</i>	
High-Velocity Flame-Sprayed Self-Fluxing Alloys	593
<i>K. Tani, H. Nakahira, Y. Harada, Tocalo Co., Ltd., Kobe, Japan</i>	
Jet Kote Sprayed Composite Coating for High Temperature Tribological Applications	599
<i>X. Guo, P. Howard, G. Milidantri, Chromalloy Research & Technology Div., Orangeburg, NY; H. Zhang, State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY</i>	
Study on the Reaction Spray of Laser-Plasma Jet-Synthesis of TiN Coatings	605
<i>A. Ohmori, Y-C. Zhang, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan; Y. Arata, Kinki University, Osaka, Japan</i>	
Wear Resistance of Non-Cobalt Containing Thermal Spray Coatings	611
<i>K. S. Fessenden, Pratt & Whitney, East Hartford, CT; C. V. Cooper, L. H. Farrow, A. P. Matarese, T. P. Slavin, United Technologies Research Center, East Hartford, CT</i>	

High Velocity Oxy-Fuel Spray Wear Resistant Coatings of TiC Composite Powders	617
<i>R. W. Smith, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA; E. Harzenski, T. Robisch, Alloy Technology, Inc., West Nyack, NY</i>	
Aluminum-Silicon/Polyester Abradable Coatings [Metco 601 vs. DJ4001]	625
<i>T. Chon, A. Aly, B. A. Kushner, A. J. Rotolico, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY; D. W. Parker, G. L. Kutner, General Plasma, E. Windsor, CT</i>	
Advanced Copper-Nickel Indium Coatings by HVOF Deposition	631
<i>E. R. Novinski, B. A. Kushner, A. J. Rotolico, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY; D. W. Parker, G. L. Kutner, General Plasma, E. Windsor, CT</i>	

HIGH TEMPERATURE CERAMIC SUPERCONDUCTORS

Plasma Spraying of Bi-Sr-Ca-Cu-O High Temperature Superconductors	635
<i>E. Lugscheider, T. Weber, Material Science Institute, RWTH Aachen, FRG</i>	
Properties of Plasma Sprayed YBa₂Cu₃O_x High Temperature Superconductors	641
<i>L. Pawlowski, A. Hill, R. McPherson, D. Garvie, Z. Przelozny, T. Finlayson, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia</i>	

AUTOMATION

Automation in the Thermal Spray Industry	647
<i>G. L. Kutner, General Plasma, Inc., East Windsor, CT</i>	
Robotic Arc Spray	651
<i>I. Hammad, Motoman, Inc., Dayton, OH</i>	
Automated Metal Spray Applications	655
<i>K. R. Abram, J. Bustamante, R. D. Etzenhouser, Allied Signal Aerospace Co., Phoenix, AZ</i>	

STATISTICAL METHODS IN THERMAL SPRAY

(Invited Paper) Optimizing Thermal Spray Processes - Going Beyond Taguchi Methods	
<i>Søren Bisgaard, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI</i>	
Taguchi Analysis of Thick Thermal Barrier Coatings	669
<i>J. E. Nerz, B. A. Kushner, A. J. Rotolico, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY</i>	
Role of Designed Experiments to Evaluate Factors that Influence Measured Properties of Sprayed Coatings	675
<i>R. P. Huston, United Technologies Research Center, East Hartford, CT</i>	
Taguchi Analysis of High Velocity Oxy-Fuel Sprayed Abradable Coatings	681
<i>T. Chon, A. Aly, B. A. Kushner, A. Rotolico, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY; W. L. Riggs, General Electric Co., Cincinnati, OH</i>	
Iterative Design of Experiments to Optimize Plasma Sprayed Chrome Carbide/Nickel Chromium	695
<i>F. Hermanek, Sulzer Plasma Technik, Inc., Troy, MI; W. L. Riggs, General Electric Co., Cincinnati, OH</i>	
Taguchi Experimental Design Study of Plasma and HVOF Chrome Carbide/Nickel Chromium	711
<i>W. L. Riggs, General Electric Co., Cincinnati, OH; R. K. Betts, Cincinnati Thermal Spray, Cincinnati, OH; N. Jayaraman, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH</i>	

Plasma Spray Coating Parameter Development	729
<i>J. Walter, Miller Thermal, Inc., Appleton, WI; W. L. Riggs, General Electric Co., Cincinnati, OH</i>	
Powder Quality Improvement Through the Use of Statistical Process Control	743
<i>J. D. Reardon, A. Dela Rose, A. M. Sobeck, Metco Division of Perkin Elmer, Westbury, NY</i>	

FEEDSTOCK MATERIALS

Plasma Spraying of Carbon-Coated TiC Powders in Air and Inert Atmosphere	747
<i>C. Moreau, S. Dallaire, National Research Council Canada, Boucherville, Québec, Canada</i>	
Microstructure and Properties of Plasma Sprayed Mo/NiCrBSi Coatings	755
<i>S. Sampath, V. Anand, GTE Products Corporation, Towanda, PA; S. F. Wayne, GTE Laboratories Inc., Waltham, MA</i>	
Synthesis and Deposition of TiC-Fe Coatings by Plasma Spraying	761
<i>G. S. Cliche, S. Dallaire, National Research Council of Canada, Boucherville, Québec, Ontario, Canada</i>	
Ni-5Al Coatings Produced by Powders from Different Suppliers	767
<i>J. Svantesson, J. Wigren, Volvo Flygmotor AB, Trollhättan, Sweden</i>	
The Influence of Atomization Process and Atomization Parameters on Metallic Powders and on Coating Properties	773
<i>P. A. Kammer, Eutectic Corporation, Flushing, NY; W. Simm, H. T. Steine, Castolin, S.A., Lausanne, Switzerland</i>	
The Chemical and Physical Properties of White Aluminum Oxide for Use in Thermal Spray Coatings	787
<i>L. A. Wolfe, G. M. Herterick, Abrasive Industries Inc., Westborough, MA</i>	

A NEW LOOK AT THE THERMAL AND GAS DYNAMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A PLASMA JET

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Abstract

There is increasing evidence that reproducibility of the plasma spray process depends to a large degree on the reproducibility of the plasma jet which is utilized for spraying. Recent research using a broad range of diagnostic techniques, including LDA, electric and acoustic probing, spectroscopy, and enthalpy probes, has greatly enhanced our present understanding of the thermal and fluid dynamic characteristics of plasma jets. Experimental results strongly imply that the entrainment mechanism in turbulent plasma jets is more of an engulfment type process as opposed to simple diffusion. Turbulence measurements indicate that the velocity fluctuations are non-isotropic, contrary to what has been assumed in most numerical work. Measurements of electric, acoustic, and light fluctuations demonstrate that there are correlations between some of these fluctuations and that turbulence in the plasma jet may be strongly affected by fluctuations in the torch nozzle. Temperature measurements using spectrometric and enthalpy probes indicate strong discrepancies, particularly in the jet fringes.

THE INABILITY TO REPRODUCE PLASMA JETS, due to lack of understanding of the physics [1], is a major source of inefficiency in the plasma spray industry today. For example, rejected plasma sprayed turbine blades, due to inadequate parameter control, result in high economic

losses. For this reason, a better understanding of the fundamental characteristics of the plasma spray process such as: substrate material properties, particle-plasma interaction, plasma torch operation, etc. are essential. This paper concentrates on recent research pertaining to plume properties of plasma torches.

Significant gains into the understanding of the flow structure and thermal properties of plasma torches has been made over the last several years by research performed in the High Temperature Laboratory of the University of Minnesota. In this paper, recent results obtained by a wide range of diagnostic techniques (Laser Doppler Anemometry, Emission Spectroscopy, Enthalpy Probes, Spectral Analysis and Numerical Modeling) will be discussed. When the information obtained by these individual techniques is combined, it significantly adds to our understanding of plasma plumes and their interaction with the external air environment.

Recently spectral analysis has been introduced for analyzing the dominant frequencies of the internal voltage fluctuations in a plasma torch and for determining both temperature and pressure fluctuation frequencies in the plasma jet. Autocorrelation can be used to calculate the periodicity in time of an individual parameter while cross-correlation between signals can determine their inter-dependence or common relationship. This paper is thought to represent the first use of a spectral analyzer as a diagnostic tool for D.C. plasma torches.

I. FLUID DYNAMICS OF PLASMA JETS

VELOCITY MEASUREMENTS - Mean velocity and turbulence intensity measurements were

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made using a single velocity component argon ion Laser Doppler Anemometry system operating in the forward scattering mode [2, 3]. Unless otherwise noted, the operating conditions for all runs discussed in this paper were as follows: total gas flow rate (Argon) = 23.6 liters/min (50 SCFH), torch current and voltage, $I = 450$ A and $V = 24$ V, respectively.

The development of the mean plasma velocities are shown in Fig. 1 which reveals that a plasma jet is qualitatively similar to isothermal jets [4]. Note the steep mean velocity gradients measured at the edge of the nozzle exit. This is where turbulence energy is generated and thus the whole entrainment process initiates. The velocity profiles further downstream show the obvious spreading of the jet and leveling off of the velocity.

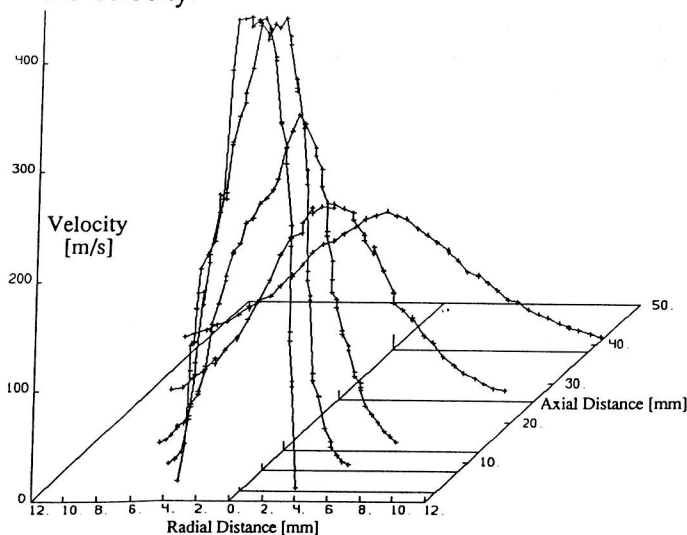


Figure 1 Mean Axial Velocity of a Plasma Jet

TURBULENCE MEASUREMENTS -The amount of turbulence not only dictates the quantity of air entrained into the jet and thus the volume of useful plasma, but it also affects heat transfer rates to particles traveling through the jet. Turbulence in this case is defined as the ratio of the standard deviation of the individual velocity measurements for a given data point (also known as fluctuating velocity) divided by the maximum centerline mean velocity for a given axial distance downstream.

The development of turbulence in a plasma jet is shown in Fig. 2 which reveals a rapid increase in axial velocity fluctuations at the edge of the jet due to the mixing and entrainment of external air. The initial rise of turbulence at the edge of the jet and the progression of the maximum turbulence towards the centerline are likewise characteristic of both combustion and isothermal jets [4,5].

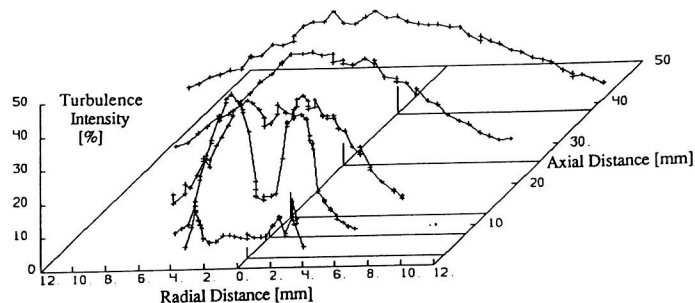


Figure 2 Turbulence Intensity of a Plasma Jet

Experimental and numerical centerline mean velocity and experimental turbulence intensity have been plotted together in Fig. 3. Note the sharp increase in turbulence and dramatic drop in axial velocity starting at $z=8$ mm. This corresponds to the point where eddies of entrained air from the surrounding fluid have finally reached the centerline of the jet. The stretching of the plasma gas eddies as they flow over the slower cold eddies, is thought to be the main reason for the large increase in axial velocity fluctuations in the transition region of the jet. The low turbulence level in the exiting plasma jet exists because the central portion is still in the potential core region of the jet and the increased viscosity, due to the high temperature, relaminarizes the flow.

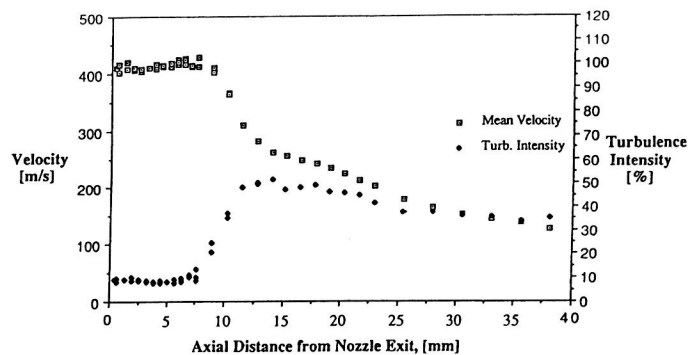


Figure 3 Centerline Mean Velocity and Turbulence Intensity

A finite-difference parabolic numerical code using a $K-\epsilon$ turbulence model was developed for comparisons with the experimental results [6]. Fig. 4, illustrates the centerline numerical and experimental mean velocities revealing dissimilarities in the initial nozzle exit region of the plasma jet. This discrepancy is most likely due to the measured particles still weakly accelerated in this region. The particles have not yet attained the true gas velocity which is probably more closely represented by the numerically calculated values.

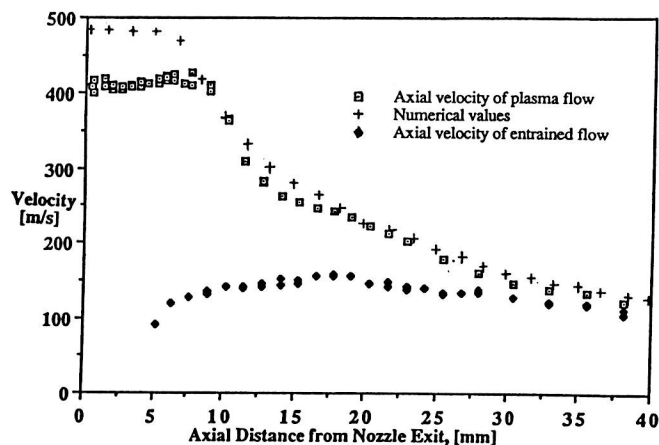


Figure 4 Comparison of Plasma Jet and Entrained Fluid Velocity on Centerline

CONCENTRATION MEASUREMENTS - Experimentally determined argon concentrations shown in Fig. 5 were derived from samples taken with an enthalpy probe [7]. The experimental results, which are only available from $z=20\text{mm}$ and farther downstream, show a large drop in centerline concentration between the 25mm to 35mm profiles indicating the end of the potential core. By 30 mm downstream the jet consists of only 50% argon on the centerline and overall the jet is probably less than one-third argon. Increasing the mass flow from 23.6 to 35.4 l/min, argon concentrations were significantly reduced for the same locations while a further jump in mass flow did not generate nearly as large an effect. This seems to indicate a transition in flow from laminar at 23.6 l/min to turbulent at 35.4 l/min.

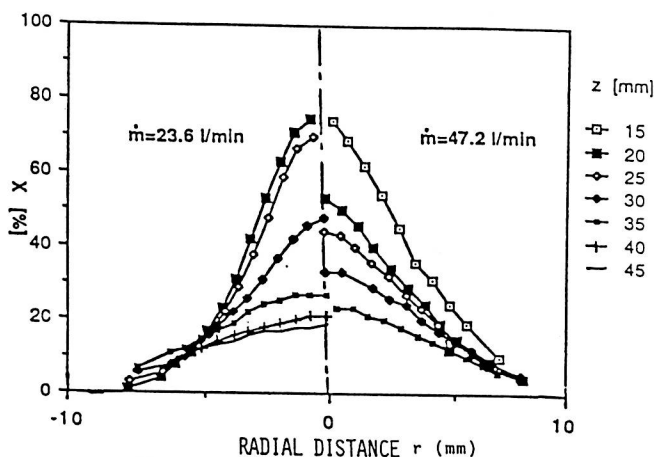


Figure 5 Argon Concentration Profiles: I=450 A

As shown in Ref. [7] air entrainment is reduced for higher arc currents. As more power is dissipated inside the torch, the temperature of the jet increases and likewise the molecular viscosity increases. The flow thus remains

laminar longer causing both mixing and turbulence levels to decrease. Since the higher arc currents increase the power and temperature of the jet, the density decreases and mixing is reduced. If the mass flow rate of the main gas is increased, it increases the swirl of the torch and reduces the plasma temperature leading to a greater effect on entrainment than current variation. The air which is entrained has a higher specific heat than argon resulting in lower temperature for the same energy content.

CONDITIONAL SAMPLING - In this case, velocity measurements are taken conditionally on the origin of the fluid. These conditional velocity measurements (obtained by alternately seeding only the plasma jet or the entrained air) provide a gauge of the "degree of mixing" in the plasma jet along with giving insight into the intermittency and entrainment processes of the jet. This seeding technique enables one to conveniently mark the fluid originating from the plasma jet and from the surrounding environment while the resulting conditional velocity statistics reveals considerable information about the details of the interaction between the two flows at the small-scale level [4, 5]. Differences in the conditional quantities are attributable to the presence of larger-scale eddies in the flow field.

The axial plot, Fig. 4, shows that for $z \leq 30$ mm fluid from the plasma jet has a much higher mean velocity than the entrained air which has reached the centerline. At $z=5$ mm, the first centerline location at which both conditional measurements could be taken, the velocity difference between eddies of the two flows is a remarkable 300 m/sec. Entrained air does not mix well with the plasma gas initially but instead travels with a much slower mean velocity than the plasma, thus forcing plasma gas to flow around it. Radial plots indicate that velocity discrepancies between the two flows prevail outward almost to the edge of the jet. By $z=30$ mm, the mean velocities of both flows have come together indicating an equilibrium in the momentum of the two flows but not necessarily a homogeneous (well mixed) fluid. All of this evidence seems to indicate that the more classical belief of entrainment and mixing by stochastic small-scale eddies is not a realistic picture of the transport mechanisms in a turbulent plasma jet. These findings have been recently confirmed by CARS measurements at INEL [8].

By plotting the plasma gas and entrained air axial velocity fluctuations in Fig. 6, it is