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N₂ SELF-SHIELDING IN THE SOLAR NEBULA: AN UPDATE

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Introduction: The N₂ molecule is isoelectronic to CO, and exhibits a similar band system to CO in the VUV. The resolved rovibronic structure and very strong bands make N₂ a plausible candidate for self-shielding, even though it is an order of magnitude less abundant than CO in a gas of solar composition. The discovery of very large ¹⁵N enrichment in lithic clasts in carbonaceous chondrites (e.g., [1–5]), in micrometeorites [6], and in comets [7] could be due to either low temperature ion-molecule chemistry that leads to NH₃ formation [8] or to N₂ self-shielding. Nitrogen isotopes in the solar system may also be enriched in ¹⁵N as a result of N₂ self-shielding [9].

Previous Modeling: A preliminary assessment of N₂ self-shielding in the outer nebula [10, 11] suggests that although self-shielding does occur, it produces substantial ¹⁵N enrichment in only a very small fraction of nebular material at 30 AU ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$ is about +800‰ in <1 ppm of total N, [11]). Also, the total enrichment in self-shielding product nitrogen (as HCN) is about +100‰ over $\sim 10^6$ yr at 30 AU. This enrichment may not be large enough to distinguish Jupiter, with $\delta^{15}\text{N} = -380 \pm 80\%$ [12], from the Sun, which has solar wind with $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ is about $-450 \pm 100\%$ [13].

Modeling in Progress: The preliminary model ([10, 11]) used a reduced set of nitrogen reactions, and used an N₂ shielding function inferred from a Titan atmosphere photochemical model [14], with mean N₂ cross section representative of the 91–100 nm range applicable to the solar nebula. Present modeling includes (1) a more complete set of nitrogen reactions, and (2) a full integration over 911–100 nm of N₂ dissociation in the presence of H₂ absorption. The ²⁸N₂ and ²⁹N₂ cross sections are from a coupled-channel model description of measured N₂ cross sections, and were provided by A. Haeyns and B. Lewis at ANU. These calculations are in progress.

Implications: As I pointed at the 2010 LPSC, the preliminary model results on nebular N₂ self-shielding have implications for CO self-shielding in the outer solar system. One criticism of outer solar nebula CO self-shielding has been that Jupiter would become more enriched in ¹⁵N due to N₂ self-shielding than is observed [12]. However, with present uncertainties, a $\sim 100\%$ increase in outer nebular $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ is not enough to rule out the occurrence of N₂ (and CO) self-shielding. Reduced uncertainties on solar wind $\delta^{15}\text{N}$, as well as a quantitative assessment of fractionation during solar wind acceleration, could influence this conclusion.

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DISCOVERY OF Cl-BEARING MAYENITE, Ca₁₂Al₁₄O₃₂Cl₂, A NEW MINERAL IN A CV3 METEORITE

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Introduction: A unique dmitryivanovite (CaAl₂O₄)-dominant Ca-, Al-rich refractory inclusion (CAI), named “Cracked Egg” by [1], was observed in the NWA 1934 CV3 carbonaceous chondrite. During our nano-mineralogy investigation of this CAI, Cl-bearing mayenite, Ca₁₂Al₁₄O₃₂Cl₂, was identified. Electron-microprobe, SEM, electron backscatter diffraction (EBSD), and micro-Raman analyses have been used to characterize its composition and structure. Pyrometamorphic and natural Cl-bearing mayenites have been reported [2, 3] and synthetic Ca₁₂Al₁₄O₃₂Cl₂ is well known [4]. Here, we report the first occurrence of Ca₁₂Al₁₄O₃₂Cl₂ in a meteorite as a new alteration mineral in a CAI.

Occurrence, Chemistry, and Crystallography: Cl-bearing mayenite occurs as small (80–300 nm) crystals forming fine-grained aggregates (1–20 μm in size) along with Zn-bearing hercynite, gehlenite and perovskite in veins and inclusions within the dmitryivanovite-dominant CAI. The mean chemical composition is (wt%) Al₂O₃ 48.48, CaO 45.73, Cl 5.12, FeO 0.80, Na₂O 0.12, TiO₂ 0.03, O -1.16, sum 99.12. An empirical formula calculated on the basis of 34 O + Cl atoms is (Ca_{11.95}Na_{0.06})Σ11.99 (Al_{13.91}Fe_{0.16}Ti_{0.01})Σ14.08O_{31.94}Cl_{2.11}.

Synthetic Ca₁₂Al₁₄O₃₂Cl₂ has a cubic structure with a Ca-Al-O framework forming “cages” in which the Cl is located [4]. The meteoritic Cl-bearing mayenite showed no electron backscatter diffraction pattern, due to small crystal sizes and, probably, poorly ordered structures but Raman microanalysis revealed a spectrum very close to that of synthetic Ca₁₂Al₁₄O₃₂Cl₂, confirming that the meteoritic phase has a similar structure.

Origin and Significance: Cl-bearing mayenite is not only a new meteoritic Ca-, Al-phase, but also a new Cl-rich phase, joining the Cl-rich meteoritic minerals sodalite (Na₄Al₃Si₃O₁₂Cl) and wadalite (Ca₆Al₅Si₂O₁₆Cl₃). Cl-bearing mayenite is a secondary alteration phase in “Cracked Egg”. A simple scenario for its formation would be the parent body breakdown of dmitryivanovite in a Cl-, Fe-rich vapor or fluid to produce Cl-bearing mayenite and hercynite, although we have not yet ruled out the possibility that Cl-bearing mayenite formed during terrestrial alteration or that preterrestrial Cl-free mayenite was later chlorinated. Multiple-alteration events seem to have occurred in this CAI.

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