Features of the crystallization of AlCl₃·6H₂O in the system AlCl₃ – MeClₓ – HCl – H₂O

¹Dosmukhamedov N.K., ¹Zholdsabay E.E., ¹Kaplan V.A., ¹Daruesh G.S., ¹Argyn A.A.

¹ Satbayev University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
² Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel

ABSTRACT
A laboratory setup has been developed to study the regularities of crystallization of aluminium chloride hexahydrate from hydrochloric acid solutions. The influence of the AlCl₃ content in the initial solution, the consumption of gaseous HCl, and the behavior of impurities on the crystallization of AlCl₃·6H₂O from aluminium chloride solutions of leaching cinder obtained as a result of chlorinating ash burning from thermal power plants in Kazakhstan have been studied. The behavior of impurity metals in the process of crystallization of aluminium chloride solution has been studied, and their distribution between the products of the crystallization process has been established. It is shown that aluminium chloride content in the solution decreases with an increase in the consumption of hydrochloric acid. It was found that under the conditions of crystallization of AlCl₃·6H₂O, all impurities, except for barium, pass by 98% into the mother liquor. To reduce barium and other impurities in the obtained crystals of AlCl₃·6H₂O, it is proposed to carry out multiple washing of the crystals with hydrochloric acid (32% HCl). It has been shown that a decrease in the acidity of the washing solution from pH = 10 to pH = 5.5 ensures the isolation of ACH crystals with a minimum content of impurity metals, ppm: 3-5 Ca; 3-6 Fe; 1-3 Mg; 0.1-0.5 Ti; 1-3 Na; 20-30 P₂O₅. The moisture content of the obtained crystals is 4-5%; the particle size is 400-900 microns. As a result of mathematical processing, regression equations were constructed that adequately predict aluminium chloride content in the solution and its extraction into crystalline hydrate, depending on the consumption of hydrochloric acid. The optimal parameters of the crystallization process have been established: T = 60 °C, HCl concentration in the solution - 26-30%, HCl gas consumption = 0.5 l/min, duration 1 hour.

Keywords: crystallization, aluminium chloride hexahydrate, solution, hydrochloric acid, impurities, washing, acidity, extraction.

Introduction
The selective precipitation (salting out) of aluminium chloride hexahydrate (ACH) from aluminium-containing solutions with hydrochloric acid are based on the different degrees of solubility of compounds in the acid. Many works are devoted to studying the crystallization of aluminium chloride from hydrochloric acid solution [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]).

It was shown in [1], [2]) that with an increase in HCl concentration, the solubility of aluminium and chromium chlorides in the systems AlCl₃-HCl-H₂O and AlCl₃-NaCl-H₂O(HCl) decreases. Detailed studies on the solubility of iron chloride in aqueous solutions were carried out in [3]. The authors found that the solubility of iron chloride in the system AlCl₃ + FeCl₃ + H₂O at 298.15 K increases with an increase in the content of iron chloride in the solution. This trend was observed in studies of a complex multicomponent system AlCl₃-
FeCl₃-MgCl₂-CaCl₂-KCl-NaCl-HCl-H₂O carried out by the authors of [5].

In the crystallization of ACH (AlCl₃·6H₂O) was carried out with gaseous hydrogen chloride (HCl) obtained as a result of the interaction of NaCl with concentrated (94%) sulfuric acid according to the reaction: H₂SO₄ + 2NaCl = 2HCl↑ + Na₂SO₄ [7]. The authors found that within 15 minutes of the crystallization process, the solution is saturated with HCl vapours, then the first crystals of ACH appear. After 30 minutes of the beginning of the experiment, the authors observed a sharp increase in the number of crystals in the solution. After an hour, the formation of crystals slowed down and practically stopped. The authors’ data obtained from studying the effect of temperature on the crystallization of ACH has a great interest. It was found that with an increase in the temperature of the process, the content of the main impurities decreases sharply: chromium by 3.5 times, iron by 2.1 times. The content of Mg and Na is almost halved; the proportion of other impurities does not exceed 10%.

An important aspect of the ACH crystallization process is washing the crystals obtained from the residues of the hydrochloric acid solution. The results of works [6], [7] on the study of washing aluminium chloride hexahydrate with hydrochloric acid of various concentrations (20, 25, 30, 35.5%) showed good agreement with each other. In experiments with an acid concentration of up to 30%, partial dissolution of the obtained crystals was observed. When using a more concentrated acid (> 30%), the moisture content of the crystals was 25%. As an alternative, an organic reagent, acetone, was chosen, using which the reverse dissolution of ACH was not observed. Humidity was in the range of 3.5-4.5%.

To optimize the crystallization process, it is necessary to have information about the influence of various factors [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]), which include four parameters that are important for controlling the crystallization of ACH: (1) - the concentration of aluminium chloride in the initial solution for crystallization, (2) - the consumption of gaseous chloride hydrogen, (3) - temperature and (4) - concentration of impurities in the initial solution. Parameters (1), (2) and (3) have a strong influence on the formation of crystals. The crystallization temperature below 60 °C reduces the purity of the crystals, and its increase does not significantly affect the growth of ACH crystals. Nevertheless, the result of parameter (4), the combined effects are also significant since some impurities, in particular phosphorus and magnesium, are concentrated in crystals at the early stages of crystal growth.

The analysis of the results of published works shows the fundamental possibility of crystallising ACH from hydrochloric acid solution with further alumina production by its thermal decomposition. Comparative analysis of the effects of well-known studies, both in terms of the mechanism of the crystallisation processes of ACH and in terms of optimal parameters, shows good agreement with each other. Minor deviations in the quality of the obtained products can be explained by the presence of impurities in the initial solutions and various equipment and techniques for their implementation.

The purpose of this work is to study the effect of the AlCl₃ content in the initial solution, the consumption of gaseous HCl, and the behavior of impurities on the crystallization of AlCl₃·6H₂O from aluminium-containing salt solutions obtained after leaching the cinder of chlorinating ash roasting from thermal power plants in Kazakhstan [13], [14].

**Research methods**

To study the crystallization process, synthetic solutions were used with the following composition: AlCl₃ - 11-15%, CaCl₂ - 12-16%, TiCl₄ - 0.2-0.3%, HCl - 3-5% and others typical for solutions obtained after leaching the cinder with hydrochloric acid and their filtration. The density of solutions is 1.25-1.29 g/cm³.

The experimental technique was as follows. A crystallizer vessel was charged with 1 l of an aluminium chloride solution obtained after leaching and filtration. The concentration of aluminium chloride in the solution varied from 10 to 15%. After pouring the solution into the crystallizer, the solution was stirred at a stirrer speed of 250 rpm. The process temperature was maintained at 60 °C. Next, hydrogen chloride gas was fed into the crystallizer at a 0.5 l/min until its concentration reached 26%. The total duration of the process was 1 hour. The obtained crystals of aluminium chloride was separated from the mother liquor by filtration and washed with 26% HCl solution. Then the crystals were dried at a temperature of 80-100 °C.

The mother liquors were sent for the extraction of non-ferrous metals containing rare-earth metals from them. The products obtained in the process of crystallization - crystals of aluminium chloride, mother liquors and solutions after washing the crystals with ACH, were subjected to elemental analysis for the content of aluminium, non-ferrous, rare-earth metals, as well as impurities - phosphorus, iron, sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, titanium, barium, etc.
**Results and discussion**

A schematic diagram of a laboratory setup for crystallizing aluminium chloride from a solution is shown in Fig. 1.

In crystallization, two products were obtained - mother liquor and crystals of ACH (AlCl₃·6H₂O).

The mother liquor composition obtained during the crystallization of ACH from an aluminium chloride solution is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Composition of mother liquor obtained during crystallization**

| Components | Composition | g/l | %  |
|------------|-------------|-----|----|
| CaCl₂      | 527.21      | 40.55|
| AlCl₃      | 11.32       | 0.87 |
| FeCl₃      | 37.22       | 2.86 |
| MgCl₂      | 31.48       | 2.42 |
| TiCl₄      | 2.37        | 0.18 |
| KCl        | 0.42        | 0.03 |
| NaCl       | 5.65        | 0.43 |
| H₂O        | 85.25       | 6.82 |
| O₂         | 611.88      | 48.95|
| Cu         | 0.013       | 10.25 ppm |
| Ni         | 0.167       | 128.8 ppm |

The consumption of hydrochloric acid determines the yield of ACH crystals. The dependence of the aluminium chloride content in the solution on the increase in the concentration of HCl, constructed from the results of the experiments (Fig. 2), shows a close relationship between these values. The content of aluminium chloride in the solution decreases with an increase in the concentration of hydrochloric acid in the solution.

The obtained results of experimental studies were subjected to mathematical processing with the data of work [5], obtained in similar conditions of the crystallization process. As a result of mathematical processing, a regression equation was obtained that predicts the content of aluminium chloride in solution (y) depending on the concentration of HCl in solution (x), which has the following form:

\[ y = 23.162 - 0.675x, \quad r = 0.83 \] (1)
Based on the experimental data on the change in the content of aluminium chloride in the solution depending on the concentration of HCl (Fig. 2), the extraction of aluminium from the solution during crystallization was calculated for each experiment. A graphical representation of the dependence of the extraction of aluminium from the solution on the HCl concentration is shown in Fig. 3.

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3** - Dependence of the extraction of aluminium from the solution on the concentration of HCl in the solution

The extraction of aluminium from the solution increases with an increase in the consumption of hydrochloric acid during crystallization. The highest extraction of aluminium from the solution (~ 95%) is achieved when the HCl concentration in the solution is 32%.

As a result of the mathematical processing of the experimental data shown in Fig. 3 (total array of 21 experiments), a regression equation was constructed, making it possible to predict the extraction of aluminium from the solution depending on the concentration of HCl.

The resulting equation has the following form:

\[ \xi = -80.379 + 17.939 \times [\text{HCl}], \quad r = 0.78 \] (2)

where:
- \( \xi \) - extraction of aluminium from solution, %;
- \([\text{HCl}]\) - concentration of hydrochloric acid in solution, %;
- \( r \) - the correlation coefficient.

Table 2 – Distribution of metal impurities between products during crystallization of ACH

| Components | Metal distribution, % |
|------------|-----------------------|
|            | In mother liquor | Into the solution after washing | Into ACH crystals |
| Al         | 2                  | 3                              | 95                 |
| Ca         | 92                 | 7                              | 1                  |
| Mg         | 91                 | 6                              | 3                  |
| Fe         | 92                 | 7                              | 1                  |
| Ti         | 90                 | 9                              | 1                  |
| Na         | 91                 | 7                              | 2                  |
| P2O5       | 89                 | 8                              | 3                  |
| Ba         | 15                 | 6                              | 79                 |
| Cu         | 97                 | 3                              | –                  |
| Zn         | 99                 | 1                              | –                  |
| Ni         | 98                 | 2                              | –                  |
| Sc         | 97                 | 3                              | –                  |
| Y          | 97                 | 3                              | –                  |

It was found that all metal impurities, except for barium, almost wholly pass into the mother liquor. In solutions after washing with hydrochloric acid, their concentrations are insignificant.

The effect of the solution's acidity on its barium content is shown in Fig. 4.

As shown in Fig. 4, an increase in the concentration of hydrochloric acid up to 20% does
not affect the barium content in the mother liquor: the barium concentration in the solution remains practically constant ~ 0.55 g/l. An increase in the concentration of hydrochloric acid over 20% leads to a sharp decrease in the barium content. When the concentration of hydrochloric acid in the solution is 26%, the barium content in the solution reaches its minimum equal to 0.1 g/l.

Several impurity metals, even insignificant (except for barium), are concentrated in the obtained crystals of AlCl₃·6H₂O (Table 2). To increase the purity of the obtained crystals, they were subjected to multiple washing with HCl solution (31%), the main meaning was as follows. An initial sample of AlCl₃·6H₂O crystals in 200 g was mixed with 400 ml of 30% HCl solution and washed at room temperature. The stirring time was 20 minutes. After a specified time, the resulting mixture was filtered. The solution was used to wash the next set of crystals. The solution and washed crystals were analyzed for the content of aluminium, iron, calcium, and metal impurities. The operation was repeated five times.

The results of analyses of the solutions obtained after each washing of the AlCl₃·6H₂O crystals with hydrochloric acid are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3 – Compositions of solutions obtained after each wash**

| Washing | AlCl₃, g/l | CaCl₂, g/l | Acidity, pH |
|---------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Initial solution | - | - | 10.1 |
| 1 | 40 | 6 | 9.0 |
| 2 | 75 | 10 | 7.8 |
| 3 | 100 | 18 | 7.0 |
| 4 | 130 | 23 | 5.9 |
| 5 | 170 | 23 | 5.5 |

It was found that repeated washing of crystals with a solution of used hydrochloric acid leads to a decrease in the acidity of the washing solution from 10 to 5.5. As a result, partial dissolution of ACH crystals in washing acid with a significant transition of aluminium and calcium into the solution is observed, which is seen in the graphical dependence shown in fig. 5.

The final melt obtained after five times washing of the ACH crystals is sent to the cinder leaching. The compositions of the crystals obtained after each washing with hydrochloric acid are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 – Compositions of the obtained crystals of AlCl₃·6H₂O**

| Washing | Content of metal impurities, ppm |
|---------|---------------------------------|
|         | Ca | Fe | Mg | Si | Ti | Na |
| 1       | 6.5 | 6.2 | 2.0 | 45 | 0.1 | 1.0 |
| 2       | 6.0 | 5.0 | 1.8 | 2.0 | n.d. | 1.0 |
| 3       | 5.0 | 3.5 | 1.7 | n.d. | n.d. | 0.7 |
| 4       | 5.3 | 3.8 | 2.1 | n.d. | n.d. | 0.7 |
| 5       | 4.2 | 2.8 | 2.0 | n.d. | n.d. | 0.5 |
| n.d. – not defined |

The final average composition of AlCl₃·6H₂O crystals obtained after repeated washing with hydrochloric acid contained, ppm: 3-5 Ca, 3-6 Fe, 1-3 Mg, 0.1-0.5 Ti, 1-3 Na, 20-30 P₂O₅. The moisture content of the crystals is 4-5%; the particle size is 400-900 microns.

Based on the carried-out studies and the obtained results, the following optimal parameters for the crystallization of ACH from an aluminium chloride solution were selected:

– crystallization temperature of ACH with gaseous HCl – 60 ºC;
– HCl gas consumption – 0.5 l/min;
– concentration of HCl in solution – 26-30 %;
– process duration – 60 min;
– ACH crystal washing – repeatable, with hydrochloric acid (32% HCl).

The crystals of ACH obtained after the crystallization process are sent to a further operation of its thermal decomposition to alumina suitable to produce commercial aluminium.
Conclusions

1. It is shown that it is possible to obtain ACH crystals (AlCl₃·6H₂O) from aluminium chloride solutions in one stage. The behavior of impurity metals during the crystallization of an aluminium chloride solution has been studied. The distribution of metal impurities between the products of the crystallization process has been established. It was shown that all metal impurities, except barium, pass into the mother liquor during crystallization up to 98%.

2. It was found that repeated washing of ACH crystals with a solution of hydrochloric acid (32% HCl) increases the extraction of aluminium from the solution into crystals up to 96%. It has been shown that a decrease in the acidity of the washing solution from pH = 10 to pH = 5.5 ensures the generation of ACH crystals with a minimum content of impurity metals, ppm: 3-5 Ca; 3-6 Fe; 1-3 Mg; 0.1-0.5 Ti; 1-3 Na; 20-30 P₂O₅. The moisture content of the crystals obtained is 4-5%, and the particle size is 400-900 microns. The recovery of ACH from the solution was 95%.

3. The optimal parameters of the crystallization process of aluminium chloride hexahydrate have been determined: T = 60 ºС, HCl concentration in solution - 26-30%, HCl gas consumption = 0.5 l/min, duration 1 hour.

Conflict of interests. On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements. The research was carried out within the framework of grant funding of the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2021-2023 in the priority area «Geology, mining and processing of mineral and hydrocarbon raw materials, new materials, technologies, safe products and structures» project No. AP09259637 "Development of highly efficient non-waste combined technology for utilization of ash from coal combustion with the production of marketable products".

Cite this article as: Dosmukhamedov NK, Zholdasbay EE, Kaplan VA, Daruesh GS, Argyn AA. Features of the crystallization of AlCl₃·6H₂O in the system AlCl₃ – MeClₓ – HCl – H₂O. Kompleksnoe Ispol'zovanie Mineral'nogo Syr'a = Complex Use of Mineral Resources. 2022;320(1):95-102. https://doi.org/10.31643/2022/6445.11

AlCl₃ – MeClₓ – HCl – H₂O жұйесіндегі AlCl₃·6H₂O кристалдану ерекшеліктері

Досмұхамедов Н.К., Жұлдошбай Е.Е., Каплан В.А., Дауреш Г.С., Арғын А.Ә.

1 Сатбаев университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан
2 Вейцман ғылыми институт, Реховот, Израиль
Особенности кристаллизации AlCl₃·6H₂O в системе AlCl₃ – MeClₓ – HCl – H₂O

Досмухамедов Н.К., Жолдасбай Е.Е., Каплан В.А., Даруеш Г.С., Арьгын А.А.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Разработана лабораторная установка для исследования закономерностей кристаллизации гексагидрата хлорида алюминия из соляно-кислых растворов. Изучено влияние содержания AlCl₃ в исходном растворе, расхода газообразного HCl и поведения примесей на кристаллизацию \( \text{AlCl}_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O} \) из алюминийсодержащих соляных растворов выщелачивания огарка, полученного в процессе кристаллизации раствора хлорида алюминия и установлено их распределение между продуктами процесса кристаллизации. Показано, что содержание хлорида алюминия в растворе снижается с увеличением расхода соляной кислоты. Установлено, что в условиях кристаллизации \( \text{AlCl}_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O} \) все примеси, за исключением бария, на 98 % переходят в маточный раствор. Для снижения бария и других примесей в получаемых кристаллах \( \text{AlCl}_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O} \) предложено проведение многоразовой промывки кристаллов соляной кислотой с рН=10 до рН=5,5 обеспечивает выделение кристаллов ГХА с минимальным содержанием металлов-примесей, ppm: 3-5 Ca; 3-6 Fe; 1-3 Mg; 0-1-0,5 Ti; 1-3 Na; 20-30 P₂O₅. Влажность полученных кристаллов составляет 4-5 %, крупиность - 400-900 микрон. В результате математической обработки построены уравнения регрессии, адекватно прогнозирующие содержание хлорида алюминия в растворе и его извлечение в кристаллогидрат в зависимости от расхода соляной кислоты. Установлены оптимальные параметры процесса кристаллизации: T=60 °C, концентрация HCl в растворе – 26-30 %, расход газа HCl=0,5 л/мин, продолжительность, t=1 ч.

Ключевые слова: кристаллизация, гексагидрат хлорида алюминия, раствор, соляная кислота, примеси, промывка, кислотность, извлечение.
I. Разделение хлоридов алюминия и железа методом высыхивания
A. Vompe TS

2-2

2-2

ov. Chast’ 1. Kinetika processa
Pak VI, Kirov SS, Mamzurina OI, Nalivajko AJU. Izuchenie...

Phase equilibrium study of the AlCl3 – NaCl – H2O – (HCl) saltwater system at 353.15 K. Crystals. 2017;7(8):244. https://doi.org/10.3390/cryst7080244

3-3

2

2

ov. Chast’ 1. Kinetika processa
Pak VI, Kirov SS, Mamzurina OI, Nalivajko AJU. Izuchenie...

Phase equilibrium study of the AlCl3 – NaCl – H2O – (HCl) saltwater system at 353.15 K. Crystals. 2017;7(8):244. https://doi.org/10.3390/cryst7080244

Reference

1. Guo Y, Yang X, Cui H, Cheng F, Yang F. Crystallization behavior of AlCl3·6H2O in hydrochloric system. Huagong Xuebao CIESC Journal. 2014;65(10):3960–3967.

2. Cheng H, Zhang I, Lv H, Guo Y, Cheng W. et al. Separating NaCl and AlCl3·6H2O crystals from acidic solution assisted by the non-equilibrium phase diagram of AlCl3 – NaCl – H2O – (HCl) saltwater system at 353.15 K. Crystals. 2017;7(8):244. https://doi.org/10.3390/cryst7080244

3. Sererbrennikova MT. Izuchenie rastvorimosti v sistemah CrCl3·NaCl·H2O i Cr(NO3)3·NaNO2·H2O [Study of solubility in CrCl3·NaCl·H2O and Cr(NO3)3·NaNO2·H2O systems]. Zhurnal prikladnoj himii = Journal of Applied Chemistry. 1959;32(2):291-297. (In Russ.).

4. Yuan M, Qiao X, Yu J. Phase equilibria of AlCl3 + FeCl3 + H2O, AlCl3 + CaCl2 + H2O and FeCl3 + CaCl2 + H2O at 298.15 K. Journal of Chemical and Engineering Data. 2016;61(5):1749–1755.

5. Brown RR, Daut GE, Mrazek RV, Gokcen NA. Solubility and activity of aluminum chloride in aqueous hydrochloric acid solutions. Bureau of Mines Report of Investigation. 1979. No. 8379. 17 p.

6. Maysilles JH, Traut DE, Sawyer DL. Jr. Aluminum chloride hexahydrate crystallization by HCl gas sparging. Bureau of Mines Report of Investigation. 1982. No. 8590. 38 p.

7. Valeev DV, Lajner JuA, Vompe TS, Pak VI. Razdenlenie hloridov aljuminija i zheleza metodom vysalivanija [Separation of aluminum and iron chlorides by salting]. Izvestija Samarskogo nauchnogo centra Rossiijskoj akademii nauk = Proceedings of the Samara Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. 2014;16(4(3)):512-515. (In Russ.).

8. Balmave BG, Tuzhilin AS, Kirov SS, Shebalkova AJU. Matematicheskoe modelirovanie i optimizacija processa poluchenija gidroksohlorida aljuminija [Mathematical modeling and optimization of the process of obtaining aluminum hydroxochloride]. Tsvetnyye metally = Non-ferrous metals. 2017;3:57–62. (In Russ.).

9. Lima PA, Angélica R, Neves R. Dissolution kinetics of Amazonian metakaolin in hydrochloric acid. Clay Minerals. 2017;1:75–82. https://doi.org/10.1180/claymin.2017.052.1.05

10. Pak VI, Kirov SS, Mamzurina OI, Nalivajko AJU. Izuchenie zakonomernostej kristallizacii geksagidrata hlorida aljuminija iz soljanokislyh rastvorov. Chast’ 1. Kinetika processa [Study of the regularities of crystallization of aluminum chloride hexahydrate from hydrochloric acid solutions. Part 1. Kinetics of the process]. Tsvetnyye metally = Non-ferrous metals. 2020;1:47–53. (In Russ.).

11. Wang J, Petit C, Zhang X, Cui S. Phase equilibrium study of the AlCl3 + CaCl2 + H2O system for the production of aluminum chloride hexahydrate from Ca-Rich Flue Ash. Journal of Chemical and Engineering Data. 2016;61(1):359–369.

12. Dosmukhamedov NK, Zholdasbay EE, Daruesh GS, Argyн AA, Kurmanseitov MB. Study of the mechanism of pre-burned ash leaching by hydrochloric acid. Kompleksnoe ispol’zovanie Mineral’nogo Syr’ia = Complex Use of Mineral Resources. 2021;319(4):72-80. https://doi.org/10.31643/2021/6445.43

13. Dosmuhamedov NK, Kaplan VA, Zholdasbay EE, Daruesh GS, Argyн AA. Vydelenie zheleza v zhelezoosoderzhashhij produkt iz zoly ot shizhania Jekibastuzskih ugley [Isolation of iron into an iron-containing product from ash from the burning of Ekibastuz coals]. Ugol’ = Coal. 2021;51:56-61. http://dx.doi.org/10.18796/0004-5790-2021-51-56 (In Russ.).

14. Kaplan V, Dosmukhamedov N, Zholdasbay E, Daruesh G, Argyн A. Alumina and Silica Produced by Chlorination of Power Plant Fly Ash Treatment. JOM. 2020;72(10):3348-3357.