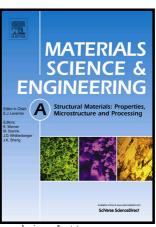
## Author's Accepted Manuscript

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www.elsevier.com/locate/msea

PII: S0921-5093(17)30436-7

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.msea.2017.03.113

Reference: MSA34896

To appear in: Materials Science & Engineering A

Received date: 20 February 2017 Revised date: 29 March 2017 Accepted date: 30 March 2017

Cite this article as: Masoud Rashidi, Lennart Johansson, Hans-Olof Andrén and Fang Liu, Microstructure and mechanical properties of two Z-phase strengthene 12%Cr martensitic steels: the effects of Cu and C, Materials Science c Engineering A, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.msea.2017.03.113

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### **ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT**

Microstructure and mechanical properties of two Z-phase strengthened 12%Cr martensitic steels: the effects of Cu and C

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#### **Abstract**

Z-phase strengthened 12% Cr steels are designed to combine good corrosion and creep resistance for applications in fossil fuel power plants with steam temperatures up to 650°C. Two trial Z-phase strengthened steels were investigated, Z-steel with ultra-low C content, and ZCuC-steel with relatively high C content and Cu addition. The Z-steel has better creep strength; however, the alloy has low impact toughness due to the formation of continuous Laves-phase films at grain boundaries. Atom probe tomography, transmission electron microscopy, and scanning electron microscopy were employed to study the effects of C and Cu on the microstructure of the two steels in the as-tempered condition, and after ageing for different times. The Z-steel shows a fast transformation from TaN to Z-phase. The relatively high C content in the ZCuC-steel resulted in the formation of two categories of MX: Ta(C, N) and TaN. The phase transformation from Ta(C, N) to Z-phase is slower compared to that from TaN to Z-phase. In addition, precipitation of M<sub>23</sub>C<sub>6</sub> and Cu particles in the ZCuC-steel led to easier nucleation of Laves-phase, and hence a much improved toughness.

**Keywords**: creep, impact toughness, electron microscopy, atom probe tomography, precipitation, Laves-phase

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