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Distinct spin glass behavior and excellent magnetocaloric effect in $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) high-entropy bulk metallic glasses

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ABSTRACT

The $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) high-entropy bulk metallic glasses (HE BMGs) with tunable magnetocaloric properties were prepared successfully. As a result, a spin glass behavior was observed below 50 K in this HE BMG system. In addition, we found that the Curie temperature (T_C) can be easily tuned from 13 to 43 K by alloying different rare earth (RE) elements, following a good de Gennes factor dependence. The peak of magnetic entropy change ($|\Delta S_M^{max}|$) for Gd-, Tb- and Tm-containing glassy alloy under a magnetic field of 5 T is 9.1, 8.6 and 11.9 J kg^{-1}K^{-1}, respectively, which leads to obtain the maximum refrigerant capacity (*RC*) of 619, 525, and 405 J kg^{-1} for the $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) HE BMGs, respectively. The glass-forming ability (GFA), T_C, ΔS_M and *RC* can be widely tuned by alloying different RE elements. These results suggest that these HE BMGs are promising magnetic refrigerants at low temperature in the future.

1. Introduction

Very recently, the high-entropy alloys (HEAs), a kind of new material in alloy design that consists of five or more principal elements with equal or nearly equal atomic percentage, have attracted increasing concerns in both fundamental sciences and engineering applications due to their multiple compositions, complicated microstructures and adjustable properties including high corrosion resistance, abrasive resistance, and high strength even at elevated temperature [1–4]. In addition, bulk metallic glasses (BMGs) also exhibit superior properties compared with crystalline materials, such as the tailorable Curie temperature (T_C), the higher electrical resistivity and broad magnetic entropy change (ΔS_M) peak, therefore hold promises for a variety of applications [4–6]. Given the unique characteristics and excellent properties of the two kinds of materials mentioned above, formation of the HEAs with amorphous structures, that is HE BMGs, provides new possibilities in developing alloys with the advantages of both HEAs and BMGs [4,5]. The HE BMGs have shown unique and remarkably improved properties due to the strong topological and chemical disorder, compared with the normal BMGs and HEAs [4–8]. Therefore, a large number of HE BMGs have been prepared and studied because they might be of great importance for future applications. For example, the $Ti_{20}Zr_{20}Hf_{20}Be_{20}Ni_{20}$ HE BMG exhibits high yield strength, together with the relatively large plastic strain up to 4% with a critical size of 15 mm [5]. The $Ca_{20}Mg_{20}Zn_{20}Sr_{20}Yb_{20}$ HE BMG with enhanced mechanical properties and corrosion resistance is more suitable for biomedical applications, compared to the CaMgZn BMGs [9].

However, up to now, most researches mainly focus on mechanical properties, and only a little work has been carried out on magnetic properties, especially the magnetocaloric properties in HE BMGs. Since the discovery of giant magnetocaloric effect (GMCE) in $Gd_5Si_2Ge_2$, increasing concerns have been put into the development of magnetic refrigerants [10,11]. In the past decades, a number of magnetic materials have been reported to exhibit large MCE [12–14]. Due to the profuse magnetic structure of RE elements, a series of heavy RE-(Gd, Ho, Dy, Er and Tb) based glassy alloys have been extensively studied, which exhibits large MCE and shows the potential applications [15–19]. Furthermore, spin glass (SG) behavior below the freezing temperature (T_f) was observed and discussed in these alloys. Recently, $Ho_{20}Er_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Dy, and Tm) HE BMGs were prepared successfully with excellent MCE and distinct SG behavior, which provides a new research direction of HE BMGs [6]. However, the $Ho_{20}Er_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Dy, and Tm) HE BMGs show low glass-forming ability (GFA) and T_C, which limits the development and

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potential applications as magnetic refrigerants. Moreover, only a little work focus on the MCE of HE BMGs containing three kinds of RE elements.

In this paper, the pentabasic $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) BMGs were designed and prepared, a distinct SG behavior, combined with improved GFA and excellent MCE were obtained in this glassy alloy system. The effects of RE on the GFA, SG behavior, T_C, ΔS_M, and refrigerant capacity (*RC*) were systematically investigated and discussed.

2. Experimental

The HEA ingots with the following nominal compositions $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) were prepared by arc melting highly pure elements (Er: 99.9 wt %, Dy: 99.9 wt %, Co: 99.99 wt %, Al: 99.9 wt %, Gd: 99.9 wt %, Tb: 99.9 wt %, Tm: 99.9 wt %) in a Ti-gettered argon atmosphere. The alloy ingots were remelted five times to ensure homogeneity. The as-cast rods with diameters of 1 mm and 1.5 mm were prepared by Cu mold suction casting method under argon atmosphere. The amorphous nature of the as-cast rods which was ground into powder was ascertained by X-ray diffraction (XRD) with Cu Kα radiation (2θ = 20–90°). The thermal analysis was carried out by differential scanning calorimeter (DSC) with a heating rate of 40 K/min using the BMGs with diameter of 1 mm. The temperature and field dependences of magnetization were measured by a SQUID magnetometer through field cooling magnetization (M_{FC}) and zero field cooling magnetization (M_{ZFC}). The M_{FC} was measured under an applied magnetic field of 16 kA m^{-1} on heating course after initially cooling the BMG with diameter of 1 mm from 120 to 2 K under the same field. The M_{ZFC} was measured on the heating course under the same field of M_{FC} after initially cooling from 120 to 2 K without applied magnetic field. The isothermal magnetization (*M-H*) curves were measured with magnetic field up to 5 T, and the temperature intervals of 3 and 10 K were selected for the regions in the vicinity of T_C and far away from T_C, respectively.

3. Results and discussion

Fig. 1 shows the XRD patterns of the as-cast $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) alloys with diameters of 1 mm and 1.5 mm. Only broad peaks can be seen for metallic alloys with compositions of $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) illustrating the formation of a fully glassy structure in the diameter range up to at least 1 mm. On the other hand, the alloys containing Gd and Tb with a diameter of 1.5 mm show fully glassy structure based on the XRD patterns, which means that the elements Gd and Tb have a positive influence on the GFA of this alloy system. The DSC curves of the as-cast $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) HE BMGs are shown in Fig. 2. It is seen that all the alloys exhibit an obvious endothermic reaction due to glass transition and exothermic peak related to crystallization, which means the formation of glassy alloys. The values of transition temperature (T_g), crystallization temperature (T_x) and supercooled liquid region ($\triangle T_x = T_x - T_g$) have been summarized in Table 1. Both of the T_g and T_x increase gradually in terms of the sequence of the Gd, Tb and Tm, this indicates an increase in the thermal stability of the supercooled liquid [20]. Therefore, it is considered that the thermal stability of this glassy alloy system increases in terms of the sequence of the Gd, Tb and Tm. It was found that electrons could transfer from the metalloid elements to fill the *d* shells in the transition metal elements to form a *s-d* hybrid bonding [21]. In this study, the numbers of 4*f* band electrons in Gd, Tb and Tm elements are 7, 9 and 13, respectively. Consequently, it is considered that the *f-d* hybrid bonding nature between RE and Co elements would increases in terms of the sequence of the Gd, Tb and Tm, which results in an increase of thermal stability of the supercooled liquid.

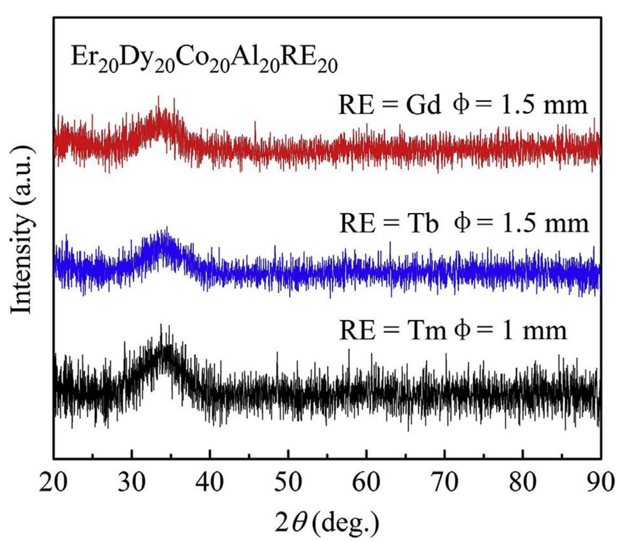

Fig. 1. XRD patterns of the as-cast $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) rods with diameter of 1 mm and 1.5 mm.

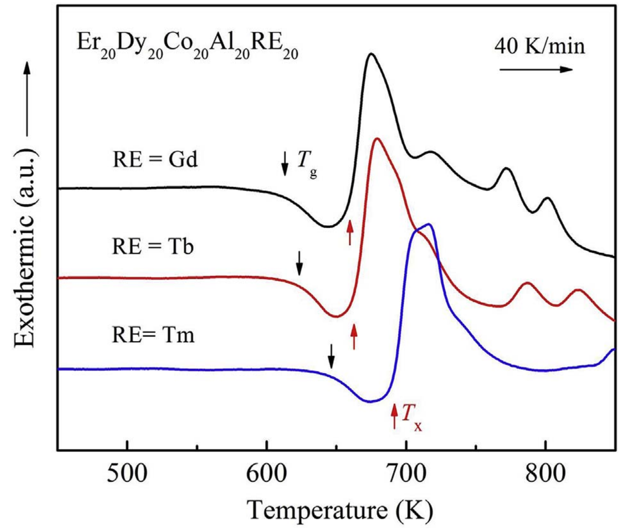

Fig. 2. DSC curves of the as-cast $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) HE BMGs.

Fig. 3 shows the M_{FC} and M_{ZFC} curves for the as-cast $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) HE BMGs. For each alloy, a spin freezing transition can be observed, while a cusp exists in the M_{ZFC} curve at the same temperature where a divergence appears between the M_{FC} and M_{ZFC} curves, which is a typical SG-like behavior. This is different from some glassy alloys, such as most Gd-based MGs which generally show ferromagnetic transition due to the absence of orbital momentum of Gd [16,22]. The reason is that the exchange interactions dominate the magnetic behavior in these Gd-based MGs, while the random magnetic anisotropy arising from the local random electrostatic field plays a significant role in this RE based HE BMGs [16,23]. The T_C of $Er_{20}Dy_{20}Co_{20}Al_{20}RE_{20}$ (RE = Gd, Tb and Tm) HE BMGs calculated from the differentiation of M_{FC} curves are 43, 29 and 13 K for RE = Gd, Tb and Tm, respectively, marked by arrows in the insert of Fig. 3. Generally, the T_C usually tends to follow the de Gennes factor (*F*) in the RE-based metallic glasses [24], i.e., the larger the magnitude of *F*, the greater the value of T_C. The *F* can be expressed as: $F = J(J+1)(g-1)^2$ [25], where *J* (*J* = 3.5, 6, and 6 for RE = Gd, Tb and Tm, respectively) represents the total orbital quantum number, and *g* represents the gyromagnetic ratio given by $g = 1 + [J(J+1) + S(S+1) - L(L+1)]/2J(J+1)$, where *S* (*S* = 3.5, 3, and 1 for RE = Gd, Tb and Tm, respectively) represents the spin