

MAGNETRON SPUTTERING WITH HOT SOLID TARGET: THERMAL PROCESSES AND EROSION

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ABSTRACT. This work focuses on erosion and thermal processes taking place on the surface of the titanium target in magnetron sputtering. The study was carried out using magnetron sputtering systems (MSS) with different thermal insulation target types from the magnetron body. It was found that the presence of an evaporation component allows the rate of removal of atoms from the surface of a solid target to be increased with limited thermal conduction. A mathematical simulation was used to evaluate the contribution of evaporation to the increase in the coating deposition rate for complete and partial thermal insulation.

It was found that non-uniformity of the direct-axis component of the magnetic induction vector helps to localize the heating, also increases the evaporation rate on the surface of the target. It was proved that local evaporation including sublimations on the surface of a hot target is a significant factor in increasing the coating deposition rate. Due to this mechanism, the coating deposition rate can be increased 5 times for Ti in comparison with fully cooled targets. This result can be applied for direct current magnetrons and also for pulsed systems. It was also found that evaporation increased the energy efficiency of the target erosion. The most suitable metals were selected for obtaining high-intensity emission of atoms from a solid target.

KEYWORDS: magnetron sputtering; hot target; evaporation; high rate deposition.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, magnetron sputtering has been considered as one of the most effective methods for depositing high-quality functional coatings on a solid surface. The deposition is carried out in a vacuum diode system under conditions of crossed electric and magnetic fields. The gas discharge plasma that is formed is located close to the surface of the target, which is fixed to the cathode. Positively charged ions extracted from the plasma move to the cathode and accelerate to energies from 100 to 1000 eV in the area of a potential fall. On the surface of the target, the ions transfer their energy to atoms on the surface layer, make the surface layer sputtered and initiate a secondary emission of electrons, which are necessary to maintain the discharge. The flow of sputtered atoms moves mainly forward from the surface of the target. The particles of this flow reach the substrate surface and are deposited on it, forming a coating.

Due to the magnetic field near the surface of the target, the flux density of the ions that bombard the target is much greater than for simple diode systems. The ion flux density is proportional to the direct-axis component of a magnetic induction vector.

The sputtering rate of magnetron sputtering systems (MSS) is crucial for the whole technology, since it determines its productivity and depends linearly on the ion current density [1].

Unfortunately, the productivity of modern MSS

with solid targets often does not meet industrial needs. Attempts to improve their efficiency just by increasing the current density have turned out to be ineffective, since the sputtering rate depends linearly on the current density. For high-power pulsed MSS, the issue related to the increase in the coating deposition rate is further aggravated by intense ionization of the sputtered particles and by the return of the particles to the target [2].

However, this situation might be improved by adding evaporation to sputtering. Previous research has proved that this method, aimed at increasing the removal rate of particles from the surface of target (or its erosion) during MSS operation [3-5] is promising. For this purpose, certain conditions need to be provided, so that the thermal energy supplied to the target from the plasma can be retained in it, and can heat the target to a high temperature. In conventional magnetrons, the target has a very good heat-conducting contact with an intensely cooled magnetron body, into which magnets are placed. As a rule, its temperature is therefore low.

If the structure of the magnetron is changed so that the flow of heat from the target is decreased, the target can be warmed up strongly. In other words, it will become possible for MSS to operate with a “hot target”. Moreover, for some materials, significant evaporation can be created by keeping most of the target in the solid state.

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