CHAPTER VI HYDROGEN STORAGE BEHAVIORS OF LiBH4/MgH2: EFFECTS OF TITANIUM CATALYSTS

6.1 Abstract

A 2:1 molar ratio of LiBH₄/MgH₂ doped with 3 mol% of a titanium catalyst (Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃) was studied for its hydrogen desorption/absorption properties. The results in the first desorption showed that the sample doped with TiCl₃ was more active than the other samples as it released hydrogen in one step, while there were three steps for the other samples. However, all samples started to desorb hydrogen at the same temperature of 50°C. The undoped sample had the highest amount of hydrogen (9.2 wt%). In the subsequent desorption, all samples decomposed in two steps, and the one doped with TiCl₃ had the lowest desorption temperature, followed by TiO₂-2LiBH₄+MgH₂, 2LiBH₄+MgH₂, and Ti-2LiBH₄+MgH₂. Using Ti resulted in the highest amount of hydrogen at 5.0 wt%. A possible reason could be the formation of titanium hydride during the hydrogen desorption. However, the titanium hydride formation depended on the composition and the chemical state of titanium catalyst. TiH_{1.971} and TiH_{0.71} were formed from the doping of Ti and the doping of TiO₂ and TiCl₃, respectively.

6.2 Introduction

Hydrogen storage for transportation must meet weight, cost, life time, and safety requirements. As compared with traditional storage methods such as in a high pressure gas tank and in the liquefied form, storing hydrogen in solid state hydride materials has more potential in terms of gravimetric and volumetric hydrogen density and reversibility property [1]. However, their thermodynamics and kinetics are too stable for practical mobile applications [2-4]. Examples of these materials are NaAlH₄, LiAlH₄, MgH₂, and LiBH₄. For NaAlH₄, it contains totally 5.6 wt% hydrogen, which is slightly lower than the DOE's target at 6.0 wt% in 2010.

However, efforts have been dedicated to NaAlH₄, in part, because it offers a reasonable decomposition temperature, 120° C [5,6]. LiAlH₄ has a high hydrogen capacity of 10.5 wt% but only 5.3 wt% hydrogen can be released at 150° C. However, its hydrogen desorption/absorption is irreversible [7]. MgH₂ is widely studied because it is abundance and the total amount of hydrogen is quite high (7.6 wt%). However, the decomposition takes place at a temperature higher than 350° C and its reaction kinetics is very slow [8,9].

In the case of LiBH₄, it is one of the most attractive materials because it provides high hydrogen capacity of 18.4 wt%. On the other hand, the hydrogen desorption starts at a temperature higher than 400°C and the reaction is difficult to reverse [10]. However, an addition of a suitable catalyst can improve the hydrogen desorption/absorption properties of LiBH₄ [11-13]. In 2003, Züttel et al. [14,15] succeeded in reduce the decomposition temperature of LiBH₄ by doping with 75 wt% SiO₂. The results showed that the hydrogen desorption started at 200°C and decomposed the total hydrogen of 9 wt%. Au et al. [16-18] reduced the hydrogen desorption temperature and improved the reversibility of LiBH₄ by adding various types of metal oxide and metal chloride catalysts. For the use of metal oxide catalysts, they found that the addition of 25 wt% TiO₂ could desorb 9.0 wt% hydrogen in a temperature range from 100 to 600°C and absorb 8.0 wt% hydrogen at 600°C and 7.0 MPa hydrogen. However, the reversible hydrogen storage capacity of LiBH₄ gradually decreased due to the loss of boron during the hydrogen desorption. In the case of metal chloride catalysts, 1-2 mol% of MgCl₂ and TiCl₃ were added into LiBH₄. The sample released 5.0 wt% hydrogen in a temperature range from 60 to 450°C and absorbed 4.5 wt% hydrogen at 600°C and 7.0 MPa hydrogen.

It is well-known that alloying and/or reacting LiBH₄ with a metal and/or a metal hydride through ball milling, so called reactive hydride composite (RHC) [19-21], can improve the thermodynamic properties such as reaction enthalpy due to the changing of reaction partway. Vajo et al. [22], who first applied the RHC concept to LiBH₄, studied the mixture of LiH and MgB₂ (a 2:1 molar ratio) including 2-3 mol% TiCl₃. The results showed that the mixture reversibly stored about 8-10 wt% hydrogen, and the decomposition occurred in two steps at 270 and 380°C,

respectively. It was concluded that the RHC not only lowered the hydrogen desorption temperature, but also contributed the reversibility due to the formation of MgB₂ during hydrogen desorption. Fan et al. [23] studied a 1:2 mass ratio of LiBH₄ and MgH₂ doped with 16 wt% Nb₂O₅. It was found that the sample started to release hydrogen at 300°C and desorbed 6-8 wt% hydrogen. The hydrogen absorption of 5-6 wt% was achieved at 400°C and 1.9 MPa hydrogen.

A titanium based catalyst is one of the most effective catalysts for the solid state hydride development. For instance, Bogdanović and Schwickardi [5] studied the Pressure-Composition Isotherm of NaAlH₄ doped with TiCl₃. The results revealed the two temperature-dependent pressure plateaus corresponding to the two-step reversibly stored 4.2-3.1 and 2.7-2.1 wt% hydrogen in each step. Sandrock et al. [6] studied the behaviors of TiCl₃ catalyst in NaAlH₄. They reported that TiCl₃ was reduced to metallic Ti (Ti) during the ball-milling process. In addition, Ti could increase both hydrogen desorption and absorption kinetics but it reduced the hydrogen capacity of NaAlH₄. Chen et al. [24] doped LiAlH₄ and Li₃AlH₆ with TiCl₃ + 1/3AlCl₃ and measured the thermodynamic and the kinetic properties over a temperature range from 25 to 250°C. They found that the activation energies from the Arrhenius plot were 42.6 and 54.8 kJ (mol H₂)⁻¹ for the hydrogen desorption of LiAlH₄ and Li₃AlH₆, respectively. Furthermore, the defect sites of a titanium catalyst (Ti⁰/Ti²⁺/Ti³⁺) played an important role in the reversibility improvement [25].

In this work, roles of titanium based catalysts including Ti-metallic (Ti), TiO_2 , and $TiCl_3$ on the hydrogen desorption temperature, total hydrogen storage capacity, reversibility, and reaction kinetics of a 2:1 mole ratio of the LiBH₄ and MgH₂ mixture were studied. XRD characterization was conducted in order to investigate the phase transformation of the sample at different conditions and evaluate the crystallite size of hydrides.

6.3 Experimental

To prevent the sample contamination by air and moisture, all sample handling steps were performed in a glovebox filled with nitrogen gas. The starting materials of LiBH₄ (95%, Acros Organics) and MgH₂ (90%, Mg 10%, Acros Organics), and titanium based catalysts, Ti (99.98%, Sigma Aldrich) and TiO₂ (Degüssa P25) were used without further purification. TiCl₃ was prepared by vacuum drying of 12% TiCl₃ solution in hydrochloric acid. The hydride sample was prepared from a 2:1:0.09 molar ratio of LiBH₄, MgH₂, and a titanium catalyst, and ball-milled by using a centrifugal ball mill (Retsch ball mill model S100) under nitrogen atmosphere with a ball to powder ratio of 60:1 and a rotation speed of 300 rpm for 5 h. To evaluate the hydrogen desorption/absorption properties, approximately 0.3 g of the milled sample was tested in the calibrated-Sievert's type apparatus. The hydrogen desorption was carried out under 0.1 MPa H₂ (purity 99.9999%) from 25 to 500°C with a heating rate of 2°C min⁻¹. The hydrogen absorption was performed under 8.5 MPa H₂ and 350°C for 12 h. Both hydrogen desorption and absorption were repeated in order to investigate the reversibility of the sample. The accumulated pressure released from the sample was measured by a pressure transducer (Cole Parmer, model 68073-68074), and used for calculating the hydrogen desorption capacity.

For the sample characterization, a Rigaku X-ray diffractometer (model DMAX 2200 HV) was used to identify phase transformation and determine the crystallite size of hydrides. The sample was packed on a glass plate covered by a Kapton tape to prevent air and moisture. The measurement was carried out at the room temperature over a range of diffraction angles from 20 to 80 with Cu K α radiation (40 kV, 30 mA).

6.4 Results and Discussion

It is well-known that the performance of metal hydrides and complex metal hydrides such as NaAlH₄, LiAlH₄, MgH₂ and LiBH₄ are dramatically improved when a titanium catalyst was applied [5,6,26-28]. However, there are many types of titanium catalysts, each of which provides different effects on the hydrogen desorption/absorption properties of the hydride. In this work, 3 mol% of a titanium

catalyst (Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃) was added into the 2LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture and ballmilled for 5 h.



Figure 6.1 XRD patterns of the samples after ball-milling for 5 h (a) undoped, (b) Ti-, (c) TiO₂-, and (d) TiCl₃-LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture.

The XRD patterns of the $2\text{LiBH}_4/\text{MgH}_2$ mixture after ball-milling are shown in Fig. 6.1. It can be seen that the peak intensities of all doped samples (Figs. 1(b)-(d)) are weaker and boarder than the undoped one (Fig. 6.1(a)). This implies that the titanium catalysts can reduce the crystallite size as well as increase the lattice strain of LiBH₄ and MgH₂. The crystallite sizes of samples can be calculated by using the Scherrer equation and shown in Table 6.1. The results confirm the reduction in the crystallite sizes of both hydrides with the titanium catalyst doping. However, the titanium catalysts seem to reduce the crystallite size of MgH₂ in a greater extent than that of LiBH₄. In addition, among the doped samples, the one with Ti has the largest crystallite size. A possible reason may be due to the hardness of the Ti particles, which is higher than that of TiO₂ and TiCl₃ particles. It was reported that the hardness of a catalyst affects the particle size and the crystallite size reduction of a hydride [29]. In addition, the XRD patterns after ball-milling reveal that the samples doped with Ti (Fig. 6.1(b)) and TiCl₃ (Fig. 6.1(d)) form new phases of Li-Mg-B-Ti and LiCl, respectively. The alloy phase of Li-Mg-B-Ti may also form due to the incorporation between the defect sites of Ti⁰ and the host metal lattice frameworks of LiBH₄ and MgH₂ during the ball-milling. In addition, the LiCl phase is produced from the reaction between Li⁺ and Cl⁻, which are from the partial decomposition of LiBH₄ and TiCl₃, respectively.

Table 6.1 Crystallite sizes of $LiBH_4$ and MgH_2 in the $LiBH_4/MgH_2$ mixture and the mixture doped with a titanium catalyst after ball-milling for 5 h

Titanium catalyst	LiBH4, nm	MgH ₂ , nm
Undoped	25.57	37.24
Ti	25.31	27.71
TiO ₂	24.27	24.06
TiCl ₃	24.78	21.55

Hydrogen desorption profiles in the first to the forth desorption of the $LiBH_4/MgH_2$ mixture and the mixture doped with 3 mol% of Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃ are shown in Figs. 6.2-6.5, respectively. Details of the hydrogen desorption temperatures and the amounts of released hydrogen are in Table 6.2.



Figure 6.2 Hydrogen desorption profiles of the undoped $LiBH_4/MgH_2$ mixture after ball-milling for 5 h (a) first, (b) second, (c) third, (d) forth hydrogen desorption, and (e) temperature.



Figure 6.3 Hydrogen desorption profiles of the Ti-LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture after ballmilling for 5 h (a) first, (b) second, (c) third, (d) forth hydrogen desorption, and (e) temperature.



Figure 6.4 Hydrogen desorption profiles of the TiO_2 -LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture after ball-milling for 5 h (a) first, (b) second, (c) third, (d) forth hydrogen desorption, and (e) temperature.



Figure 6.5 Hydrogen desorption profiles of the $TiCl_3$ -LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture after ball-milling for 5 h (a) first, (b) second, (c) third, (d) forth hydrogen desorption, and (e) temperature.

In the first desorption, the LiBH₄/MgH₂ (Fig. 6.2(a)), Ti- (Fig. 6.3(a)), and TiO₂-LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixtures (Fig. 6.4(a)) decompose in three steps, while the TiCl₃-LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture (Fig. 6.5(a)) releases hydrogen in only one step. It can be deduced from the result that TiCl₃ somehow involves in the hydrogen dissociation of the hydrides. This can be substantiated by the formation of LiCl during the ball-milling process (Fig. 6.1(d)). For the Ti doped sample, even though there is an indication of the sample decomposition as evidenced by the presence of Li-Mg-B-Ti alloy (Fig. 6.1(b)), the decomposition of the sample is not affected. For the desorption temperature, all doped samples start to release hydrogen at the same temperature as the undoped sample, 50°C. For the amount of desorbed hydrogen, it was found that, with TiO₂ and TiCl₃, the samples release higher amounts of hydrogen than the undoped and Ti doped samples. From Table 6.2, the amounts of

desorbed hydrogen in the first step of the first desorption are 1.3 wt% for the undoped sample, 1.1 wt% for the Ti doped sample, and 1.8 wt% for the TiO₂ and TiCl₃ doped samples. Once again, the catalytic activity of TiO₂ and TiCl₃ shows similar effects on the LiBH₄ and MgH₂ mixture as that on NaAlH₄ [25]. On the contrary, in the case of Ti, the formation of the Li-Mg-B-Ti alloy phase may inhibit the activity of Ti resulting in the lower amount of hydrogen desorption. The lower catalytic activity of the metal catalyst than the oxide and chloride catalysts in the hydrogen desorption/absorption improvement of MgH₂ was also reported by Barkhordarian et al. [30].

Doping a titanium catalyst also decreases the hydrogen desorption temperature of the hydrides in the second step decomposition. The doped TiO_2 sample liberates hydrogen at 310°C, which is lower than that doped with Ti and the undoped one, 10 and 20°C, respectively. However, the cumulative amounts of desorbed hydrogen in this step of all doped samples are significantly lower than the undoped one. The Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃ doped samples desorb only 2.2, 2.8, and 2.2 wt% hydrogen, respectively, while the undoped sample releases 4.4 wt% hydrogen (Table 6.2). For the third step of the first desorption, the Ti- and TiO₂-LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixtures release hydrogen at the same temperature, 350°C, while the undoped sample desorbs hydrogen at 380°C (Table 6.2). It is clearly seen that the titanium catalysts play an important role in the reduction of the hydrogen desorption temperature.

For the total amount of desorbed hydrogen, as expected, the doped samples release lower amounts of hydrogen than the undoped one. From Table 6.2, the undoped, Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃ doped samples desorb 9.2, 8.3, 7.8, and 7.0 wt% hydrogen, respectively. The released hydrogen from the doped samples are approximately 90 (Ti), 83 (TiO₂), and 76% (TiCl₃) compared with the undoped sample. One possible reason is that there may be the formation of new phases during the hydrogen desorption, which will be explained by the XRD patterns after the hydrogen desorption.

Table 6.2 Hydrogen desorption temperature and total amount of desorbed hydrogen of the $LiBH_4/MgH_2$ mixture and the mixture doped with different titanium catalysts after ball-milling for 5 h in the first, second, third, and forth desorption

The LiBH ₄ /MgH ₂	Starting desorption temperature, °C				Total hydrogen capacity, wt%			
mixture	Undoped	Ti	TiO ₂	TiCl ₃	Undoped	Ti	TiO ₂	TiCl ₃
1 st desorption								
- Step 1	50	50	50	50	1.3	1.1	1.8	1.8*
- Step 2	330	320	310	-	4.4	2.2	2.8	2.2**
- Step 3	380	350	350	-	9.2	8.3	7.8	7.0
2 nd desorption								
- Step 1	360	390	330	310	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.3
- Step 2	450	470	420	400	4.5	5.3	4.0	4.2
3 rd desorption								
- Step 1	360	390	330	310	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.3
- Step 2	450	470	420	400	3.6	5.1	3.6	3.1
4 th desorption								
- Step 1	360	390	330	310	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.3
- Step 2	450	470	420	400	3.2	5.0	3.5	2.6

* The hydrogen capacity is evaluated at 320°C.

** The hydrogen capacity is evaluated at 350°C.



Figure 6.6 XRD patterns of the samples after the first hydrogen desorption (a) undoped, (b) Ti-, (c) TiO₂-, and (d) TiCl₃-LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture.

The phase identification of the samples after the hydrogen desorption is shown in Fig. 6.6. It can be seen from the figure that all samples have the same phases of LiH, MgB₂, LiBH₄, MgH₂, and MgO. The LiH and MgB₂ phases are products from the hydrogen desorption. The presence of LiBH₄, MgH₂, and MgO results in the lower total amount of desorbed hydrogen than the theoretical value (11.4 wt%). LiBH₄ and MgH₂ are the unconverted phases of the starting materials, and MgO is the oxide layer from the reaction between Mg and impurities. This oxide layer prevents the hydrogen molecules from penetrating into the metal lattice framework. On the other hand, MgO was found to enhance the rate of hydrogen uptake [31]. In addition, the MgB₇ and Li_XMg_Y phases were found in the case of the undoped sample (Fig. 6.6(a)). The MgB₇ phase is a by-product between the reaction of rich LiBH₄ and MgH₂ [32], while the alloy phase of Li_XMg_Y may be from the reaction between Li and Mg [33]. The alloy phase of Li-Mg-B-Ti, which was found in the Ti doped sample after ball-milling (Fig. 1(b)), also decomposes during the

hydrogen desorption. The different titanium hydride phases were exhibited in the doped samples (Figs. 6.6(b)-(c)). The XRD patterns show that the titanium hydride phase depends on the chemical state and composition of the titanium catalyst. Doping Ti in the hydrides results in the formation of the $TiH_{1,971}$ phase, while the TiH_{0.71} phase formes with TiO₂ and TiCl₃. A possible reason why the presence of TiO₂ and TiCl₃ results in the same phase of titanium hydride may be because both Ti^{4+} and Ti^{3+} defect sites in TiO_2 and $TiCl_3$, respectively, are partially reduced to the same defect site of Ti⁰ during the ball-milling process [24,34-37]. Subsequently, the Ti⁰ defect sites may further form a microstructure composite with the host metal lattice framework and/or transform to the titanium hydride phase of TiH₂ or TiH_{Z<2} during the hydrogen desorption, Eq. (6.1) [38]. However, $TiH_{0.71}$ forms in the samples doped with TiO₂ and TiCl₃ instead of TiH_{1.971}, as detected in the one doped with Ti, because the presence of O^{2-} (in TiO₂) and Cl⁻ (in TiCl₃) may surround Ti atoms in the bulk and interfere the hydrogen uptake to form TiH₂. This phenomena also takes place for the Ti(OBu)₄ catalyst as proposed by Baldé et al [39]. All in all, the formation of titanium hydride, which promotes the dissociation of hydrogen molecular into hydrogen atoms [40], results in the decrease in the hydrogen desorption temperature of the LiBH₄ and MgH₂ mixture.

$$Ti + H_2 \rightarrow TiH_2 \quad (\Delta G_f^{=} -105 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1})$$
 (6.1)

It is evidence that the titanium catalysts affect the total amount of desorbed hydrogen. The undoped sample has the highest total amount of hydrogen. Considering the doped samples, the one doped with Ti gives the highest total amount of desorbed hydrogen (8.3 wt%). A possible reason is due to Ti has a much lower chance to form any inactive by-products as it does not contain O^{2-} as in TiO₂ or Cl⁻ as in TiCl₃. The statement can be confirmed by the XRD patterns after the hydrogen desorption (Fig. 6.6). The patterns show that the Ti doped sample has lower MgO intensity than the other doped samples. In the case of the sample doped with TiO₂, it releases a lower amount of hydrogen than that doped with Ti. The explanation is that the oxide ions in TiO₂ may lead to the formation of inactive oxide compounds such

as B_2O_3 (ΔG_f° = -1184.1 kJ mol⁻¹) and MgO (ΔG_f° = -569.6 kJ mol⁻¹) [41]. However, only the MgO phase is observed in the XRD pattern (Fig. 6.6(c)) because the other oxide compounds may be in the amorphous form and/or present in a small quantity. The sample doped with TiCl₃ desorbs the lowest amount of hydrogen because it can form both MgO and LiCl phases during the hydrogen desorption (Fig. 6.6(d)).

The XRD patterns of the desorbed samples (Fig. 6.6) were used to purpose the hydrogen desorption pathway. The decomposition reaction of the undoped sample and that doped with Ti, TiO_2 , and $TiCl_3$ may follow Eqs. (6.2)-(6.5).

$$2\text{LiBH}_4 + \text{MgH}_2 \rightarrow 2\text{LiH} + \text{MgB}_2 + 4\text{H}_2$$
(6.2)

 $2LiBH_4 + MgH_2 + 0.09Ti \rightarrow 2LiH + MgB_2$

+ 0.09TiH_{1.971} +
$$\left(\frac{7.82}{2}\right)$$
H₂ (6.3)

 $2\text{LiBH}_4 + \text{MgH}_2 + 0.09\text{TiO}_2 \rightarrow 2\text{LiH} + 0.82\text{MgB}_2 + 0.18\text{MgO}$

+ 0.09TiH_{0.71} + 0.36B +
$$\left(\frac{7.94}{2}\right)$$
H₂ (6.4)

 $2\text{LiBH}_4 + \text{MgH}_2 + 0.09\text{TiCl}_3 \rightarrow 1.73\text{LiH} + \text{MgB}_2 + 0.27\text{LiCl}$

+ 0.09TiH_{0.71} +
$$\left(\frac{8.21}{2}\right)$$
H₂ (6.5)

After the first desorption, the spent hydrides were subject to the hydrogen absorption. The XRD patterns of the adsorbed samples, Fig. 6.7, show that LiBH₄ and MgH₂ are recovered from the reaction between LiH and MgB₂ in all samples. However, some traces of unconverted phases of LiH, Mg, MgO, TiH_{1 971}, and TiH_{0.71} can be observed. This substantiates the incomplete hydrogen absorption of the spent sample, and that inherently affects the decrease in the total amount of desorbed hydrogen in the subsequent desorption.



Figure 6.7 XRD patterns of the samples after the first hydrogen absorption (a) undoped, (b) Ti-, (c) TiO₂-, and (d) TiCl₃-LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture.

For the subsequent desorption, the results from Figs. 6.2-6.5(b)-(d) exhibit that all samples decompose in two steps. The starts of the hydrogen desorption temperature in the first step are 360, 390, 330, and 310°C for the undoped sample and that doped with Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃, respectively. It was found that the TiO₂ and TiCl₃ doped samples release hydrogen at a lower temperature than the undoped one. On the contrary, the Ti doped sample desorbs hydrogen at a higher temperature than the undoped one. The amounts of desorbed hydrogen of the Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃ doped samples are 1.7, 1.4, and 1.3 wt%, respectively, which are lower than that of the undoped sample, 1.8 wt%. In addition, the results from Table 6.2 show that the amounts of desorbed hydrogen in the first step are constant up to the forth desorption. In the second step, the samples doped with Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃ start to release hydrogen at 440°C. It can be said that using TiCl₃ results in the lowest

desorption temperature, while using Ti inhibits the hydrogen decomposition of the $2\text{LiBH}_4/\text{MgH}_2$ mixture. The total amount of hydrogen in the second to the forth desorption of the samples doped with Ti, TiO₂, and TiCl₃ are in the range of 5.0-5.3, 3.5-4.0, and 3.6-4.2 wt% (Table 6.2), respectively, while the undoped sample releases 3.2-4.5 wt% hydrogen (Table 6.2).

6.5 Conclusions

A 2:1 molar ratio of LiBH₄/MgH₂ mixture was investigated with the presence of 3 mol% of a titanium catalyst for its hydrogen desorption/absorption. In the first desorption, the samples doped with TiCl₃ released hydrogen in one step, while the other samples decomposed in three steps. However, all samples started to desorb hydrogen at the same temperature, 50°C. The undoped sample had the highest total amount of hydrogen (9.2 wt%). In the subsequent desorption, all samples decomposed in two steps. The desorption temperatures of the samples were in the order of TiCl₃ > TiO₂ > undoped > Ti. However, using Ti resulted in the highest amount of reversible hydrogen at 5.0 wt%.

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6.7 References

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