

EXPANCEL

Code: 233-128

This remarkable material looks like a white powder but actually consists of millions of tiny polymer spheres 10-15 microns in diameter, each of which contains a drop of hydrocarbon fluid. When heated, the shell of each sphere softens and the liquid inside turns to gas. This expands the spheres to around four times their original diameter.

The spheres are sometimes sold in this form as an additive for plastics, plaster etc. to reduce overall weight. In their unexpanded form they can be added to plastics and other materials so that they expand the material when it is heated. An example is 3D printing ink. Another example is 'Braille paper'. This contains microspheres that expand preferentially in contact with black print when passed through heated rollers.

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