A utility sleeve for temporarily waterproofing a utility device comprises a top portion, a slack portion capable of being furled and unfurled by a user, a rim portion, and a bottom portion enclosed underneath the utility device. The slack portion is provided on all sides of the utility sleeve. When water levels rise due to floods and/or storm water conditions, the slack portion can be easily unfurled along all sides of the utility device by the user. The rim portion is partially closed by a closure means to allow release of gases and to allow the utility sleeve to conform to the utility device as a waterproof layer. The closure means can be attached to a part of a building structure above the utility device.
BACKGROUND

[0003] Portions of this disclosure of this patent document contain material that is subject to copyright protection. The copyright owner has no objection to the facsimile reproduction by anyone of the patent document or the patent disclosure as it appears in the Patent and Trademark Office file or records, but otherwise reserves all copyright rights whatsoever.

[0010] U.S. Pat. No. 4,421,150 issued to Masters on Dec. 20, 1983 discloses a waterproof bag device for containing articles in a waterproof environment. The bag device includes an outer bag with a flexible side with a back side being extended to provide a cover flap which is attachable to the front side by means of Velcro fastening tape. A waterproof inner enclosure is sewn within the outer bag which includes an extended mouth portion for insertion of an article which may be folded upon itself to provide a tight seal for the inner bag. Straps are located across the cover flap to secure to the back side of the bag by means of Velcro fastening tape to maintain the closure of the inner enclosure in a folded, sealed configuration. The cover flap is unfastened by exertion of pressure on the bag.

[0011] All of the systems discussed above have considerable drawbacks for protecting electrical appliances against flood hazards. These systems are bulky and are difficult to install. Conventional waterproof bags are not heat resistant. In addition, these systems are sealed on both top and bottom, which can result in instability in the water. Finally, these systems are not completely waterproof.

[0012] Therefore, there is a need for a simple, lightweight and waterproof protection sleeve that can be used to protect electric appliances from flood hazards. Such a needed apparatus could be easily installed beneath electrical appliances. Further, the sleeve would remain stationary in water and allow the appliance to sit in water depths safely with stability. Such a product would be self-extinguishing, non-conductive, mold-resistant and 100% waterproof. The present embodiment accomplishes these objectives.

SUMMARY

[0013] The preferred embodiment in accordance with the present invention is a utility sleeve for temporarily waterproofing a utility device, such as a water heater, furnace, boiler, gas valve or burner. The utility sleeve comprises a top portion unsealed for providing stability to the utility device, and a bottom portion enclosed underneath the utility device. The slack portion is provided on all sides of the utility sleeve and
the slack portion includes a rim portion. If water levels rise due to floods and/or storm water conditions, the slack portion can be easily unfurled along all sides of the utility device by the user. After the sleeve has been fully unfurled, the rim portion is partially closed by the user utilizing a closure means. The top portion is unsealed to allow release of gases and other discharges and to allow the utility sleeve to conform to the utility device as a waterproof layer. Due to the unfurled slack portion and the unsealed top portion, the pressure of the exterior water will allow the sleeve to conform to the utility device as a protective, waterproof layer. After the water levels have receded, the utility sleeve may be collapsed or furled back to the normal position by the user. The utility sleeve can be professionally installed underneath the utility device by minor plumbing. The utility sleeve remains unfurled around a bottom portion of the utility device by at least one strapping when not in use.

Although particular embodiments of the present invention have been described in the foregoing description, it is to be understood that the present invention is not to be limited to just the embodiments disclosed, but that they are capable of numerous rearrangements, modifications and substitutions without departing from the description herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Fig. 1 illustrates a utility sleeve installed underneath a utility device.

Fig. 2 illustrates a slack portion of the utility sleeve partially unfurled by a user.

Fig. 3 illustrates the slack portion fully unfurled by the user.

REFERENCE NUMERALS

10 . . . Utility sleeve
12 . . . Utility device
14 . . . Top portion of the utility sleeve
16 . . . Slack portion
18 . . . Bottom portion of the utility sleeve
20 . . . Bottom portion of the utility device
22 . . . At least one strapping
24 . . . Rim portion
26 . . . Top portion of the utility device
28 . . . Closure means
30 . . . Seam

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Fig. 1 illustrates a utility sleeve 10 installed underneath a utility device 12. The utility sleeve 10 is utilized for temporarily waterproofing the utility device 12. The utility sleeve 10 comprises a top portion 14, a slack portion 16 capable of being unfurled by a user, and a bottom portion 18 enclosed underneath the utility device 12. The slack portion 16 and the top portion 14 allow the utility sleeve 10 to conform to the utility device 12 as a protective, waterproof layer. The utility sleeve 10 remains unfurled around a bottom portion 20 of the utility device 12 by at least one strapping 22 when not in use. The strapping 22 is attached to the utility sleeve 10 to keep the utility sleeve 10 in a neat, furled position, with one end of the strapping attached to the top portion 14 and the other end attached to the bottom portion of the utility sleeve 18. The size and quantity of the strapping 22 varies depending on the size of the utility device 12 being protected. The utility sleeve 10 can be professionally installed underneath the utility device 12 by minor plumbing. The utility sleeve 10 remains stationary for the life expectancy of the utility device 12. The utility device 12 may be electrical appliances, including water heaters, furnaces and boilers.

Fig. 2 illustrates the slack portion 16 of the utility sleeve 10 partially unfurled by the user. The slack portion 16 is provided on all sides of the utility sleeve 10 and the slack portion 16 includes a rim portion 24, although the rim portion 24 may also form part of the top portion 14. If water levels rise due to floods and/or storm water conditions, the slack portion 16 can be easily unfurled along all sides of the utility device 12 by the user. The top portion 14 is unsealed to allow release of gases and other discharges and to allow the utility sleeve 10 to conform to the utility device 12 as a waterproof layer. Due to the unfurled slack portion 16 and the unsealed top portion 14, the pressure of the exterior water of the utility device will allow the sleeve 10 to conform to the utility device 12 as a protective, waterproof layer. The top edges of the slack portion 16 will be sufficient in length to rise above the utility device 12.

Fig. 3 illustrates the slack portion 16 fully unfurled by the user. The utility sleeve 10 protects the utility device 12 up to a top portion 26 of the utility device. The top portion of the sleeve 14 is left unsealed to allow for conformity and the possibility of the need to release gases and other discharge. After the sleeve 10 has been fully unfurled, the rim portion 24 is partially closed by the user utilizing a closure means 28. The closure means 28 which could be a drawstring or rope, toggle and eye-hook. The utility sleeve 10 may be attached to a beam, ceiling, hook, pipe or other part of a building structure located above the utility device, utilizing the closure means. The utility sleeve 10 can then be pulled up by pulling the draw string through the eye hook and fastening the draw string. When fully unfurled, the slack portion 16 will extend up to five feet. After the water levels have receded, the utility sleeve 10 may be collapsed or furled back to the normal position by the user. The utility sleeve 10 can be furled or collapsed back to normal position by unfastening the at least one strapping 22 or by pulling up with the closure means 28. The slack portion 16 may be replaced after first or second use.

The utility sleeve 10 helps to protect electrical appliances exposed to possible water damages due to flood waters and storm waters. The utility sleeve 10 may be pre-installed underneath the utility device 12. The utility sleeve 10 allows the utility device 12 to sit in water depths without damage. The utility sleeve 10 is made of a non-conductive, non-flammable and 100% waterproof material. The non-conductive, non-flammable and waterproof material may be a single layer engineered Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC), multiple layer engineered Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC), polyurethane or Teflon fabrics. The utility sleeve 10 includes a seam 30. The utility sleeve 10 can be made according to the measurements of any utility device. The size and number of the seam 30 varies with the size of the utility device 12.

All features disclosed in this specification, including any accompanying claims, abstract, and drawings, may be replaced by alternative features serving the same, equivalent or similar purpose, unless expressly stated otherwise. Thus, unless expressly stated otherwise, each feature disclosed is one example only of a generic series of equivalent or similar features.

Although preferred embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, various modifications and substitutions may be made thereto without depart-
ing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, it is to be understood that the present invention has been described by way of illustration and not limitation.

[0035] Any element in a claim that does not explicitly state "means for" performing a specified function, or "step for" performing a specific function, is not to be interpreted as a "means" or "step" clause as specified in 35 U.S.C. §112, paragraph 6. In particular, the use of "step of" in the claims herein is not intended to invoke the provisions of 35 U.S.C. §112, paragraph 6.

What is claimed is:

1. A utility sleeve for temporarily waterproofing a utility device in the event of flood or water exposure, comprising:
   a top portion with a closure means;
   a slack portion capable of being furled and unfurled by a user;
   a rim portion; and
   a bottom portion enclosed underneath the utility device;
   whereby in a furled position, the utility sleeve sits at the base of a utility device with the top portion unsealed, and in an unfurled position, the utility sleeve covers the utility device up to a top portion of the utility device with the rim portion of the utility sleeve partially sealed by the closure means.

2. The utility sleeve of claim 1, wherein said closure means is attachable to a part of a building structure above the utility device to keep the utility sleeve in an unfurled position.

3. The utility sleeve of claim 1, further comprising at least one strapping to keep the utility sleeve in a furled position, with one end of the at least one strapping attached to the top portion of the utility sleeve and the other end of the at least one strapping attached to the bottom portion of the utility sleeve.

4. The utility sleeve of claim 1, wherein the closure means comprises a drawstring, toggle, and eye-hook.

5. The utility sleeve of claim 1, wherein the closure means comprises a drawstring, toggle, and eye-hook.

6. The utility sleeve of claim 1, wherein the rim portion is part of the slack portion.

7. The utility sleeve of claim 1, wherein the utility device is a water heater, furnace, boiler, gas valve or burner.

8. The utility sleeve of claim 1, wherein the utility sleeve is made of a non-conductive, non-flammable and waterproof material.

9. The utility sleeve of claim 7, wherein the non-conductive, non-flammable and waterproof material is a single layer engineered Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC), a multiple layer engineered Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC), or polyurethane and Teflon fabrics.

10. A method for protecting a utility device such as a water heater, furnace or boiler from water damage comprising the steps of:
   installing a utility sleeve underneath and around a bottom portion of the utility device, the utility sleeve having a slack portion;
   covering the utility device with the utility sleeve up to a top portion of the utility device;
   partially closing a rim of the utility sleeve with a closure means to allow gas or exhaust from the utility device to escape;
   and attaching the closure means to a part of a building structure, above the utility device, to keep the utility sleeve in an unfurled position.

* * * * *