

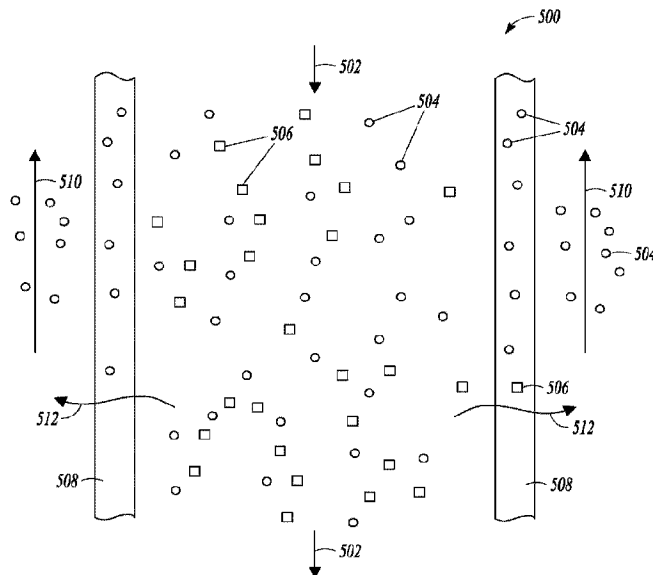


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(54) Title: LIQUID TO AIR MEMBRANE ENERGY EXCHANGERS



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) can be used as part of a heating and cooling system to transfer heat and moisture between a liquid desiccant and an air stream to condition the temperature and humidity of the air flowing through the LAMEE. The membrane can be a non-porous film having selective permeability for water, but not for other constituents that form the liquid desiccant. The non-porous membrane can allow for use of liquid desiccants, such as glycols, that had been previously determined to be unacceptable or undesirable in these types of applications. In an example, the membrane can be an ion-exchange membrane or pervaporation membrane.



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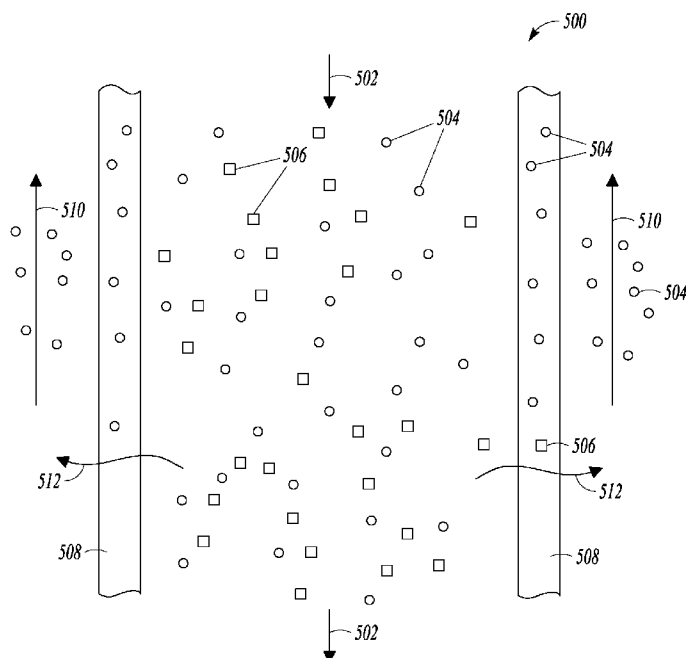


FIG. 5

(57) Abstract: A liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) can be used as part of a heating and cooling system to transfer heat and moisture between a liquid desiccant and an air stream to condition the temperature and humidity of the air flowing through the LAMEE. The membrane can be a non-porous film having selective permeability for water, but not for other constituents that form the liquid desiccant. The non-porous membrane can allow for use of liquid desiccants, such as glycols, that had been previously determined to be unacceptable or undesirable in these types of applications. In an example, the membrane can be an ion-exchange membrane or pervaporation membrane.

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LIQUID TO AIR MEMBRANE ENERGY EXCHANGERS

5

[0001]**BACKGROUND**

- 10 **[0002]** A liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) transfers heat and moisture between a liquid desiccant and an air stream in order to condition the temperature and humidity of the air flowing through the LAMEE. LAMEEs can be employed in a number of different applications, including, for example, Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems, dehumidification systems,
- 15 evaporative cooling, industrial applications requiring treated air, etc. In another application, the exchanger transfers heat and moisture between the desiccant and air in order to condition the temperature and concentration of the desiccant by both releasing or gaining heat and releasing or gaining moisture in the desiccant in any combination.
- 20 **[0003]** Existing LAMEEs use micro-porous hydrophobic membranes to contain a liquid desiccant, including, for example, a halide salt. In these membranes a micro-porous structure is created in a thin film of a low surface energy polymer such as PTFE, polypropylene or polyethylene. The hydrophobic membrane resists penetration by the liquid due to surface tension, while freely allowing the transfer of gases, including
- 25 water vapor, through the membrane pores. In the LAMEE application, the membranes are typically about 20 microns thick with a mean pore size of 0.1 - 0.2 micron. Micro-porous membranes however, are subject to two potential problems which can directly affect their function. Firstly, the membrane pores could become blocked by mineral deposition, dust accumulation, etc., which would degrade the moisture vapor transfer
- 30 rate of the membrane and require cleaning to restore performance. Secondly, the membrane pores could become contaminated by a surfactant, oil, or other compound, which lowers the surface tension of the desiccant and allows penetration of the liquid through the pores. The susceptibility of micro-porous membranes to surfactants may require prevention or inhibition of environmental exposure to these compounds.

[0004] Liquid desiccants used in HVAC and drying applications are typically solutions of halide salts (such as lithium chloride, magnesium chloride, calcium chloride, or lithium bromide) and water. These solutions have two important properties: they are strongly hygroscopic and the salt is non-volatile. The hygroscopic property allows the solution to either release or absorb water vapor from an air stream depending on the water vapor pressure of the solution compared to that of the air. High concentration salt solutions (for example a 40% LiCl solution) can have very low vapor pressures, which produces a large potential for dehumidification of the air stream encountering the solution. Traditionally, liquid desiccant systems designed for industrial and commercial drying applications have used direct contact exchangers, in which a media wetted with desiccant (such as a cellulose honeycomb matrix) is exposed directly to an air stream. These exchangers require a salt that is non-volatile under the temperatures and pressures used for air treatment so that the salt does not evaporate into the air. The salt charge remains in the system and does not have to be replenished over time. Membrane exchangers with micro-porous membranes have the same requirement, since a gas phase can freely move through the membrane.

[0005] The main disadvantage of salt-based desiccants is that they are very corrosive to metals. For example, lithium chloride (LiCl) causes rapid corrosion of most ferrous and nonferrous metals with example exceptions including titanium and some copper-nickel alloys. Direct contact exchangers have not been widely used in HVAC applications because of the potential for desiccant droplet carryover into the air stream and corrosion of downstream metal ducting, fans and other air handling equipment. The membrane exchanger provides separation of the desiccant from the air, preventing droplet carryover; however, in the event of a membrane failure or liquid circuit leak, some local corrosion may occur if the desiccant is not detected and cleaned up. The corrosive desiccant also contributes to an increased cost for the exchanger and liquid pumping circuit because corrosion resistant materials may need to be used in portions of the circuit that may encounter the desiccant. Corrosion resistant sensors, pumps, heat exchangers, etc. may all contribute to increased cost for the circuit vs. components mass produced from non-corrosion resistant metals. In addition, secure containment of the desiccant is required in the event of a circuit leak or spill to prevent migration of corrosive desiccant into the air handling unit cabinet, mechanical room or building structure. This can further add to system cost and complexity. The lithium salts can also be relatively expensive, and costs may continue

to rise due to pressure on the global lithium supply from lithium-ion battery production.

[0006] Glycols are another type of liquid desiccant that have been used in some drying applications. Glycols, however, are volatile and will steadily evaporate into an air stream when used in a direct contact exchanger or a membrane exchanger with micro-porous membranes. The steady consumption of glycol and the impact on air quality has made this desiccant unacceptable for most HVAC and dehumidification applications. Other potential strong hygroscopic fluids that are low cost, non-toxic and non-corrosive also may not be used in existing liquid desiccant systems because of either volatility, reactivity with air or air pollutants or production of odors. Therefore, current liquid desiccant systems are sometimes restricted to using halide salts with their inherent drawbacks.

OVERVIEW

[0007] The present inventors recognize, among other things, an opportunity for an energy exchanger that allows for use of a variety of liquid desiccants in combination with a non-porous, selectively permeable membrane.

[0008] The following non-limiting examples pertain generally, but not by way of limitation, to energy exchanger systems and methods for conditioning air in an enclosed space, such as a commercial or residential building. The following non-limiting examples are provided to further illustrate the systems and methods disclosed herein.

[0009] Examples according to the present application include LAMEEs including a membrane that is selectively permeable to water, including any of the membranes disclosed herein. Example LAMEEs in accordance with the present application can be employed in a variety of systems/applications, including, for example, residential and commercial HVAC, dehumidification, humidification, desiccant regeneration, evaporative cooling and industrial drying applications.

[0010] In one example, a LAMEE includes a selectively permeable membrane separating an air stream from a liquid desiccant. The membrane is selectively permeable to water but not to other species/constituents present in the liquid desiccant or air. In one example, the membrane is a non-porous membrane. Example membranes may allow the use of hygroscopic fluids, which may be volatile, reactive and otherwise unsuitable for use in existing micro-porous membrane or direct contact

liquid desiccant exchangers. In one example, the selectively permeable membrane includes an ion exchange membrane. In another example, the selectively permeable membrane includes a pervaporation membrane.

[0011] Examples according to the present application may address at least some of the drawbacks with current LAMEE technology using halide salt solutions by including an improved combination of fluid desiccant and membrane. For example, the liquid desiccant may be selected to be strongly hygroscopic, non-corrosive, non-toxic, and low cost; the membrane may have high water transport rates, be non-permeable to other species in the chosen desiccant, low cost, and have good mechanical properties and thermal/chemical stability. LAMEE systems in accordance with the present application may have an operating performance comparable with current LAMEEs, but with potentially significantly reduced costs and risk compared to current systems using salt-based desiccants. LAMEE systems in accordance with the present application may have a broader market acceptance in the HVAC industry and lead to wider adoption of energy efficient liquid desiccant conditioning equipment. In addition, selectively permeable membranes included in examples of the present application may have a reduced risk to membrane fouling, surfactant contamination, and biological growth.

[0012] Selectively permeable membranes employed in examples of the present application may also allow the use of salt solutions that have a higher potential to precipitate out. In some cases, for example in LAMEEs including a micro-porous membrane, this could occur near the membrane surface leading to fouling, but, due to the nature of selectively permeable membranes in accordance with examples of the present application, the precipitate is not likely to foul the membrane. Instead the precipitate could flow through the LAMEE and be collected and purged from the system with a mechanical filter, leaving the membrane intact and functioning to specifications. Such membranes may also be well suited for the utilization of acetate salts, widely avoided due to the evaporation of acetic acid leading to a pungent vinegar smell in the space. The acetic acid vapors would be contained by the selectively permeable membrane.

[0012a] According to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) comprising: at least one air flow channel comprising a first inlet for receiving a flow of air into the LAMEE and a first outlet for exhausting the flow of air out of the LAMEE, a
5 temperature and a humidity of the air changing between the first inlet and the first outlet; at least one liquid desiccant channel comprising a second inlet for receiving a flow of liquid desiccant into the LAMEE and a second outlet for expelling the flow of liquid desiccant from the LAMEE; and a selectively permeable, non-porous membrane interposed between the flow of air and
10 the flow of liquid desiccant, the membrane being selectively permeable to water in the flow of air and the flow of liquid desiccant, wherein water molecules or ions are transportable through the membrane to transfer water between the air and the liquid desiccant.

[0012b] According to another aspect of the present invention, there is
15 provided a liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) comprising: a plurality of semi-permeable, non-porous membranes arranged in parallel; a liquid desiccant channel formed by first and second membranes of the plurality of membranes, the first and second membranes being adjacent to one another, the liquid desiccant channel configured to receive a liquid desiccant flowing through
20 the liquid desiccant channel; and an air channel adjacent to the liquid desiccant channel and formed by the second membrane and a third membrane of the plurality of membranes, the second and third membranes being adjacent to one another, the air channel configured to receive air flowing through the air channel, wherein the liquid desiccant conditions the air flowing through the air channel, and
25 at least one of a temperature and humidity of the air at an inlet of the air channel is different than a temperature and humidity of the air at an outlet of the air channel, and wherein each of the membranes of the plurality of membranes is selectively permeable to water in the air and liquid desiccant.

[0012c] According to still another aspect of the present invention, there is
30 provided a method of conditioning air in an enclosed space, the method comprising: providing a liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) comprising a non-porous membrane selectively permeable to water; directing a flow of air through the LAMEE; and directing a flow of liquid desiccant through the

LAMEE, wherein the liquid desiccant conditions the air, and at least one of a temperature and a humidity of the air at an inlet of the LAMEE is different than a temperature and a humidity of the air at an outlet of the LAMEE, and wherein water in the air and liquid desiccant is transportable through the membrane.

- 5 **[0013]** This overview is intended to provide an overview of subject matter of the present patent application. It is not intended to provide an exclusive or exhaustive explanation of the invention. The detailed description is included to provide further information about the present patent application.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0014] In the drawings, which are not necessarily drawn to scale, like numerals may describe similar components in different views. Like numerals having different letter suffixes may represent different instances of similar components. The drawings
- 5 illustrate generally, by way of example, but not by way of limitation, various embodiments discussed in the present document.
- [0015] FIG. 1 is a schematic of an example energy exchange system in accordance with the present patent application.
- [0016] FIG. 2 is a side perspective view of an example liquid-to-air membrane energy
- 10 exchanger in accordance with the present patent application.
- [0017] FIG. 3 is a cut-away front view of panels within an example energy exchange cavity of a liquid-to-air membrane energy exchanger in accordance with the present patent application.
- [0018] FIG. 4 is an exploded isometric top view of an example energy exchange cavity
- 15 of a liquid-to-air membrane energy exchanger in accordance with the present patent application.
- [0019] FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of an example panel of a liquid-to-air membrane energy exchanger in accordance with the present patent application.
- [0020] FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional view of another example of a panel of a liquid-to-air
- 20 membrane energy exchanger in accordance with the present patent application.
- [0021] FIG. 7 is a flow chart for an example of a method in accordance with the present patent application.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- 25 [0022] A liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) can be used as part of a heating and cooling system (or energy exchange system) to transfer heat and moisture between a liquid desiccant and an air stream to condition the temperature and humidity of the air flowing through the LAMEE. The membrane can be a non-porous film having selective permeability for water, but not for other constituents that form
- 30 the liquid desiccant. Many different types of liquid desiccants can be used in combination with the non-porous membrane, including, for example, glycols. The non-porous membrane can make it feasible to use desiccants, such as glycols, that had been previously determined to be unacceptable or undesirable in these types of applications. For example, ion-exchange membranes can be designed to be selectively

permeable to ionic species (anions or cations) and water. Applications of ion-exchange membranes include fuel cells, desalination, water treatment, water purification, brine concentration, moisture exchange (including energy recovery exchangers), among others. These types of membranes can be constructed from polymers, inorganic materials and organic-inorganic hybrids, and can have a range of desirable attributes including very high flux rates of the permeable species, good mechanical properties and strength retention when exposed to water, and resistance to heat and chemical degradation. These membranes may also have inherent anti-fouling and anti-bacterial properties.

10 [0023] Example membranes are described below which are suitable with energy exchange systems described herein. Similarly, various types of liquid desiccants are described below as examples for use with the non-porous, selectively permeable membrane. It is recognized that any type of liquid desiccant that facilitates absorption of moisture from the air (or vice versa – release of moisture to the air) and is usable with a non-porous membrane can be included for use with the LAMEEs described herein.

[0024] FIG. 1 illustrates a schematic view of an example of an energy exchange system 100. The system 100 is configured to partly or fully condition air supplied to a structure 101. The system 100 may include an inlet 102 for a pre-conditioned air flow path 104. The pre-conditioned air flow path 104 may include outside air, air from a building adjacent to the enclosed structure 101, or air from a room within the enclosed structure 101. Airflow in the pre-conditioned air flow path 104 may be moved through the pre-conditioned air flow path 104 by a fan 106. The fan 106 directs the pre-conditioned air flow through path 104 to a supply air liquid-to-air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) 108. The supply air LAMEE 108 conditions the pre-conditioned air flow in path 104 to generate a change in air temperature and humidity (i.e. to pre-condition the air partly or fully) toward that which is required for a supply air flow condition to be discharged into the enclosed space 101. During a winter mode operation, the supply air LAMEE 108 may condition the pre-conditioned air flow path 104 by adding heat and moisture to the pre-conditioned air in flow path 104. In a summer mode operation, the supply air LAMEE 108 may condition the pre-conditioned air flow path 104 by removing heat and moisture from the pre-conditioned air in flow path 104. The pre-conditioned air 110 may be channeled to an HVAC system 112 of the enclosed structure 101. The HVAC system 112 may further condition the pre-

conditioned air **110** to generate the desired temperature and humidity for the supply air **114** that is supplied to the enclosed structure **101**.

[0025] As shown in FIG. 1, one fan **106** may be located upstream of the LAMEE **108**.

Optionally, the pre-conditioned air flow path **104** may be moved by a down-stream fan and/or by multiple fans or a fan array or before and after each LAMEE in the system.

[0026] Return air **116** is channeled out of the enclosed structure **101**. A mass flow rate portion **118** of the return air **116** may be returned to the HVAC system **112**. Another mass flow rate portion **119** of the return air **116** may be channeled to a return air or regeneration LAMEE **120**. The portions **118** and **119** may be separated with a damper

121 or the like. For example, 80% of the return air **116** may be channeled to the HVAC system **112** and 20% of the return air **116** may be channeled to the return air LAMEE **120**. The return air LAMEE **120** exchanges energy between the portion **119** of the return air **116** and the preconditioned air **110** in the supply air LAMEE **108**. During a winter mode, the return air LAMEE **120** collects heat and moisture from the portion

119 of the return air **116**. During a summer mode, the return air LAMEE **120** discharges heat and moisture into the portion **119** of the return air **116**. The return air LAMEE **120** generates exhaust air **122**. The exhaust air **122** is discharged from the structure **101** through an outlet **124**. A fan **126** may be provided to move the exhaust air **122** from the return air LAMEE **120**. The system **100** may include multiple fans **126** or one or more fan arrays located either up-stream or down-stream (as in FIG. 1) of the return air LAMEE **120**.

[0027] A liquid, such as a desiccant fluid **127**, flows between the supply air LAMEE **108** and the return air LAMEE **120**. The desiccant fluid **127** transfers the heat and moisture between the supply air LAMEE **108** and the return air LAMEE **120**. The system **100** may

include desiccant storage tanks **128** in fluid communication between the supply air LAMEE **108** and the return air LAMEE **120**. The storage tanks **128** store the desiccant fluid **127** as it is channeled between the supply air LAMEE **108** and the return air LAMEE **120**. Optionally, the system **100** may not include both storage tanks **128** or may have more than two storage tanks. Pumps **130** are provided to move the desiccant fluid **127** from the storage tanks **128** to one of the supply air LAMEE **108** or the return air LAMEE **120**. The illustrated embodiment includes two pumps **130**. Optionally, the system **100** may be configured with as few as one pump **130** or more than two pumps **130**. The desiccant fluid **127** flows between the supply air LAMEE **108** and the return

air LAMEE **120** to transfer heat and moisture between the conditioned air **110** and the portion **118** of the return air **116**.

[0028] The energy exchange system **100** of FIG. **1** is an example of the type of system that a LAMEE can be used within. It is recognized that the LAMEEs described herein
 5 can be used in other types of systems and designs configured for conditioning air for an enclosed space. In the example of FIG. **1**, the LAMEEs **108** and **120** can operate in a passive manner such that the liquid desiccant is not conditioned or controlled. In other words, the system **100** may not include means to heat or cool the liquid desiccant or change a concentration of the liquid desiccant. In other examples, one or
 10 more LAMEEs, which are similar in design to the LAMEEs described herein, can be part of the HVAC system and the LAMEEs can be actively controlled. The liquid desiccant in the LAMEE can be heated or cooled depending on, for example, set point conditions of the HVAC system. Similarly, a concentration of the liquid desiccant can be increased or decreased by adding water or concentrated desiccant.

[0029] FIG. **2** illustrates a side perspective view of an example of a LAMEE **300**. The LAMEE **300** may be used as the supply air LAMEE **108** and/or the return or exhaust air LAMEE **120** (shown in FIG. **1**). The LAMEE **300** includes a housing **302** having a body **304**. The body **304** includes an air inlet end **306** and an air outlet end **308**. A top **310** extends between the air inlet end **306** and the air outlet end **308**. While not shown, a stepped-down top may be positioned at the air inlet end **306**. The stepped-down top may be stepped a distance from the top **310**. A bottom **316** extends between the air inlet end **306** and the air outlet end **308**. While not shown, a stepped-up bottom may be positioned at the air outlet end **308**. The stepped-up bottom may be stepped a distance from the bottom **316**. In alternative designs the stepped-up bottom or
 20 stepped-down top sections may have different sizes of steps or no step at all. An air inlet **322** is positioned at the air inlet end **306**. An air outlet **324** is positioned at the air outlet end **308**. Sides **326** extend between the air inlet **322** and the air outlet **324**.

[0030] An energy exchange cavity **330** extends through the housing **302** of the LAMEE **300**. The energy exchange cavity **330** extends from the air inlet end **306** to the air
 30 outlet end **308**. An air stream **332** is received in the air inlet **322** and flows through the energy exchange cavity **330**. The air stream **332** is discharged from the energy exchange cavity **330** at the air outlet **324**. The energy exchange cavity **330** may include a plurality of panels **334**, such as liquid panels configured to receive desiccant and direct the flow of the desiccant therethrough.

[0031] A desiccant inlet reservoir **352** may be positioned on the top **310**. The desiccant inlet reservoir **352** may be configured to receive desiccant, which may be stored in a storage tank **128** (shown in FIG. 1). The desiccant inlet reservoir **352** may include an inlet in flow communication with the storage tank **128**. The desiccant is received through the inlet. The desiccant inlet reservoir **352** may also include an outlet that is in fluid communication with desiccant channels **376** of the panels **334** in the energy exchange cavity **330**. The liquid desiccant flows through the outlet into the desiccant channels **376**. The desiccant flows along the panels **334** through the desiccant channels **376** to a desiccant outlet reservoir **354**, which may be positioned at or proximate the bottom **316**. Accordingly, the desiccant may flow through the LAMEE **300** from top to bottom. For example, the desiccant may flow into the desiccant channels **376** proximate the desiccant inlet reservoir **352**, through the desiccant channels **376**, and out of the LAMEE **300** proximate to the desiccant outlet reservoir **354**. In an alternative embodiment, the desiccant may flow through the LAMEE **300** from bottom to top.

[0032] Air from an enclosed space like a commercial or residential building enters the LAMEE **300** through the air inlet end **306**. The air **332** entering the LAMEE **300** has a first temperature and a first humidity. The air **332** flows through one or more air flow channels in the LAMEE **300**, which are separated from the liquid desiccant flowing through the LAMEE **300** by selectively permeable membrane(s). As the inlet air **332** flows through the LAMEE **300**, the liquid desiccant acts to condition the air by altering the temperature and humidity of the air. For example, the liquid desiccant can have a lower temperature than the inlet air and can act to remove heat from the inlet air such that the conditioned air exiting the LAMEE **300** is at a lower temperature compared to the air entering the LAMEE **300**.

[0033] Additionally, the hygroscopic property of the desiccant can allow the desiccant to either release or absorb water vapor from the inlet air depending, for example, on the water vapor pressure of the desiccant compared to that of the inlet air. For example, liquid desiccants with relatively low vapor pressures can provide a large potential for dehumidification of the inlet air flowing through the LAMEE **300**. The conditioned air flowing out of the LAMEE **300** after being conditioned by the liquid desiccant separated from the air by the selectively permeable membrane has a second temperature and second humidity, which is different than the first temperature and first humidity of the inlet air.

[0034] FIG. 3 illustrates a cut-away front view of the panels 334 within the energy exchange cavity 330 of the LAMEE 300, according to an embodiment. The panels 334 may be solution or liquid panels configured to direct the flow of liquid, such as desiccant, therethrough, as explained below. The panels 334 form a liquid desiccant flow path 376 that is confined by semi-permeable membranes 378 on either side and is configured to carry desiccant therethrough. Each membrane 378 may be any flexible structure that may generally bulge under fluid pressure. The semi-permeable membranes 378 are arranged in parallel to form air channels 336 with an average flow channel width of 337 and liquid desiccant channels 376 with an average flow channel width of 377. In one embodiment, the semi-permeable membranes 378 are spaced to form uniform air channels 336 and liquid desiccant channels 376. The air stream 332 (shown in FIG. 2) travels through the air channels 336 between the semi-permeable membranes 378. The desiccant in each desiccant channel 376 exchanges heat and moisture with the air stream 332 in the air channels 336 through the semi-permeable membranes 378. The air channels 336 alternate with the liquid desiccant channels 376. Except for the two side panels of the energy exchange cavity, each air channel 336 may be positioned between adjacent liquid desiccant channels 376.

[0035] It is noted that for purposes of the present application, semi-permeable and selectively permeable have the same meaning.

[0036] In order to minimize or otherwise eliminate the liquid desiccant channels 376 from outwardly bulging or bowing, membrane support assemblies may be positioned within the air channels 336. The membrane support assemblies are configured to support the membranes, and may promote turbulent air flow between the air channels 336 and the membranes 378.

[0037] As an example, the LAMEE 300 may be similar to a LAMEE as described in WO 2011/161547, entitled "Liquid-To-Air Membrane Energy Exchanger," filed Jun. 22, 2011.

[0038] FIG. 4 illustrates an exploded isometric top view of an example of an energy exchange cavity 400. The energy exchange cavity 400 may include a plurality of liquid panel assemblies 402 spaced apart from one another by membrane support assemblies 404, such as those described in U.S. Patent Application Ser. No. 13/797,062, entitled "Membrane Support Assembly for an Energy Exchanger," filed March 12, 2013, and published as US Pub. No. US 2014/0054004. The membrane support assemblies 404 may reside in air channels 406. For example, the membrane support

assemblies **404** may prevent membranes **418** of the solution panel assemblies **402** from outwardly bulging or bowing into the air channels **406**. Airflow **408** is configured to pass through the air channels **406** between liquid panel assemblies **402**. As shown, the airflow **408** may generally be aligned with a horizontal axis **410** of the energy exchange cavity **400**. Thus, the airflow **408** may be horizontal with respect to the energy exchange cavity **400**. Notably, however, the membrane support assemblies **404** may include turbulence promoters configured to generate turbulence, eddies, and the like in the airflow **408** within the energy exchange cavity **400**.

[0039] Each liquid panel assembly **402** may include a support frame **412** connected to an inlet member **414** at an upper corner **415** and an outlet member **416** at a lower corner **417** that may be diagonal to the upper corner **415**. Further, membranes **418** are positioned on each side of the support frame **412**. The membranes **418** sealingly engage the support frame **412** along outer edges in order to contain liquid within the liquid panel assembly **402**. Alternatively, a single membrane may sealingly wrap around an entirety of the support frame **412**.

[0040] Each inlet member **414** may include a liquid delivery opening **420**, while each outlet member **416** may include a liquid passage opening **422**. The liquid delivery openings **420** may be connected together through conduits, pipes, or the like, while the liquid passage openings **422** may be connected together through conduits, pipes, or the like. Optionally, the inlet members **414** and outlet members **416** may be sized and shaped to directly mate with one another so that a liquid-tight seal is formed therebetween. Accordingly, liquid, such as desiccant may flow through the liquid delivery openings **420** and the liquid passage openings **422**. The inlet members **414** and outlet members **416** may be modular components configured to selectively couple and decouple from other inlet members **414** and outlet members **416**, respectively. For example, the inlet members **414** and outlet members **416** may be configured to securely mate with other inlet members **414** and outlet members **416**, respectively, through snap and/or latching connections, or through fasteners and adhesives.

[0041] As shown, the liquid panel assemblies **402**, the membrane support assemblies **404**, and the air channels **406** may all be vertically oriented. The liquid panel assemblies **402** may be flat plate exchangers that are vertically-oriented with respect to a base that is supported by a floor, for example, of a structure.

[0042] Alternatively, the liquid panel assemblies **402**, the membrane support assemblies **404**, and the air channels **406** may all be horizontally oriented. For

example, the liquid panel assemblies **402** may be flat plate exchangers that are horizontally-oriented with respect to a base that is supported by a floor, for example, of a structure.

[0043] In operation, liquid, such as desiccant, flows into the liquid delivery openings **420** of the inlet members **414**. For example, the liquid may be pumped into the liquid delivery openings **420** through a pump. The liquid then flows into the support frames **412** through a liquid path **424** toward the outlet members **416**. As shown, the liquid path **424** includes a vertical descent **426** that connects to a horizontal, flow portion, such as a flow portion **428**, which, in turn, connects to a vertical descent **430** that connects to the liquid passage opening **422** of the outlet member **416**. The vertical descents **426** and **430** may be perpendicular to the horizontal, flow portion **428**. As such, the liquid flows through the solution panel assemblies **402** from the top corners **415** to the lower corners **417**. As shown, the length of the horizontal, flow portion **428** substantially exceeds half the length L of the liquid panel assemblies **402**. The horizontal, flow portion **428** provides liquid, such as desiccant, that may counterflow with respect to the airflow **408**. Alternatively, the flow portion may be a crossflow, parallel-aligned flow, or other such flow portion, for example.

[0044] The airflow **408** that passes between the liquid panel assemblies **402** exchanges energy with the liquid flowing through the liquid panel assemblies **402**. The liquid may be a desiccant, refrigerant, or any other type of liquid that may be used to exchange energy with the airflow **408**.

[0045] The energy exchange cavity **400** may include more or less liquid panel assemblies **402**, membrane support assemblies **404**, and air channels **406** than those shown in FIG. 4. The inlet and outlet members **414** and **416** may be modular panel headers that are configured to selectively attach and detach from neighboring inlet and outlet members **414** and **416** to provide a manifold for liquid to enter into and pass out of the liquid panel assemblies **402**. Sealing agents, such as gaskets, silicone gel, or the like, may be disposed between neighboring inlet members **414** and neighboring outlet members **416**. At least a portion of the membrane sealingly engages the inlet and outlet members **414** and **416**. The liquid panel assembly **402** formed in this manner provides a fully-sealed, stand-alone unit having openings at the inlet and outlet members **414** and **416**, notably the openings **420** and **422**, respectively. Accordingly, the liquid panel assembly **402** may be pre-tested for leaks

and membrane holes prior to being positioned within an energy exchange cavity, for example.

[0046] Additional details about the liquid panel assemblies 402 are provided in U.S. Patent Application Ser. No. 13/797,152, entitled "Liquid Panel Assembly", filed March 12, 2013, and published as US Pub. No. US 2014/0054013.

[0047] FIG. 5 illustrates a cross-sectional view of an example of a panel 500 for use in a LAMEE. The panel 500 can be similar to the panels 334 described above and shown in FIG. 3, and multiple panels, like panel 500, can be included in the LAMEE. The panel 500 can be configured to direct the flow of liquid, such as desiccant, in a direction indicated by arrows 502. The liquid desiccant can include water 504 and one or more non-water constituents 506. The panel 500 can include a pair of membranes 508 that contain or seal the liquid desiccant. The flow of air, as indicated by arrows 510, can be in a direction opposite to the flow of liquid 502. Arrows 512 indicate a flux of water 504 from the liquid desiccant to the air through the membrane 508. The flux of water 504 can also be in the opposite direction of the arrows 512 in FIG. 5 and water can flow from the air to the desiccant.

[0048] The membrane 508 is non-porous and selectively permeable to water 504, but not permeable to the one or more non-water constituents 506 present in the liquid desiccant or air. In an example, the membrane 508 can be a non-porous film. The membrane 508 does not allow a general transfer of other species/constituent compounds present in the liquid desiccant or air, including the one or more non-water constituents 506, through the membrane 508. In some examples, the membrane 508 may allow a very low flux of the one or more non-water constituents 506 in the desiccant if the flux rate is considered acceptable for a given application. As such, the one or more non-water constituents 506 may not be completely contained by the membranes 508. As shown in FIG. 5, a non-water constituent 506 may permeate the membrane 508; however, the panel 500 is configured such that the one or more non-water constituents 506 are largely contained by the membrane 508. The panel 500 is thus able to function sufficiently in the LAMEE without having to replace the liquid desiccant more frequently than normal or acceptable.

[0049] In an example, the membrane 508 is a solution-diffusion membrane which facilitates transport of the water 504 through the membrane 508. The transport can be provided by, for example, ion conduction channels in the membrane 508. Thus transport can be guided by specific structural features in the membrane 508;

alternatively, in other examples, transport can occur at any location on the membrane 508.

[0050] The water molecules 504 can be transported from the liquid desiccant through the membrane 508 to the air which is flowing in an opposite direction to the flow of the liquid desiccant. Similarly, water from the air can be transported from the air through the membrane 508 to the liquid desiccant, depending on particular conditions of the air. The water molecules 504 may be transported through the membrane 508 as ions (such as, for example, H^+ and OH^- ions) rather than as H_2O molecules. The water molecules 504 may be transported through the membrane 508 in a liquid or vapor phase.

[0051] Various types of selectively permeable, non-porous membranes can be used as the membrane 508. In an example, ion-exchange membranes can be designed to be selectively permeable to ionic species and water. Examples of ion-exchange membranes with a selective permeability for water include Nexar® polymers, which are sulfonated block copolymers from Kraton Performance Polymers (reference is made to US Patent No. 7,737,224), and Aquivion® PFSA from Solvay Plastics. Membranes formed of these materials can include, for example, Short Side Chain (SSC) copolymer of Tetrafluoroethylene and a Sulfonyl Fluoride Vinyl Ether (SFVE) $F_2C=CF-O-CF_2CF_2-SO_2F$ of low molecular weight. It is recognized that these polymers can be modified to achieve desired characteristics.

[0052] Pervaporation membranes can be used as the membrane 508. Hydrophilic pervaporation membranes have been developed for dehydration of organic solvents such as glycols, alcohols, and other azeotropic or close boiling mixtures. These membranes are selectively permeable to water, and when the liquid solution is exposed to the membrane with a vacuum or low vapor pressure gas on the other side, the water selectively permeates/diffuses through the membrane and then evaporates on the side with the gas phase while the solvent is isolated on the liquid side.

[0053] Pervaporation membranes are currently available with high flux rates, high selectivity ratio, and good thermal/chemical stability. Examples include cross-linked chitosan, ceramic, silica-based, polyvinyl alcohol, and polyimide-based membranes.

[0054] It is recognized that the non-porous membrane 508 can include at least one porous portion or layer. In an example, a non-porous film can be deposited onto a porous substrate and the porous substrate can act as a supporting layer to the non-porous film. In some examples, a backer layer can also be included with the porous

substrate and non-porous film. The backer layer can be thicker than the porous substrate and thicker than the non-porous film, and can be formed, for example, from a spun bond or other fibrous material. The non-porous film can be very thin, relative to the porous layer and the backer layer.

5 [0055] Various types of liquid desiccants can be used within the panel 500 of FIG. 5, in combination with the non-porous, selectively permeable membrane 508. In an example, the liquid desiccant can include a glycol or glycol-water solution. Glycols are traditionally considered to be unsuitable for use in a LAMEE because glycols are volatile and evaporate. However, a glycol based liquid desiccant can be used here with
10 a non-porous membrane since the glycol can be largely contained within the pair of membranes securing the liquid desiccant.

[0056] In an example, the liquid desiccant can include glycols, or glycol-based solutions, such as triethylene glycol and propylene glycol, which are non-toxic, compatible with most metals and comparatively low in cost. Glycols can be strongly
15 hygroscopic at higher concentrations. For example, a 95% solution of triethylene glycol has a comparable drying/dehumidification potential to lithium chloride near saturation. Triethylene glycol and tripropylene glycol can have low vapor pressures, but can be expensive. Less expensive and higher vapor pressure glycols, such as ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, propylene glycol and dipropylene glycol, can be used
20 herein.

[0057] In an example, the liquid desiccant can include an acetate salt, such as, but not limited to, an aqueous potassium acetate and an aqueous sodium acetate. Other examples of liquid desiccants usable in the system described herein include, but are not limited to, hygroscopic polyol based solutions, sulfuric acid and phosphoric acid.
25 Glycerol is an example of a hygroscopic polyol usable herein.

[0058] As described above, salt-based desiccants can have disadvantages when used with energy exchangers similar to those described herein; however, such salt-based desiccants can offer advantages as well, since these types of desiccants are generally not volatile and are resistant to degradation. Examples of salt-based desiccants usable
30 herein include lithium chloride, magnesium chloride, calcium chloride, lithium bromide, lithium iodide, potassium fluoride, zinc bromide, zinc iodide, calcium bromide, sodium iodide and sodium bromide.

[0059] In summary, any type of liquid desiccant compatible with a non-porous membrane and useful in conditioning air can be used in the panel 500 and LAMEEs

described herein. The types of liquid desiccant can include, but are not limited to, an acetate salt solution, a halide salt solution, a hygroscopic polyol based solution, a glycol based solution, a sulfuric acid solution, a phosphoric acid solution, and any combinations thereof. It is recognized that mixtures of desiccants can be used as the liquid desiccant in the panel **500** and LAMEEs described herein.

[0060] FIG. 6 illustrates a cross-sectional view of another example of a panel **600** for use in a LAMEE. The panel **600** can be configured similarly to the panel **500** to direct the flow of liquid, such as desiccant, in a direction indicated by arrows **602**, and air flow, as indicated by arrows **610**, in a direction opposite to the flow of liquid **602**. The liquid desiccant can be contained within a liquid channel by way of membranes **608** that contain or seal the liquid desiccant. For simplicity, the species that make up the liquid desiccant (such as water and one or more non-water constituents, like species **504** and **506**, respectively, in FIG. 5) are not shown in FIG. 6.

[0061] The panel **600** can include a multi-layer membrane design. In addition to non-porous membranes **608**, the panel **600** can also include microporous membranes **609** adjacent to porous membranes **608**. The microporous membranes **609** can provide chemical or structural stability. The microporous membranes **609** can be air permeable, whereas the non-porous membranes **608** can be air impermeable. In an example, each microporous membrane **609** can be bonded to the adjacent porous membrane **608**, by lamination, deposition or other known bonding techniques. As similarly described above in reference to FIG. 5, arrows **612** indicate a flux of water (liquid or vapor) from the liquid desiccant to the air through the membranes **608** and **609**; alternatively, the flux of water can be in the opposite direction and water can flow from the air to the desiccant.

[0062] As shown, the microporous membranes **609** are in contact with the desiccant and the porous membranes **608** are in contact with the air. In another example, the microporous membranes **609** can be in contact with the air and the non-porous membranes **608** can be in contact with the desiccant. The microporous membranes **609** can each be formed of multiple microporous sublayers with different chemical and/or physical properties, such as corrosion resistance and pore size. Similarly, the non-porous membranes **608** can each be formed of multiple non-porous layers of different compositions and characteristics.

[0063] In another example, each side of the panel **600** can include more than two layers with alternating non-porous **608** and microporous **609** membranes.

[0064] In an example, the microporous membranes **609** can include polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), which is chemically stable and able to resist degradation. As such, it can be beneficial, in an example, to have the microporous membranes **609** in contact with the desiccant. In an example, a microporous
5 membrane **609** including PTFE can be used in combination with a liquid desiccant including a halide salt, and the microporous membranes **609** and the non-porous membranes **608** can be configured as shown in FIG. **6**. The PTFE-containing membrane **609** (on the desiccant side) is chemically compatible with the halide salt of the liquid desiccant, and the non-porous membrane **608** (on the air side) can combat potential
10 leaking of the desiccant through the microporous membrane **609**.

[0065] FIG. **7** is a flowchart depicting an example method **700** for operating a LAMEE in accordance with the present application. The method **700** of FIG. **7** can include step **702** of directing a flow of air through a liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE), step **704** of directing a flow of liquid desiccant through the LAMEE, and step
15 **706** of interposing a selectively permeable membrane between the flow of air and the flow of liquid desiccant in the LAMEE. The membrane is non-porous and selectively permeable to water in the air and liquid desiccant flowing through the LAMEE. In other words, the selectively permeable membrane is permeable to water but generally not permeable to the one or more non-water constituents present in the liquid
20 desiccant or air, recognizing that that the membrane may be permeable to the non-water constituents at an acceptably low flux rate.

[0066] In an example, the method **700** can optionally include interposing a microporous membrane between the flow of air and the flow of liquid desiccant. The microporous membrane can be adjacent to or bonded to the selectively permeable
25 membrane.

[0067] The above detailed description includes references to the accompanying drawings, which form a part of the detailed description. The drawings show, by way of illustration, specific embodiments in which the invention can be practiced. These embodiments are also referred to herein as “examples.” Such examples can include
30 elements in addition to those shown or described. However, the present inventors also contemplate examples in which only those elements shown or described are provided. Moreover, the present inventors also contemplate examples using any combination or permutation of those elements shown or described (or one or more aspects thereof), either with respect to a particular example (or one or more aspects

thereof), or with respect to other examples (or one or more aspects thereof) shown or described herein.

[0068]

[0069] In this document, the terms “a” or “an” are used, as is common in patent documents, to include one or more than one, independent of any other instances or usages of “at least one” or “one or more.” In this document, the term “or” is used to refer to a nonexclusive or, such that “A or B” includes “A but not B,” “B but not A,” and “A and B,” unless otherwise indicated. In this document, the terms “including” and “in which” are used as the plain-English equivalents of the respective terms “comprising” and “wherein.” Also, in the following claims, the terms “including” and “comprising” are open-ended, that is, a system, device, article, or process that includes elements in addition to those listed after such a term in a claim are still deemed to fall within the scope of that claim. Moreover, in the following claims, the terms “first,” “second,” and “third,” etc. are used merely as labels, and are not intended to impose numerical requirements on their objects.

[0070] Method examples described herein can be machine or computer-implemented at least in part. Some examples can include a computer-readable medium or machine-readable medium encoded with instructions operable to configure an electronic device to perform methods as described in the above examples. An implementation of such methods can include code, such as microcode, assembly language code, a higher-level language code, or the like. Such code can include computer readable instructions for performing various methods. The code may form portions of computer program products. Further, the code can be tangibly stored on one or more volatile or non-volatile tangible computer-readable media, such as during execution or at other times. Examples of these tangible computer-readable media can include, but are not limited to, hard disks, removable magnetic disks, removable optical disks (e.g., compact disks and digital video disks), magnetic cassettes, memory cards or sticks, random access memories (RAMs), read only memories (ROMs), and the like.

[0071] Examples, as described herein, may include, or may operate on, logic or a number of components, modules, or mechanisms. Modules may be hardware, software, or firmware communicatively coupled to one or more processors in order to carry out the operations described herein. Modules may hardware modules, and as

5 such modules may be considered tangible entities capable of performing specified operations and may be configured or arranged in a certain manner. In an example, circuits may be arranged (e.g., internally or with respect to external entities such as other circuits) in a specified manner as a module. In an example, the whole or part of one or more computer systems (e.g., a standalone, client or server computer system)

10 or one or more hardware processors may be configured by firmware or software (e.g., instructions, an application portion, or an application) as a module that operates to perform specified operations. In an example, the software may reside on a machine-readable medium. In an example, the software, when executed by the underlying hardware of the module, causes the hardware to perform the specified operations.

15 Accordingly, the term hardware module is understood to encompass a tangible entity, be that an entity that is physically constructed, specifically configured (e.g., hardwired), or temporarily (e.g., transitorily) configured (e.g., programmed) to operate in a specified manner or to perform part or all of any operation described herein. Considering examples in which modules are temporarily configured, each of the

20 modules need not be instantiated at any one moment in time. For example, where the modules comprise a general-purpose hardware processor configured using software; the general-purpose hardware processor may be configured as respective different modules at different times. Software may accordingly configure a hardware processor, for example, to constitute a particular module at one instance of time and to

25 constitute a different module at a different instance of time. Modules may also be software or firmware modules, which operate to perform the methodologies described herein.

[0072] The above description is intended to be illustrative, and not restrictive. For example, the above-described examples (or one or more aspects thereof) may be used

30 in combination with each other. Other embodiments can be used, such as by one of ordinary skill in the art upon reviewing the above description.

[0073] The present application provides for the following exemplary embodiments or examples, the numbering of which is not to be construed as designating levels of importance:

- 5 **[0074]** Example 1 provides a liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) and can comprise at least one air flow channel comprising a first inlet for receiving a flow of air into the LAMEE and a first outlet for exhausting the flow of air out of the LAMEE, a temperature and a humidity of the air changing between the first inlet and the first outlet. The LAMEE can also comprise at least one liquid desiccant channel comprising
 - 10 a second inlet for receiving a flow of liquid desiccant into the LAMEE and a second outlet for expelling the flow of liquid desiccant from the LAMEE, and a selective permeable, non-porous membrane interposed between the flow of air and the flow of liquid desiccant. The membrane can be selectively permeable to water in the flow of air and the flow of liquid desiccant. Water molecules or ions can be transportable
 - 15 through the membrane to transfer water between the air and the liquid desiccant.
- [0075]** Example 2 provides the LAMEE of Example 1 optionally configured such that the selectively permeable, non-porous membrane comprises at least one of an ion exchange membrane, a pervaporation membrane, and a solution diffusion membrane.
- [0076]** Example 3 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 1 or 2 optionally configured
 - 20 such that the flow of liquid desiccant comprises a solution of glycol and water.
- [0077]** Example 4 provides the LAMEE of Example 3 optionally configured such that the glycol is selected from the group consisting of triethylene glycol, tripropylene glycol, ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, propylene glycol, dipropylene glycol, and combinations thereof.
- 25 **[0078]** Example 5 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 1-4 optionally configured such that the flow of liquid desiccant comprises an acetate salt.
- [0079]** Example 6 provides the LAMEE of Example 5 optionally configured such that the acetate salt comprises at least one of aqueous potassium acetate and aqueous sodium acetate.

[0080] Example 7 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 1-6 optionally configured such that the flow of liquid desiccant comprises a solution of one or more halide salts and water.

[0081] Example 8 provides the LAMEE of Example 7 optionally configured such that
5 the one or more halide salts are selected from the group consisting of lithium chloride, magnesium chloride, calcium chloride, lithium bromide, lithium iodide, potassium fluoride, zinc bromide, zinc iodide, calcium bromide, sodium iodide, sodium bromide, and combinations thereof.

[0082] Example 9 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 1-8 optionally configured
10 such that the flow of liquid desiccant comprises a desiccant selected from the group consisting of a hygroscopic polyol based solution, sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid, and combinations thereof.

[0083] Example 10 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 1-9 optionally configured
15 such that the selectively permeable, non-porous membrane is attached to a porous layer.

[0084] Example 11 provides the LAMEE of Example 10 optionally configured such that the non-porous membrane is adjacent to the at least one air flow channel and the porous layer is adjacent to the at least one liquid desiccant channel.

[0085] Example 12 provides the LAMEE of Example 10 optionally configured such that
20 the non-porous membrane is adjacent to the at least one liquid desiccant channel and the porous layer is adjacent to the at least one air flow channel.

[0086] Example 13 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 1-12 optionally configured such that the flow of liquid desiccant is selected from the group consisting of an acetate salt solution, a halide salt solution, a hygroscopic polyol based solution, a
25 glycol based solution, a sulfuric acid solution, a phosphoric acid solution, and any combinations thereof.

[0087] Example 14 provides a liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) and can comprise a plurality of semi-permeable, non-porous membranes arranged in parallel, and a liquid desiccant channel formed by first and second membranes of the
30 plurality of membranes. The first and second membranes can be adjacent to one another and the liquid desiccant channel can be configured to receive a liquid desiccant flowing through the liquid desiccant channel. The LAMEE can further comprise an air channel adjacent to the liquid desiccant channel and formed by the second membrane and a third membrane of the plurality of membranes. The second

and third membranes can be adjacent to one another and the air channel can be configured to receive air flowing through the air channel. The liquid desiccant can condition the air flowing through the air channel, and at least one of a temperature and humidity of the air at an inlet of the air channel can be different than a
5 temperature and humidity of the air at an outlet of the air channel. Each of the membranes of the plurality of membranes can be selectively permeable to water in the air and liquid desiccant.

[0088] Example 15 provides the LAMEE of Example 14 optionally configured such that each of the membranes of the plurality of membranes is attached to a porous layer.

10 **[0089]** Example 16 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 14 or 15 optionally configured such that each of the membranes of the plurality of membranes is selected from the group consisting of a solution diffusion membrane, an ion exchange membrane, and a pervaporation membrane.

[0090] Example 17 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 14-16 optionally
15 configured such that the liquid desiccant is selected from the group consisting of an acetate salt solution, a halide salt solution, a hygroscopic polyol based solution, a glycol based solution, a sulfuric acid solution, a phosphoric acid solution, and any combinations thereof.

[0091] Example 18 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 14-17 optionally further
20 comprising additional liquid desiccant channels and air channels formed by adjacent membranes of the plurality of membranes, wherein the liquid desiccant channels and air channels are arranged in an alternating pattern.

[0092] Example 19 provides the LAMEE of any of Examples 14-18 optionally
25 configured such that the air channel is configured to receive air flowing through the air channel in a direction opposite to the liquid desiccant flowing through the liquid desiccant channel.

[0093] Example 20 provides a method of conditioning air in an enclosed space and can
comprise providing a liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) comprising a non-porous membrane selectively permeable to water, directing a flow of air through
30 the LAMEE and a directing a flow of liquid desiccant through the LAMEE. The liquid desiccant can condition the air and at least one of a temperature and a humidity of the air at an inlet of the LAMEE is different than a temperature and a humidity of the air at an outlet of the LAMEE. Water in the air and liquid desiccant is transportable through the membrane.

[0094] Example 21 provides the method of Example 20 optionally configured such that the flow of liquid through the LAMEE is in an opposite direction to the flow of air through the LAMEE.

[0095] Example 22 provides the method of any of Examples 20 or 21 optionally
5 configured such that the liquid desiccant is selected from the group consisting of an acetate salt solution, a halide salt solution, a hygroscopic polyol based solution, a glycol based solution, a sulfuric acid solution, a phosphoric acid solution, and any combinations thereof.

[0096] Example 23 provides the method of Example 22 optionally configured such
10 that the liquid desiccant comprises a glycol based solution of water and glycol, and the glycol is selected from the group consisting of triethylene glycol, tripropylene glycol, ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, propylene glycol, dipropylene glycol, and combinations thereof.

[0097] Example 24 provides the method of any of Examples 20-23 optionally
15 configured such that the non-porous membrane comprises at least one of an ion exchange membrane, a pervaporation membrane, and a solution diffusion membrane.

[0098] Example 25 provides a system, LAMEE, or method of any one or any combination of Examples 1-24, which can be optionally configured such that all steps or elements recited are available to use or select from.

20 [0099] Various aspects of the disclosure have been described. These and other aspects are within the scope of the following claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) comprising:
at least one air flow channel comprising a first inlet for receiving a flow of air
5 into the LAMEE and a first outlet for exhausting the flow of air out of
the LAMEE, a temperature and a humidity of the air changing between
the first inlet and the first outlet;
at least one liquid desiccant channel comprising a second inlet for receiving a
flow of liquid desiccant into the LAMEE and a second outlet for
10 expelling the flow of liquid desiccant from the LAMEE; and
a selectively permeable, non-porous membrane interposed between the flow
of air and the flow of liquid desiccant, the membrane being selectively
permeable to water in the flow of air and the flow of liquid desiccant,
wherein water molecules or ions are transportable through the
15 membrane to transfer water between the air and the liquid desiccant.
2. The LAMEE of claim 1, wherein the selectively permeable, non-porous
membrane comprises at least one of an ion exchange membrane, a pervaporation
membrane, and a solution diffusion membrane.
20
3. The LAMEE of claim 1, wherein the flow of liquid desiccant comprises a
solution of glycol and water.
4. The LAMEE of claim 3, wherein the glycol is selected from the group consisting
25 of triethylene glycol, tripropylene glycol, ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, propylene
glycol, dipropylene glycol, and combinations thereof.
5. The LAMEE of claim 1, wherein the flow of liquid desiccant comprises an
acetate salt.
30
6. The LAMEE of claim 5, wherein the acetate salt comprises at least one of
aqueous potassium acetate and aqueous sodium acetate.

7. The LAMEE of claim 1, wherein the flow of liquid desiccant comprises a solution of one or more halide salts and water.
8. The LAMEE of claim 7, wherein the one or more halide salts are selected from the group consisting of lithium chloride, magnesium chloride, calcium chloride, lithium bromide, lithium iodide, potassium fluoride, zinc bromide, zinc iodide, calcium bromide, sodium iodide, sodium bromide, and combinations thereof.
9. The LAMEE of claim 1, wherein the flow of liquid desiccant comprises a desiccant selected from the group consisting of a hygroscopic polyol based solution, sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid, and combinations thereof.
10. The LAMEE of claim 1, wherein the selectively permeable, non-porous membrane is attached to a porous layer.
11. The LAMEE of claim 10, wherein the non-porous membrane is adjacent to the at least one air flow channel and the porous layer is adjacent to the at least one liquid desiccant channel.
12. The LAMEE of claim 10, wherein the non-porous membrane is adjacent to the at least one liquid desiccant channel and the porous layer is adjacent to the at least one air flow channel.
13. The LAMEE of claim 1, wherein the flow of liquid desiccant is selected from the group consisting of an acetate salt solution, a halide salt solution, a hygroscopic polyol based solution, a glycol based solution, a sulfuric acid solution, a phosphoric acid solution, and any combinations thereof.
14. A liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) comprising:
a plurality of semi-permeable, non-porous membranes arranged in parallel;
a liquid desiccant channel formed by first and second membranes of the plurality of membranes, the first and second membranes being adjacent to one another, the liquid desiccant channel configured to

- receive a liquid desiccant flowing through the liquid desiccant channel;
and
an air channel adjacent to the liquid desiccant channel and formed by the
second membrane and a third membrane of the plurality of
5 membranes, the second and third membranes being adjacent to one
another, the air channel configured to receive air flowing through the
air channel,
wherein the liquid desiccant conditions the air flowing through the air channel,
and at least one of a temperature and humidity of the air at an inlet of
10 the air channel is different than a temperature and humidity of the air
at an outlet of the air channel, and wherein each of the membranes of
the plurality of membranes is selectively permeable to water in the air
and liquid desiccant.
- 15 15. The LAMEE of claim 14, wherein each of the membranes of the plurality of
membranes is attached to a porous layer.
16. The LAMEE of claim 14, wherein each of the membranes of the plurality of
membranes is selected from the group consisting of a solution diffusion membrane, an
20 ion exchange membrane, and a pervaporation membrane.
17. The LAMEE of claim 14, wherein the liquid desiccant is selected from the group
consisting of an acetate salt solution, a halide salt solution, a hygroscopic polyol based
solution, a glycol based solution, a sulfuric acid solution, a phosphoric acid solution,
25 and any combinations thereof.
18. The LAMEE of claim 14, further comprising additional liquid desiccant channels
and air channels formed by adjacent membranes of the plurality of membranes,
wherein the liquid desiccant channels and air channels are arranged in an alternating
30 pattern.
19. The LAMEE of claim 14, wherein the air channel is configured to receive air
flowing through the air channel in a direction opposite to the liquid desiccant flowing
through the liquid desiccant channel.

20. A method of conditioning air in an enclosed space, the method comprising:
providing a liquid to air membrane energy exchanger (LAMEE) comprising a
non-porous membrane selectively permeable to water;
5 directing a flow of air through the LAMEE; and
directing a flow of liquid desiccant through the LAMEE, wherein the liquid
desiccant conditions the air, and at least one of a temperature and a
humidity of the air at an inlet of the LAMEE is different than a
temperature and a humidity of the air at an outlet of the LAMEE, and
10 wherein water in the air and liquid desiccant is transportable through
the membrane.
21. The method of claim 20 wherein the flow of liquid through the LAMEE is in an
opposite direction to the flow of air through the LAMEE.
- 15 22. The method of claim 20, wherein the liquid desiccant is selected from the
group consisting of an acetate salt solution, a halide salt solution, a hygroscopic polyol
based solution, a glycol based solution, a sulfuric acid solution, a phosphoric acid
solution, and any combinations thereof.
- 20 23. The method of claim 22, wherein the liquid desiccant comprises a glycol based
solution of water and glycol, and the glycol is selected from the group consisting of
triethylene glycol, tripropylene glycol, ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, propylene
glycol, dipropylene glycol, and combinations thereof.
- 25 24. The method of claim 20, wherein the non-porous membrane comprises at
least one of an ion exchange membrane, a pervaporation membrane, and a solution
diffusion membrane.

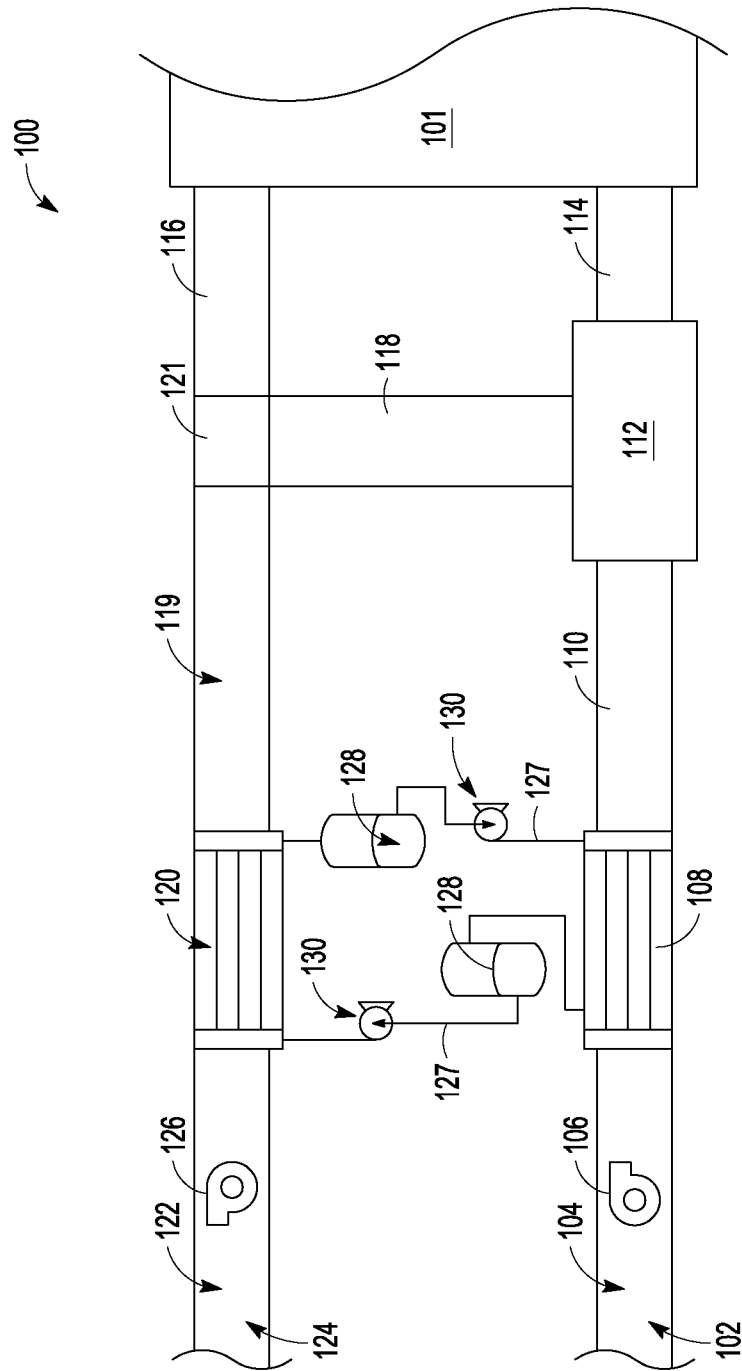


FIG. 1

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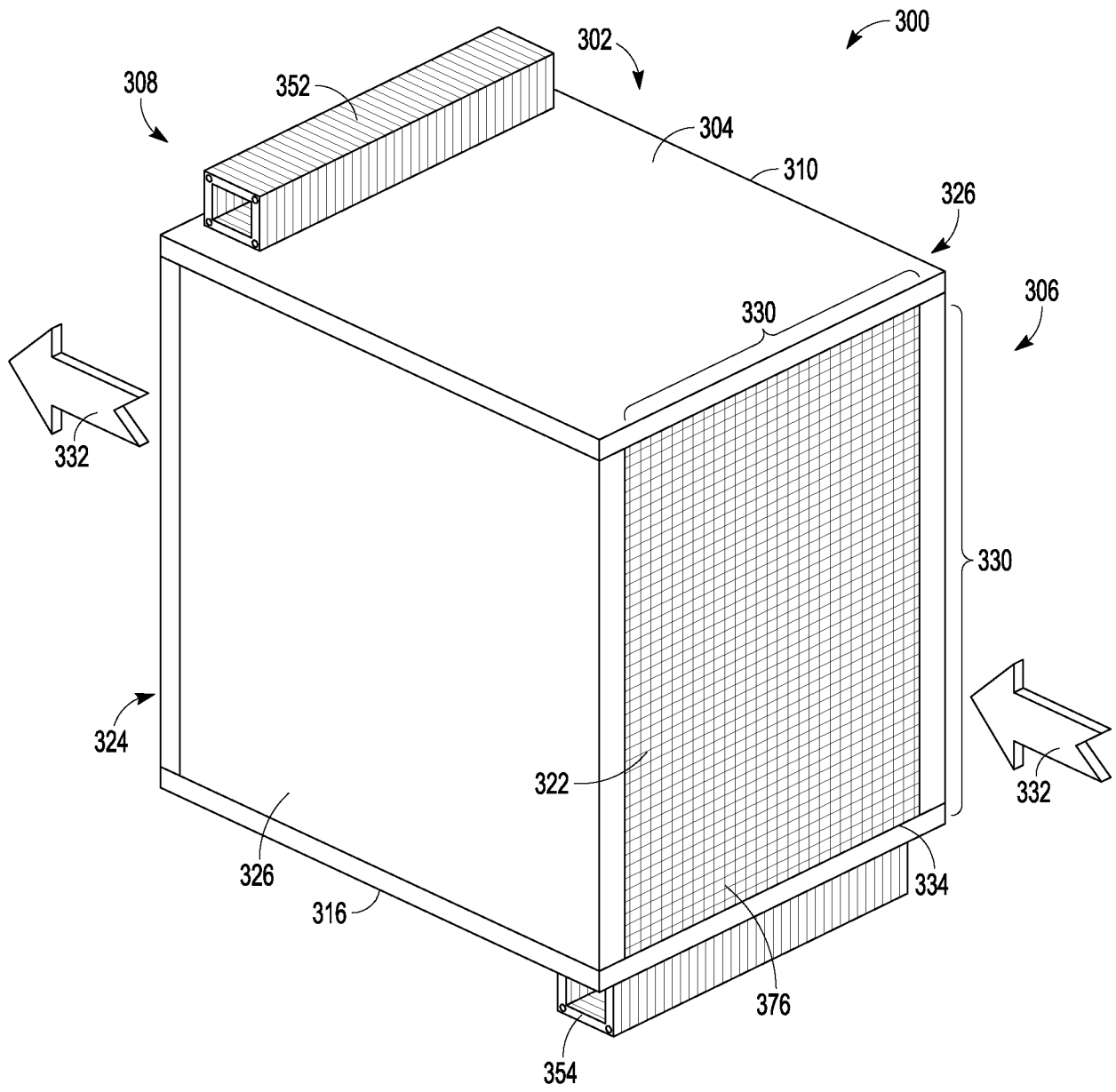


FIG. 2

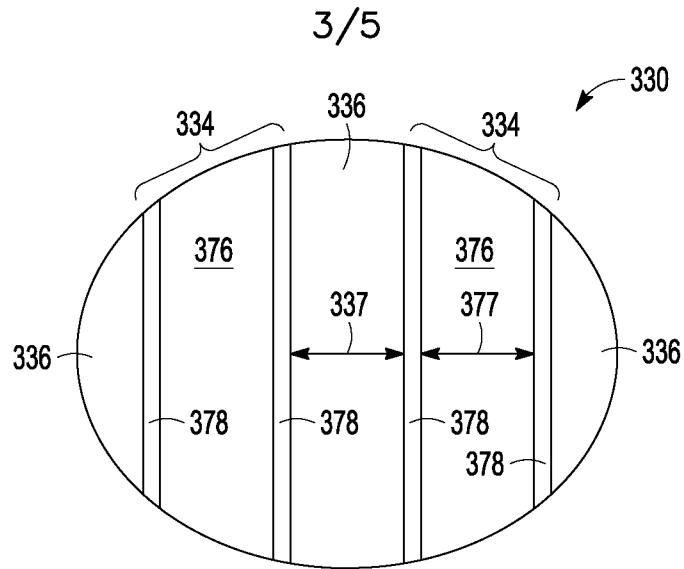


FIG. 3

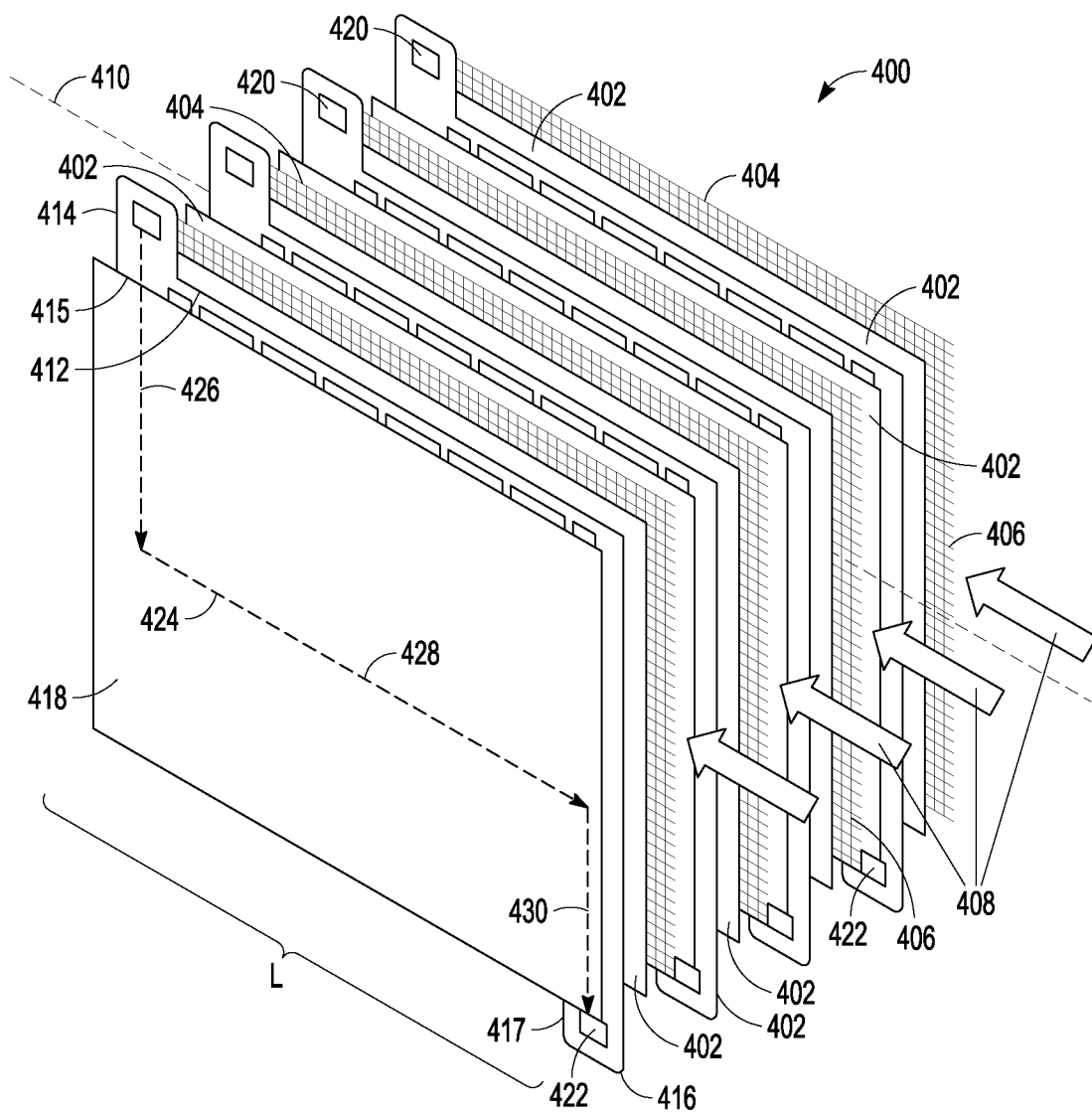


FIG. 4

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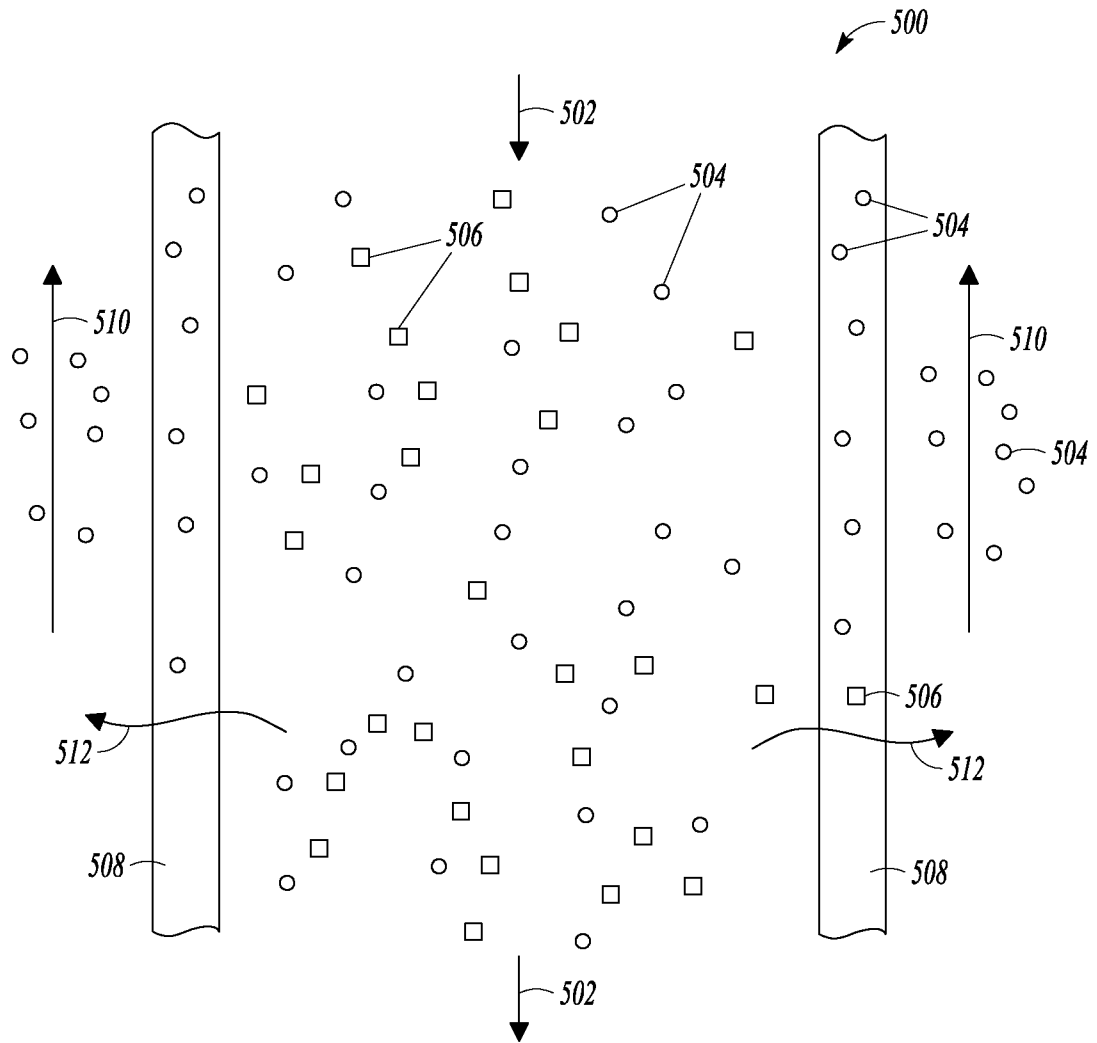


FIG. 5

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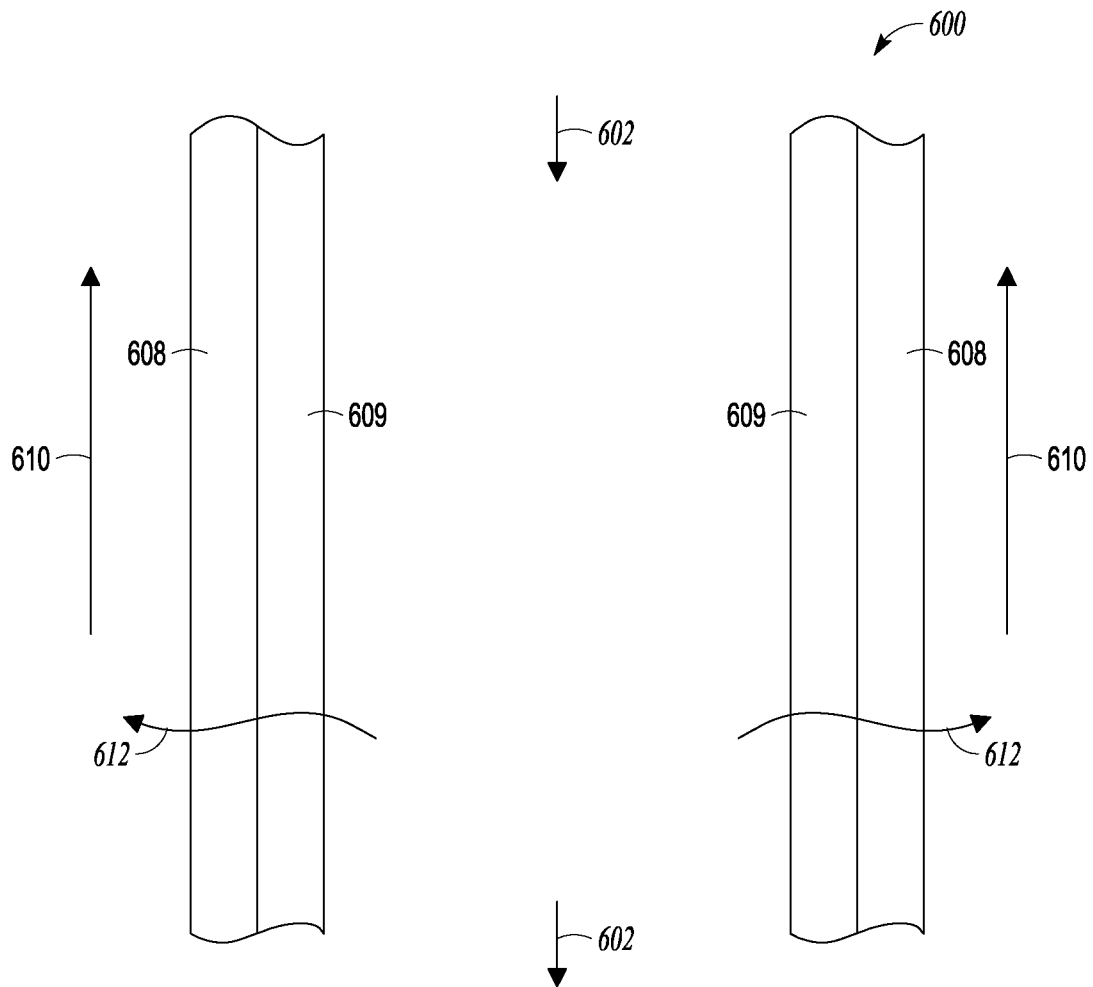


FIG. 6

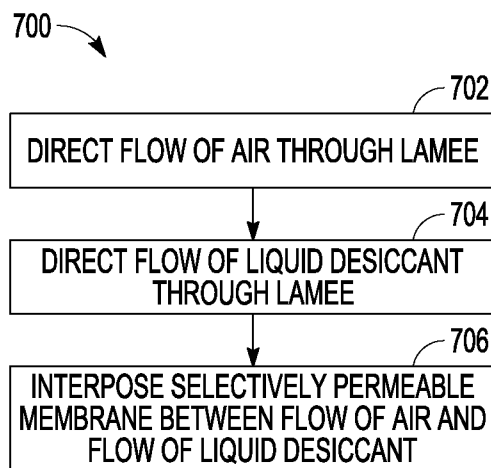


FIG. 7

