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(54) IDENTIFICATION HOLDER SYSTEM

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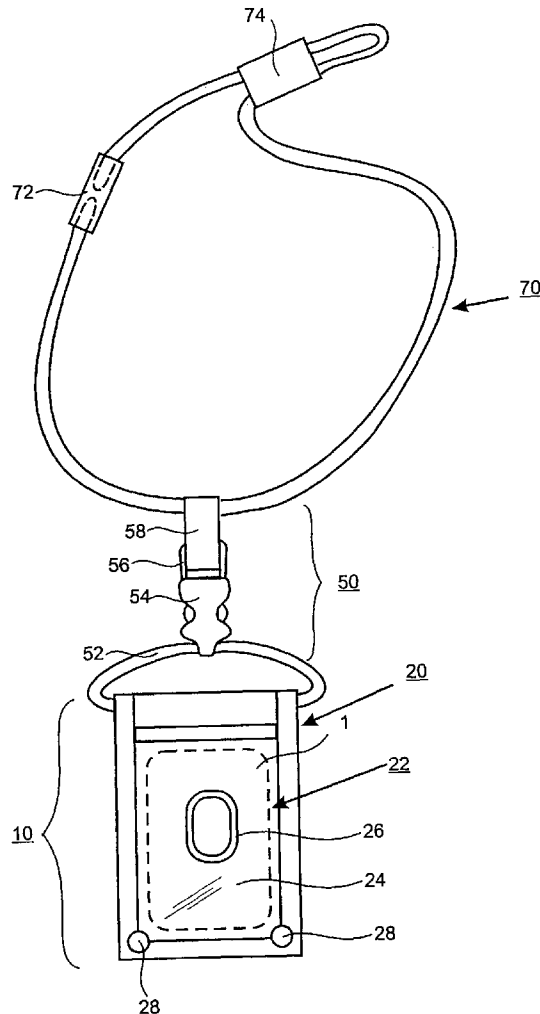
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A non-rigid identification card holder system is provided which can be attached to either a breakaway lanyard for

holding the identification card about the neck or to a clip for attaching the identification card to an article of clothing. The identification card holder comprises at least one pocket sized to hold the identification card. In a preferred embodiment, at least one face of the pocket comprises a transparent polymeric material to allow easy viewing of the card. Any information contained on electronic chips which may be part of the card can also be scanned through the transparent material. A reinforced hole may be provided in the pocket face through which a finger may be inserted to aid in removing the identification card from the pocket. In another preferred embodiment, the card holder has two back-to-back pockets with the outer face of each pocket comprising a window of transparent polymeric material. The identification card holder may also provide additional pockets sized to hold ATM cards, phone cards, credit cards, photographs, security cards etc. For improved durability, the identification card holder may be made of a second material such as a woven material or nylon in addition to the first transparent polymeric material.



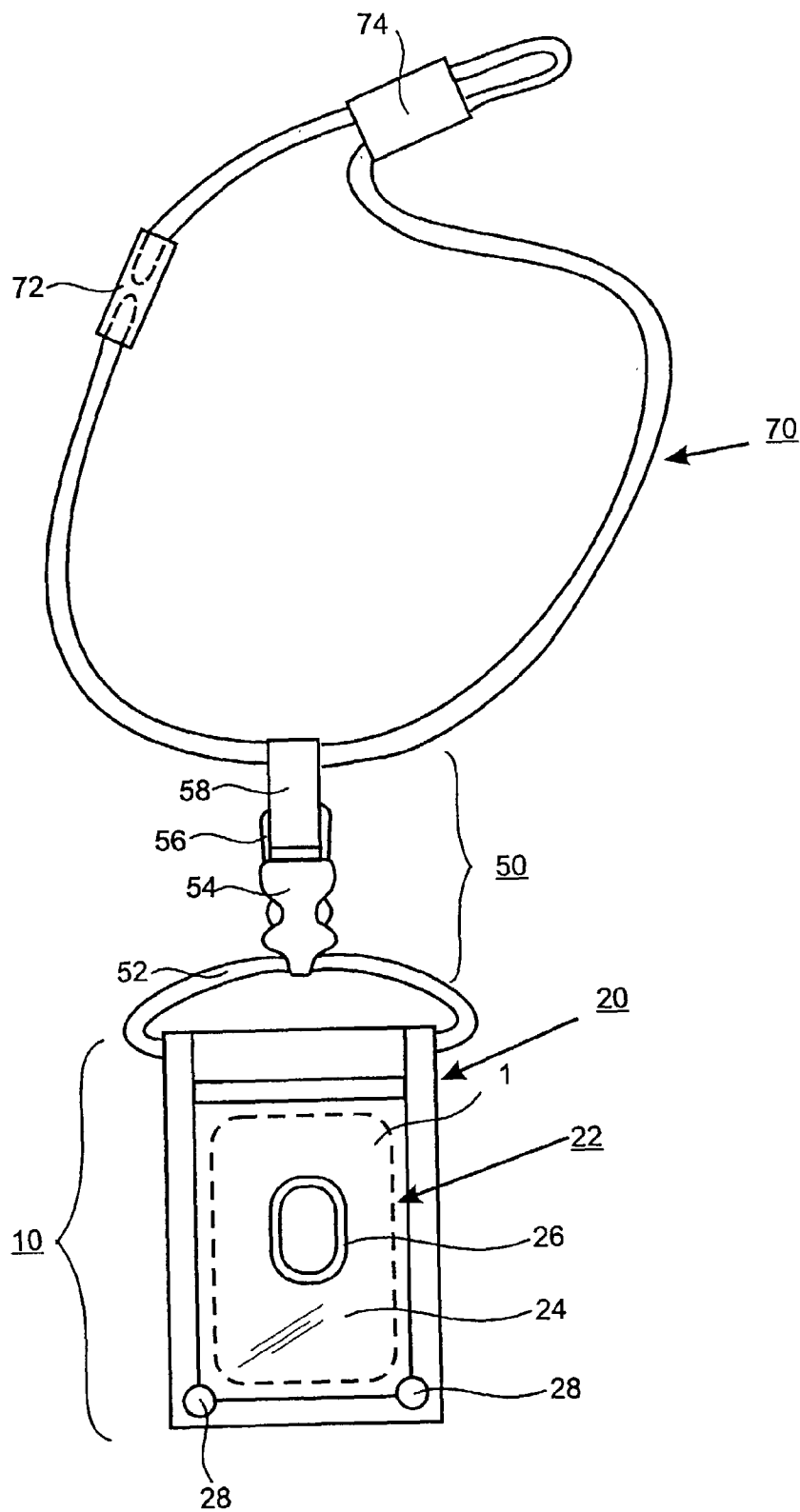


FIG. 1A

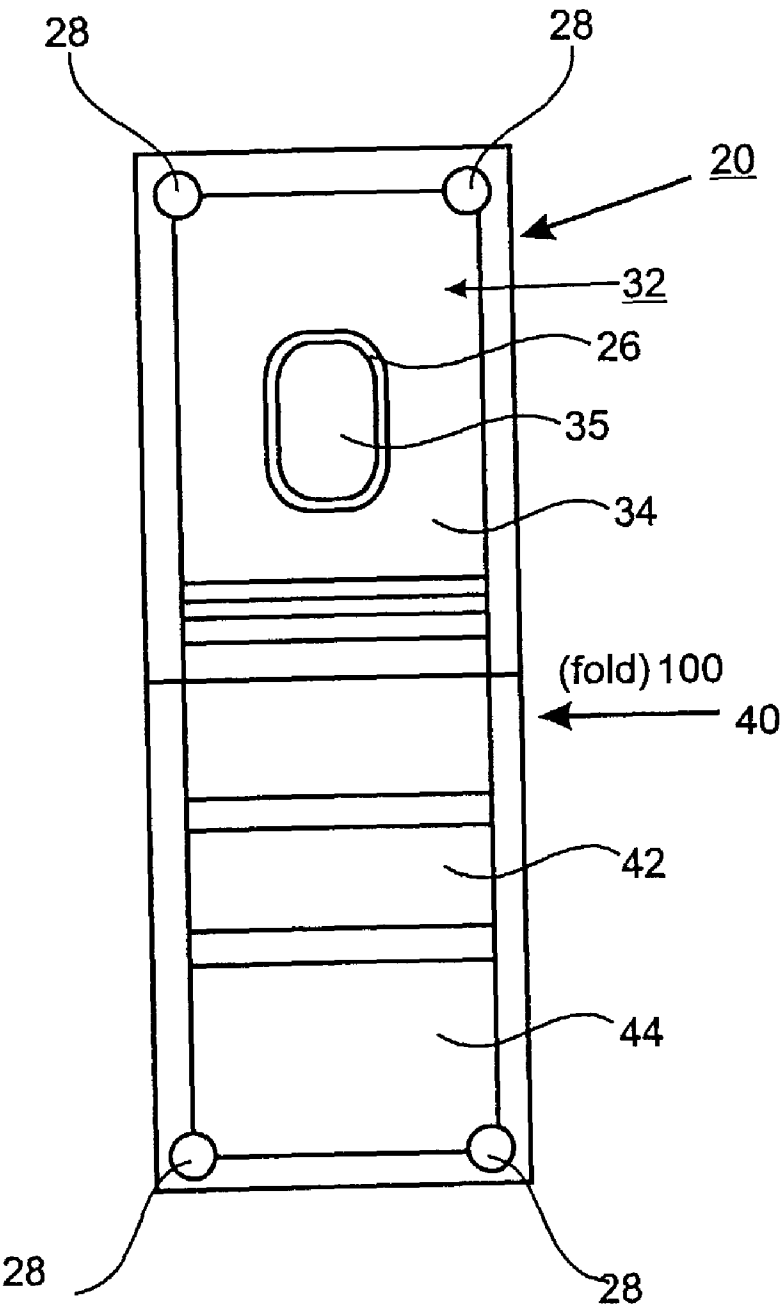


FIG. 1B

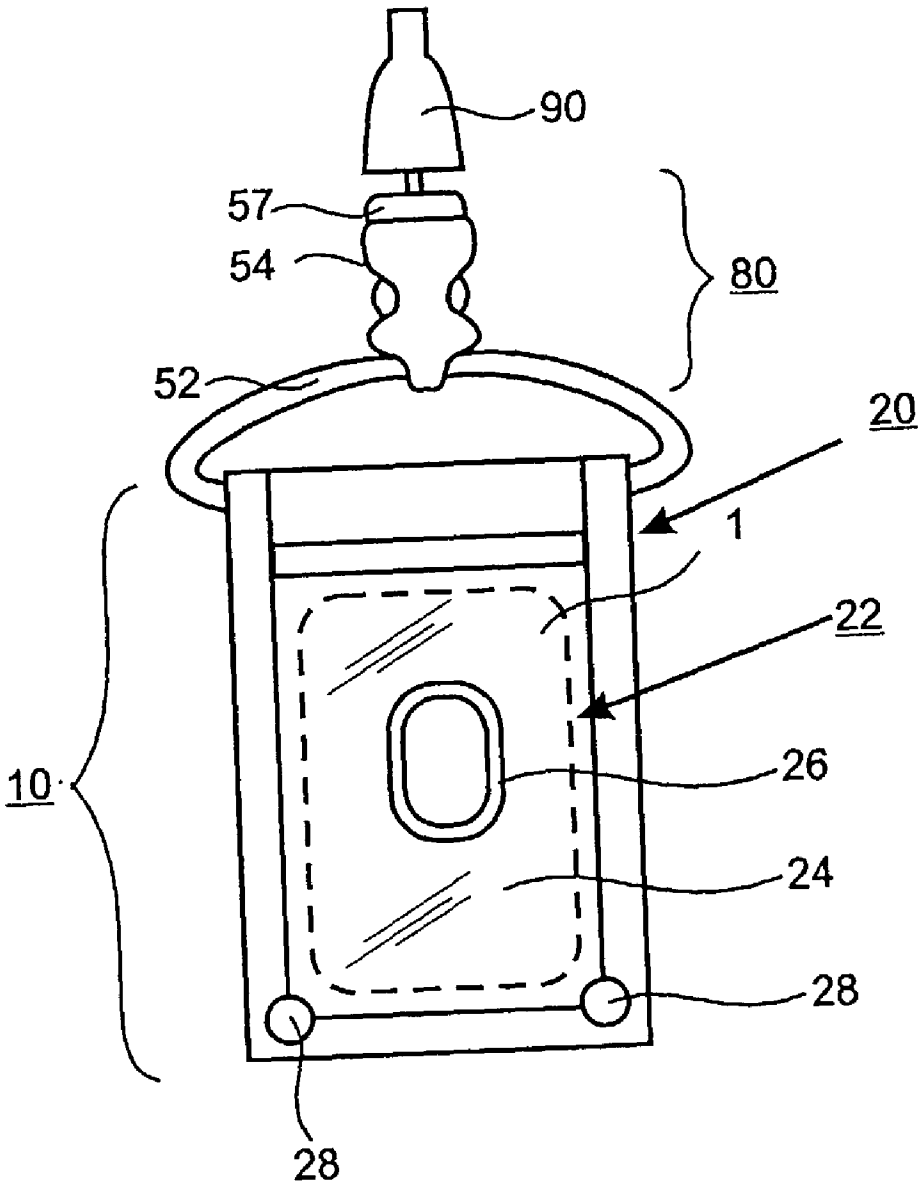


FIG. 1C

IDENTIFICATION HOLDER SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Commercially available protective identification card holders or badge holders include both holders which are used primarily for display of the identification card and holders which are used primarily for storage of the identification card, such as wallet-style holders. A non-rigid display-type identification card or badge holder is typically made wholly of flexible plastic and has a single pocket which substantially encloses the card, but allows removal of the card at one edge of the pocket. The card holder often is provided with a slot and/or holes spaced away from the pocket for connection to a neck lanyard, clip, pin, or other attachment device. An attachment device such as a clip may also be attached directly to the holder. Such plastic holders are subject to tearing at the edges of the pocket and at the point(s) of connection to the display device. A single pocket holder also does not allow separated storage of either multiple identification cards or of an identification card with another card such as a credit card. Separated storage of multiple cards allows the cards to be more easily organized. In general, separated storage of multiple cards also allows proper operation of cards containing magnetic information.

[0002] Seron (U.S. Pat. No. 5,027,477) discloses a breakaway lanyard loop containing a breakaway element which defines a weak point in the loop. When sufficient force is applied to the loop, the loop will open at the breakaway element. Seron's **FIG. 1** shows that the breakaway lanyard may be attached to an identification card by a mounting element such as a hook. Seron teaches that the mounting element should be at a fixed location on the loop. Depending on the placement of the breakaway element, having a fixed mounting element can limit adjustment of the loop size to fit a wearer. Seron does not appear to address protective covers or holders for identification cards. Different breakaway elements are disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,379,928, 5,533,238, and 6,073,317.

[0003] The present invention provides an attractive, durable, non-rigid identification card holder which is capable of being connected to either a breakaway lanyard or a clip. The identification card holder may optionally provide separated storage for more than one identification card or for one or more identification cards and other cards such as credit, ATM, or phone cards. Separated storage of multiple cards allows more convenient organization of the cards and in general allows proper operation of cards containing magnetic information.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention is in the field of non-rigid identification card holders, especially holder systems which can be attached to either a breakaway lanyard for holding the identification card about the neck or to a clip for attaching the identification card to an article of clothing.

[0005] The present invention provides a system for holding at least one identification card. The system allows a non-rigid identification card holder to be either attached to a breakaway lanyard for holding the identification card about the neck or to be attached to a clip for securing the identification card to an article of clothing. In general, breakaway lanyards are safer than non-breakaway lanyards

since they prevent choking of the wearer. In a preferred embodiment, the breakaway lanyard makes noise when the lanyard loop is opened, thus alerting the wearer of possible loss or theft of the identification card holder.

[0006] The identification card holder comprises at least one pocket sized to hold the identification card. In a preferred embodiment, at least one face of the pocket comprises a transparent polymeric material to allow easy viewing of the card. If the card is a smart card containing electronically coded information, e.g. on an electronic chip, the card can also be scanned or read through the transparent material by a smart card reader. A reinforced hole, for example a thumb slide, may be provided in one pocket face through which a finger may be inserted to aid in removing the identification card from the pocket. In another preferred embodiment, the card holder has two back-to-back pockets with the outer face of each pocket comprising a window of transparent polymeric material. These two pockets provide separated storage for two identification cards. The identification card holder may also provide additional pockets sized to hold ATM cards, phone cards, credit cards, security cards, photographs, etc.

[0007] For improved durability, the identification card holder may be made of a second material such as a woven material or leather in addition to the first transparent polymeric material. It is preferred that the means for attachment of the breakaway lanyard or clip connects to a portion of the information card holder made of this second, more durable material.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] **FIG. 1A** illustrates one embodiment of information card holder system of the invention. The card holder is attached to a breakaway lanyard.

[0009] **FIG. 1B** illustrates the interior of the opened card holder of **FIG. 1**.

[0010] **FIG. 1C** illustrates the card holder of **FIG. 1** attached to an alligator clip rather than a breakaway lanyard.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0011] The present invention provides a system for holding at least one identification card. As used herein, the term "identification card" encompasses cards, tags, or badges which carry identifying information. An identification card can have information encoded on it within a magnetic stripe or within an electronic chip, in which case it may also be called a smart card or proximity card. Information encoded on a smart card is typically scanned or read with a smart card reader.

[0012] The present invention provides an identification card holder system which can be attached to either a breakaway lanyard for holding the identification card about the neck or to a clip, preferably an alligator clip, for attaching the identification card to an article of clothing. **FIGS. 1A-1C** illustrate one embodiment of an identification card holder system of the invention. The identification card (1) is contained within an identification card holder (10). In **FIG. 1A**, attachment means (50) slidably attach holder (10) to breakaway lanyard (70). In **FIG. 1C**, clip attachment means (80) attach holder (10) to alligator clip (90).

[0013] In general, the card holder comprises at least one pocket sized to hold an identification card. It is preferred that at least one face of the pocket comprises a transparent polymeric material to allow easy viewing of the card. Any information contained on electronic chips which may be part of the card can also be scanned through the transparent material. The pocket face may be formed wholly of transparent material or may have only a window of transparent material. The card holder shown in FIGS. 1A-1C has front and back flaps which fold over each other and fasten together. The front flap of the card holder has two back-to-back pockets which share a common inner face.

[0014] The card holder preferably comprises a first material which is transparent polymer sheet and a second material which is a woven material or leather. For improved durability of the holder, it is preferred that the second material be more durable than the first. In a preferred embodiment, the second material is 500 denier nylon. The transparent polymeric material is preferably used only in making the pockets.

[0015] FIG. 1A shows the front flap (20) of the card holder (10) with exterior pocket (22) containing identification card (1). The exterior pocket has two faces, an outer face (24) and an inner face ((35) in FIG. 1B). Preferably, the outer face (24) comprises a durable transparent polymeric material. In FIG. 1A, the outer face (24) is shown as containing a reinforced hole (26) through which a finger may be inserted to more easily remove the identification card from the exterior pocket. This reinforced hole may also be termed a thumb slide. The hole may be reinforced by deforming the material immediately surrounding the hole during manufacture of the pocket face (24). The inner face of exterior pocket (22) may be of any durable, flexible material which does not stretch such as a woven material or leather. The inner and outer faces of exterior pocket (22) may be joined by sewing or by other means as known to the art. The edges of the pocket faces may be covered. For example, the edges of a pocket may be bound with fabric tape prior to sewing. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1A, the exterior pocket (22) does not open to the exterior side of the front flap. Instead, the card in exterior pocket (22) is inserted or removed from the interior side of the front flap. The front flap fastens to the back flap. Any fastener known to the art such as snaps or hook-loop material may be used. In FIGS. 1A-1C, snaps (28) join the front flap (20) to the back flap ((40) in FIG. 1B and described below).

[0016] FIG. 1B shows the card holder opened to reveal its interior. The interior of the front flap (20) has an interior pocket (32). To reveal more of the pocket structure, no card is shown in interior pocket (32). Preferably, the outer face (34) of interior pocket (32) comprises a durable transparent polymeric material. The outer face (34) may also contain a reinforced hole (26). Exterior pocket (22) (FIG. 1A) and interior pocket (32) share a common inner face (35). Therefore, exterior pocket (22) and interior pocket (32) form back-to-back pockets which provide separated storage of identification cards. Separated storage of multiple cards allows the cards to be more easily organized. In general, separated storage of multiple cards allows proper operation of cards containing magnetic information. However, in some circumstances a smart card reader may not read the desired card correctly if smart cards are placed in both of the back-to-back pockets. The interior pocket (32) may be

constructed in a similar manner to the exterior pocket (22). The interior of back flap (40) has an upper pocket (42) and a lower pocket (44). In the embodiment of FIG. 1B, the outer face of the upper pocket provides the inner face of the lower pocket. Cards stored in pockets (42) and (44) are thus separated from one another. The upper and lower pockets may be sized to accommodate smaller cards such as ATM, phone and credit cards. FIG. 1B also shows the fold line (100) which separates the two flaps.

[0017] The means for slidably attaching the identification card holder to the breakaway lanyard allows the identification holder to move along the lanyard. The identification holder not being held at a fixed point on the lanyard allows more convenient adjustment of the lanyard to fit the size of the wearer. FIG. 1A shows one embodiment of attachment means (50) for slidably attaching the identification card holder (10) to the breakaway lanyard (70). For improved durability, attachment means (50) preferably connect to a part of the card holder which is made of leather or woven material. In FIG. 1A, attachment means (50) comprises a loop of cord (52) threaded through one end (54) of a side release buckle assembly and a webbing loop (58) threaded through the other end (56) of the side release buckle assembly. The loop of cord (52) may be sewn to the identification holder (10) or may be attached by other means as known to the art. Breakaway lanyard (70) is threaded through the webbing loop (58). Preferably, the means for slidably attaching the identification holder to the breakaway lanyard incorporates a reversible fastener which allows the lanyard to be reversibly removed from the identification holder and replaced with a clip attachment, e.g. an alligator clip attachment. As shown in FIG. 1A, the reversible fastener can be a side release buckle assembly. Other types of reversible fasteners, such as clips, snaps or hook-loop material, may also be used. Attachment of the identification card holder to the reversible fastener can be achieved by cord, webbing, and/or metal or plastic rings, or by other means known to the art. Attachment of the breakaway lanyard to the reversible fastener can be also achieved by cord, webbing, and/or rings, so long as the attachment allows the sliding movement of the lanyard with respect to the identification card holder.

[0018] As illustrated in FIG. 1A, the breakaway lanyard (70) comprises a breakaway element (72) which defines a weak point at which the loop may be opened and pulled from the wearer. A variety of breakaway elements are known to the art. Preferably, the breakaway element of the invention comprises a piece of flexible piece of polymeric tubing which is sized to fit closely around the ends of the lanyard inserted therein. The ends of the lanyard may require stiffening to facilitate their insertion into the tubing. This particular form of breakaway element makes a popping noise when the loop is opened, thus alerting the wearer of possible loss or theft of the identification card holder. This form of breakaway element also provides a reattachable breakaway joint which opens at a reproducible applied force. The lanyard may be a cord, ribbon, chain, strap or other material suitable for supporting the identification card holder, so long as it can be fitted with a breakaway element. Suitable breakaway lanyards may be obtained from Westec Inc., Carriere, Miss. The breakaway lanyard (70) may also be provided with a cord slide (74) for convenient adjustment of the size of the loop formed by the lanyard.

[0019] The identification card holder may also be removed from the breakaway lanyard and connected to a clip as shown in FIG. 1C. In FIG. 1C, attachment means (80) comprises a loop of cord (52) threaded through one end (54) of a standard side release buckle assembly which is mated with the other end (57) of the assembly. The other end (57) of the assembly is directly connected to alligator clip (90). Preferably, the means for slidably attaching the identification holder to the breakaway lanyard incorporates a reversible fastener which allows the lanyard to be reversibly removed from the identification holder and replaced with an alligator clip attachment. As shown in FIG. 1C, the reversible fastener can be a side release buckle assembly. Other types of reversible fasteners, such as clips, snaps or hook-loop material, may also be used. Attachment of the identification card holder to the reversible fastener can be achieved by cord, webbing, and/or metal or plastic rings, or by other means known to the art. The alligator clip may be directly attached to the reversible fastener as shown in FIG. 1C or cord, webbing, and/or rings can be used.

[0020] The disclosure is provided for illustrative purposes and is not intended to limit the scope of the invention as claimed herein. Any variations in the exemplified articles which occur to the skilled artisan are intended to fall within the scope of the present invention.

I claim:

1. A system for holding at least one identification card comprising:

an identification card holder comprising at least one pocket sized to hold the identification card;

a breakaway lanyard comprising a breakaway element; and

means for slidably attaching the identification holder to the breakaway lanyard.

2. The identification card holder system of claim 1, wherein at least one face of the pocket comprises transparent polymeric material, whereby the identification card can be viewed or scanned through the transparent material.

3. The system of claim 2 wherein one face of the pocket additionally comprises a reinforced hole through which a finger may be inserted to aid in removing the identification card from the pocket.

4. The identification card holder system of claim 1, wherein the identification card holder comprises two back-to-back pockets capable of holding identification cards.

5. The identification card holder system of claim 4, wherein the outward face of each of the back-to-back pockets comprises transparent polymeric material, whereby identification cards can be viewed or scanned through the transparent material.

6. The system of claim 5 wherein the outward face of each of the back-to-back pockets additionally comprises a reinforced hole through which a finger may be inserted to aid in removing the identification cards from the pocket.

7. The system of claim 5 wherein the identification card holder comprises additional pockets.

8. The system of claim 1 wherein the breakaway element comprises a piece of flexible piece of polymeric tubing which is sized to fit closely around the ends of the lanyard inserted therein.

9. The system of claim 1 additionally comprising a slide to adjust lanyard length.

10. The system of claim 1 additionally comprising a clip and means for attaching the identification card holder to the clip wherein the means for slidably attaching the identification card holder to the breakaway lanyard is reversibly interchangeable with the means for attaching the identification card holder to the clip.

11. An identification card holder system comprising

an identification card holder comprising at least one pocket sized to hold the identification card, the pocket comprising a first material which is a transparent polymer sheet and a second material which is a woven material or leather;

a breakaway lanyard; and

means for slidably attaching the identification holder to the breakaway lanyard.

12. The system of claim 11 wherein one face of the pocket additionally comprises a reinforced hole through which a finger may be inserted to aid in removing the identification card from the pocket.

13. The identification card holder system of claim 11, wherein the identification card holder comprises two back-to-back pockets capable of holding identification cards.

14. The identification card holder system of claim 14, wherein the outward face of each of the back-to-back pockets comprises the first transparent material, whereby the identification card can be viewed or through the transparent material.

15. The system of claim 11 wherein the breakaway element comprises a piece of flexible piece of polymeric tubing which is sized to fit closely around the ends of the lanyard inserted therein.

16. The system of claim 11 additionally comprising a clip and means for attaching the identification card holder to the clip wherein the means for slidably attaching the identification card holder to the breakaway lanyard is reversibly interchangeable with the means for attaching the identification card holder to the clip.

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