

**(12) STANDARD PATENT**  
**(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE**

(11) Application No. **AU 2003261506 B2**

(54) Title  
**Device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized**

(51) International Patent Classification(s)  
**F04D 29/12** (2006.01) **F04B 35/01** (2006.01)  
**F04B 9/133** (2006.01) **F04D 29/14** (2006.01)  
**F04B 17/00** (2006.01) **F16J 15/40** (2006.01)  
**F04B 31/00** (2006.01)

(21) Application No: **2003261506** (22) Date of Filing: **2003.11.06**

(30) Priority Data

(31) Number (32) Date (33) Country  
**MI2002A 002401** **2002.11.13** **IT**

(43) Publication Date: **2004.06.03**

(43) Publication Journal Date: **2004.06.03**

(44) Accepted Journal Date: **2009.02.19**

(71) Applicant(s)  
**Nuovo Pignone Holding S.P.A.**

(72) Inventor(s)  
**Meucci, Stefano**

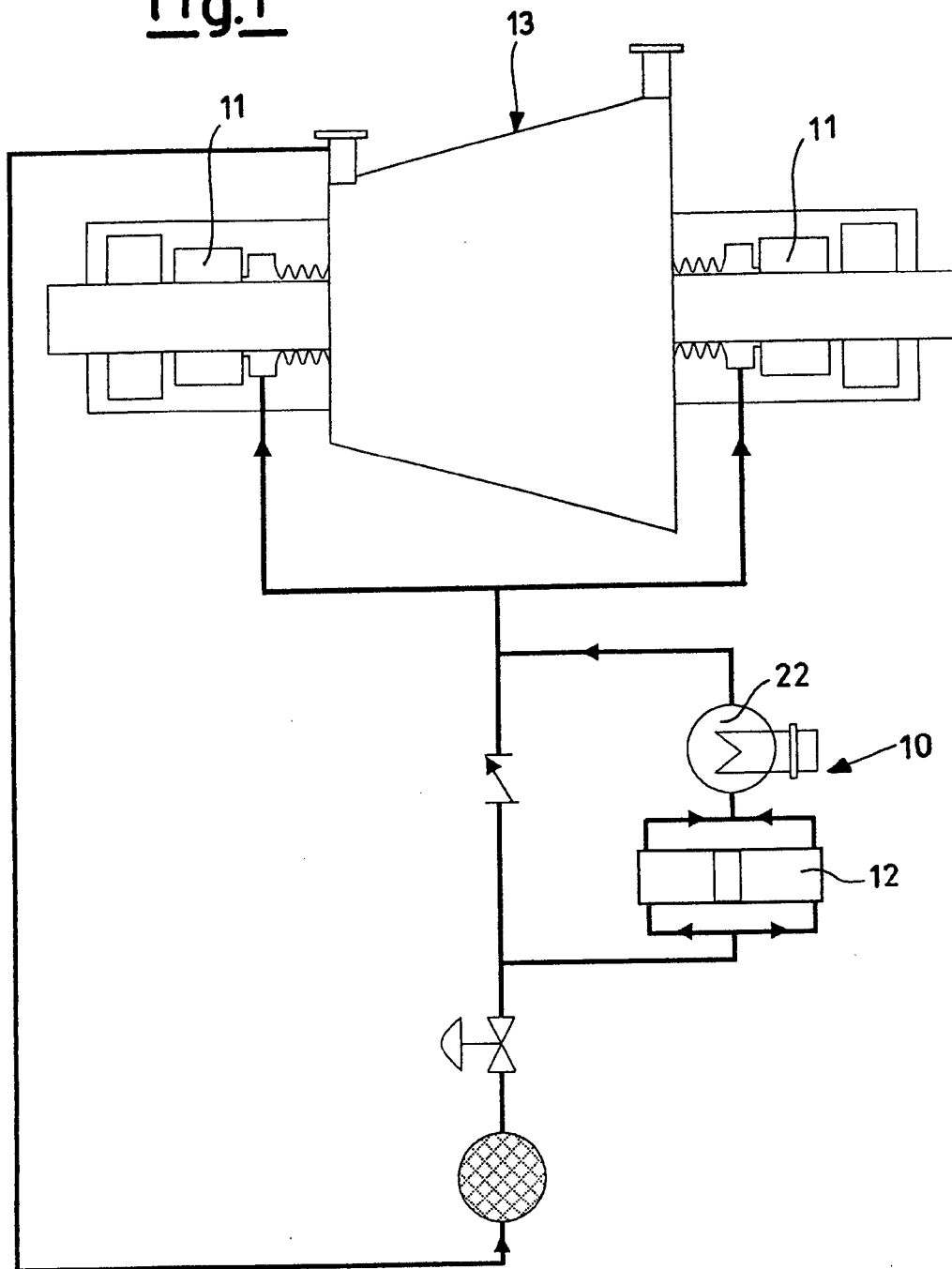
(74) Agent / Attorney  
**Davies Collison Cave, 255 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000**

(56) Related Art  
**EP 1008759 A1**  
**GB 2105793 A**  
**US 4231722 A**

DEVICE FOR CIRCULATING SEALING GAS FOR MECHANICAL DRY  
SEALS OF A CENTRIFUGAL COMPRESSOR AT TIMES WHEN THE  
MACHINE IS STATIONARY AND PRESSURIZED

5    ABSTRACT

10        A device (10) for circulating sealing gas for  
mechanical dry seals (11) of a    centrifugal compressor  
         (13) at times when the machine is stationary and  
         pressurized; the device comprises a sealed  
         reciprocating compressor (12), which includes a piston  
         (14) slidable in a cylinder (16), and the piston (14)  
         is moved by a magnetic coupling to an external magnetic  
         element (20) which moves along the said cylinder (16).

Fig.1

**AUSTRALIA**  
**PATENTS ACT 1990**  
**COMPLETE SPECIFICATION**

NAME OF APPLICANT(S)::

**Nuovo Pignone Holding S.P.A.**

ADDRESS FOR SERVICE:

**DAVIES COLLISON CAVE**

Patent Attorneys

Level 10, 10 Barrack Street, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 2000

INVENTION TITLE:

Device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times  
when the machine is stationary and pressurized

The following statement is a full description of this invention, including the best method of performing it  
known to me/us:-

DEVICE FOR CIRCULATING SEALING GAS FOR MECHANICAL DRY  
SEALS OF A CENTRIFUGAL COMPRESSOR AT TIMES WHEN THE  
MACHINE IS STATIONARY AND PRESSURIZED

5           The present invention relates to a device for  
circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a  
centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is  
stationary and pressurized.

          In general terms, a centrifugal compressor is a  
10 machine which imparts to a compressible fluid a  
pressure greater than the intake pressure and which  
transfers the energy required for this pressure  
increase to the fluid. It consists of one or more  
impellers or rotors having radial blades and driven at  
15 high speed by a motor which is generally connected  
directly to the compressor shaft itself.

          Typically, centrifugal compressors are designed  
for a great variety of applications where high flow  
rates are required at medium to low pressures, for  
20 example in refrigeration systems, in the petrochemical  
industry, for example ethylene and catalytic cracking  
plants, and CO<sub>2</sub> compression units in urea plants, in  
the power industry, in liquid propane gas and oxygen  
plants, for instance, and in units for pressurizing gas  
25 pipelines and returning them to operation. The  
installed power is generally high.

          In order to prevent the outflow of the treated  
fluid to the atmosphere, centrifugal compressors are  
generally fitted with mechanical dry seals positioned  
30 on the rotor shaft. A suitably treated gas, generally  
taken from the delivery end of the compressor itself,

is made to circulate in these mechanical dry seals. When the compressor is operating in normal design conditions, the circulation is ensured by the pressure difference between the intake and delivery ends.

5           When the machine is stationary and pressurized, the clean sealing gas which prevents contamination by solid particles between the sealing ring and disc of each mechanical seal cannot be made to circulate. Furthermore, the gas temperature has to be sufficient  
10   to prevent the formation of condensate and/or ice between the sealing ring and disc.

          The gas circulation devices currently available on the market are also fitted with mechanical seals which have their own problems of contamination and  
15   condensation similar to those mentioned above.

          At the present time, where the problem of contamination is concerned, designers generally accept the risk that some solid particles will reach the mechanical seal, and preventive maintenance operations --  
20   are therefore provided.

          As regards the problem of condensate and/or ice formation between the sealing ring and disc of mechanical seals, it has been proposed that the customer should be instructed to depressurize the  
25   machine and the circuit concerned when the machine is stopped, as a recommendation for proper use forming part of the terms of the guarantee.

          Depending on circumstances, depressurizing can cause economic losses which may be significant for the  
30   manager of the installation, and/or a certain degree of pollution.

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The problem has been discussed many times by manufacturers of centrifugal compressors and their customers, but since no reliable solutions are available on the market, customers are inevitably obliged to accept the conditions of operation described above.

5       The aim of the present invention is therefore to overcome the aforementioned problems and in particular the problem of providing a device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor which can operate at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized.

10       Another aim of the present invention is to provide a device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized, which is particularly reliable, with no possibility of gas leaks, simple, functional, and relatively inexpensive.

15       These and other aims of the present invention are achieved by providing a device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized, as described in Claim 1.

      Further characteristics of a device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized are described in the subsequent claims.

20       According to one aspect the present invention provides a device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized, characterized in that the device includes a sealed reciprocating compressor, the reciprocating compressor including a piston slidable in a cylinder, said piston being moved by a magnetic coupling between said piston and an external magnetic element, the magnetic coupling moves along said cylinder to move gas  
25       from the reciprocating compressor and raising the temperature of the gas to a sufficient temperature to prevent the formation of condensate and/or ice between a sealing ring and disc of said mechanical dry seals.

      The characteristics and advantages of a device according to the present invention for circulating

sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized will be made clearer by the following description, provided by way of example and without  
5 restrictive intent, with reference to the attached schematic drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows a centrifugal compressor fitted with mechanical dry seals, supplied by a sealing gas circulation device according to the present invention;

10 Figure 2 is a device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor which operates at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized.

With reference to the figures, these show a  
15 sealing gas circulation device, indicated as a whole by 10, for mechanical dry seals 11 of a centrifugal compressor 13 which also operates at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized.

In the illustrated example, according to the  
20 present invention, the sealing gas circulation device 10 comprises a double-acting reciprocating compressor 12 which is small and fully sealed.

The reciprocating compressor 12 includes a piston  
14 made from metallic material and slidable in a  
25 cylinder 16 of nonmagnetic material.

A reciprocating motor 18 of the pneumatic type is also provided. The motor 18 moves an external magnetic element 20, such as a ring, along the cylinder 16.

The operation of the sealing gas circulation  
30 device 10 for mechanical dry seals 11 of a centrifugal



compressor 13 according to the invention is clear from what has been described above with reference to the figures, and can be summarized as follows.

5       The movement to the piston 14 is transmitted by a magnetic coupling from the outside of the cylinder 16 of nonmagnetic material, by means of the magnetic element 20.

10       The magnetic element 20 is displaced by the reciprocating motor 18 which moves it along the cylinder 16.

      The magnetic field of the magnetic element 20 in turn causes the movement of the piston 14, generally made from a metallic material or other material sensitive to the magnetic field.

15       Because of the absence of any seal in contact with the exterior, the gas circulation device 10 according to the invention is particularly suitable for applications using dangerous gases and high pressures of up to 450 bar.

20       It should be noted that the gas circulation device 10 according to the invention can also comprise a heater 22, through which the gas moved by the reciprocating compressor 12 passes, as shown in Figure 1.

25       Thus the gas is raised to a sufficient temperature to prevent the formation of condensate and/or ice between the sealing ring and disc of the mechanical dry seals 11.

30       The very high reliability of the equipment makes it suitable for any application with any type of gas.

The above description clearly demonstrates the characteristics of the device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is stationary and  
5 pressurized, according to the present invention, together with its advantages.

Some concluding observations are provided below in order to define the aforesaid advantages more precisely and clearly.

10 In the first place, it should be noted that the sealing gas circulation device according to the invention also operates at times when the centrifugal compressor is stationary and pressurized, without problems in respect of condensate formation and  
15 contamination.

Thus the customer is no longer required to depressurize the machines when they are stationary, and therefore the manager of the installation can avoid the consequent economical losses as well as the undesirable  
20 implications of pollution. The solution provided by the sealing gas circulation device of the present invention will be attractive to customers and could be the decisive factor in negotiations, since it distinguishes the device from competing products.

25 Finally, it should be pointed out that the device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals according to the invention is simple to use, reliable, and inexpensive with respect to the known art.

Lastly, it is clear that the device for  
30 circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is

stationary and pressurized, designed in this way, can be modified and varied in numerous ways within the scope of the invention; moreover, all the components can be replaced with technically equivalent elements.

- 5 In practice, the materials used, as well as the shapes and dimensions, can be chosen at will, subject to technical requirements.

The scope of protection of the invention is therefore delimited by the attached claims.

- 10 Throughout this specification and the claims which follow, unless the context requires otherwise the word "comprise", or variations such as "comprises" or "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or step or group of integers or steps but not  
15 the exclusion of any other integer or step or group of integers or steps.

- The reference to any prior art in this specification is not, and should not be taken as an acknowledgment or any form of suggestion that, that prior art forms part of the  
20 common general knowledge of Australia.

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The claims defining the present invention are as follows:

1. Device for circulating sealing gas for mechanical dry seals of a centrifugal compressor at times when the machine is stationary and pressurized, characterized in that  
5 the device includes a sealed reciprocating compressor, the reciprocating compressor including a piston slidable in a cylinder, said piston being moved by a magnetic coupling between said piston and an external magnetic element, the magnetic coupling moves along said cylinder to move gas from the reciprocating compressor and raising the temperature of the gas to a sufficient temperature to prevent the formation of condensate and/or ice  
10 between a sealing ring and disc of said mechanical dry seals.
2. Gas circulation device according to Claim 1, characterized in that the said external magnetic element is moved by a reciprocating motor.
3. Gas circulation device according to Claim 2, characterized in that the said reciprocating motor is of the pneumatic type.
- 15 4. Gas circulation device according to Claim 1, characterized in that the said external magnetic element is a ring which is moved outside the said cylinder.
5. Gas circulation device according to Claim 1, characterized in that the said cylinder is made from nonmagnetic material.
6. Gas circulation device according to Claim 1, characterized in that the said piston is  
20 made from a material sensitive to a magnetic field.
7. Gas circulation device according to Claim 6, characterized in that the said piston is made from a metallic material.
8. Gas circulation device according to Claim 1, characterized in that the device has no seals in contact with the exterior.

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9. Gas circulation device according to Claim 1, characterized in that the said reciprocating compressor is double-acting.

10. Gas circulation device according to Claim 1, characterized in that the dimensions of  
5 the said reciprocating compressor are small.

11. A gas circulation device, substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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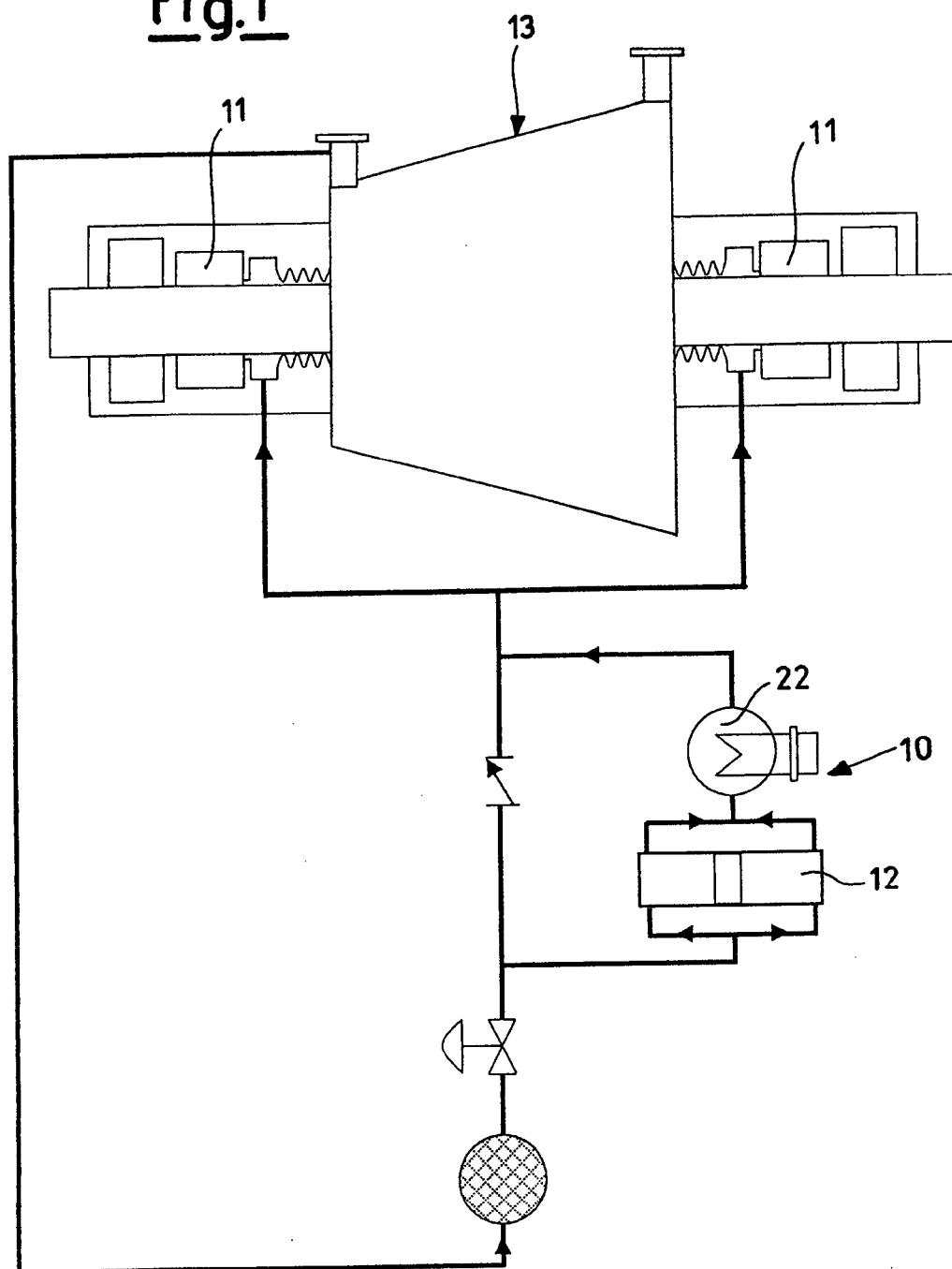
Fig.1

Fig. 2