



(51) International Patent Classification:

F25J 1/00 (2006.01) F25J 1/02 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:

PCT/US2019/043014

(22) International Filing Date:

23 July 2019 (23.07.2019)

(25) Filing Language:

English

(26) Publication Language:

English

(30) Priority Data:

62/718,738 14 August 2018 (14.08.2018) US

(71) Applicant: **EXXONMOBIL UPSTREAM RESEARCH COMPANY** [US/US]; (EMHC-N1.4A.607), 22777 Springwoods Village Parkway, Spring, TX 77389 (US).

(72) Inventors: **RYBERG, Brett, L.**; 13428 Hughes Lane, Dallas, TX 75240 (US). **WRIGHT, Stephen**; 204 Gabriel Woods Drive, Georgetown, TX 78633 (US). **TADANO,**

Kenichi; C/o Chiyoda Corporation, 2-12-1, Tsurumichuo 2-chome, Tsurumi-ku, Yokohama 230-8801 (JP). **WATANABE, Naoki**; C/o Chiyoda Corporation, 2-12-1, Tsurumichuo 2-chome, Tsurumi-ku, Yokohama 230-8801 (JP).

(74) Agent: **JENSEN, Nathan, O.** et al.; ExxonMobil Upstream Research Company, EMHC-N1.4A.607, 22777 Springwoods Village Parkway, Spring, TX 77389 (US).

(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DJ, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JO, JP, KE, KG, KH, KN, KP, KR, KW, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SA, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(54) Title: CONSERVING MIXED REFRIGERANT IN NATURAL GAS LIQUEFACTION FACILITIES

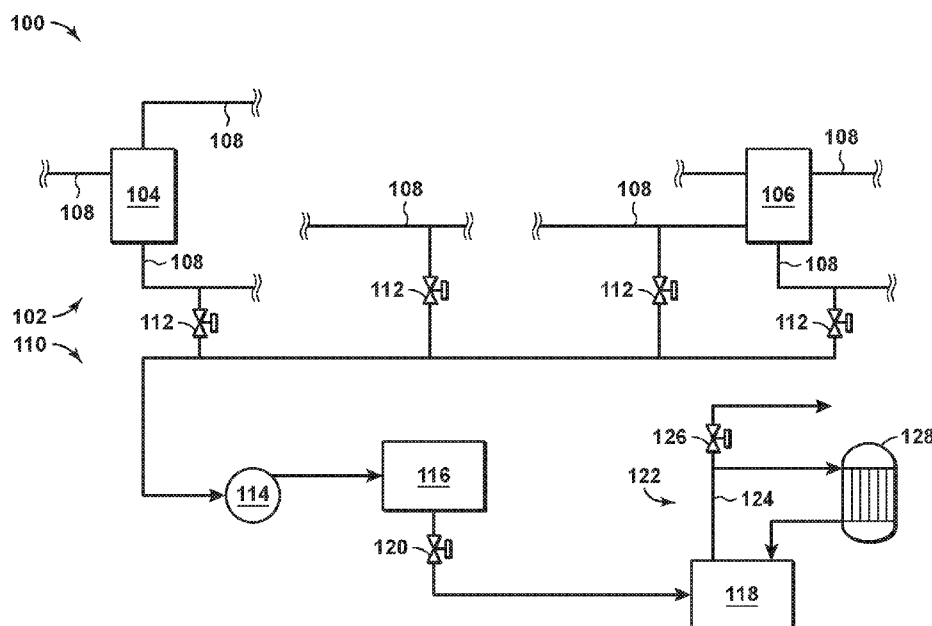


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility, can include: draining down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem into a high-pressure holding tank of a drain down subsystem, wherein draining down to the high-pressure holding tank is achieved by pumping the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem to the high-pressure holding tank or backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas; and optionally, transferring at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant into a low-pressure drum from the high-pressure holding tank.



(84) **Designated States** (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available*): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, ST, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Declarations under Rule 4.17:

- *as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent (Rule 4.17(ii))*
- *as to the applicant's entitlement to claim the priority of the earlier application (Rule 4.17(iii))*

Published:

- *with international search report (Art. 21(3))*

CONSERVING MIXED REFRIGERANT IN NATURAL GAS LIQUEFACTION FACILITIES

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

5 [0001] This application claims the priority benefit of United States Provisional Patent Application No. 62/718738 filed August 14, 2018, entitled CONSERVING MIXED REFRIGERANT IN NATURAL GAS LIQUEFACTION FACILITIES.

FIELD

10 [0002] This disclosure relates generally to systems and methods for conserving mixed refrigerant during drain down operations of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility.

BACKGROUND

15 [0003] Because of its clean burning qualities and convenience, natural gas has become widely used in recent years. However, large volumes of natural gas, primarily methane, are located in remote areas of the world. This gas has significant value if it can be economically transported to market. Where gas reserves are located in reasonable proximity to a market and the terrain between the two locations permits, the gas is typically produced and then transported to market through submerged and/or land-based pipelines. However, when gas is produced in locations where laying a pipeline is infeasible or economically prohibitive, other techniques
20 must be used for getting this gas to market.

[0004] A commonly used technique for non-pipeline transport of gas involves liquefying the gas at or near the production site and then transporting the liquefied natural gas to market in specially designed storage tanks aboard transport vessels. The natural gas is cooled and condensed to a liquid state to produce liquefied natural gas ("LNG") at substantially
25 atmospheric pressure and at temperatures of about -162 °C (-260 °F), thereby significantly increasing the amount of gas that can be stored in a storage tank, which can be on-site or aboard a transport vessel.

[0005] Many natural gas liquefaction facilities use a mixed refrigerant subsystem for pre-cooling, liquefaction, and sub-cooling natural gas to manufacture liquefied natural gas (LNG).
30 Mixed refrigerants typically include a mixture of nitrogen and light hydrocarbons (*e.g.*, methane, ethane, propane, and butane). In remote locations or where the natural gas supply

does not contain significant quantities of the relatively-heavier light hydrocarbons (*e.g.*, ethane and heavier), the relatively-heavier light hydrocarbons may need to be imported to the natural gas liquefaction facility, which has purchase and transport costs.

5 [0006] The relatively-heavier light hydrocarbons are volatile, so loss of these compounds from the mixed refrigerant is an issue. Relatively-heavier light hydrocarbon loss can be significant when portions of the natural gas liquefaction facility are shutdown (*e.g.*, for planned maintenance or unplanned reasons). The mixed refrigerant being used in components of the natural gas liquefaction facility warms and increase in pressure, so some or all of the mixed refrigerant in that portion of the natural gas liquefaction facility is drained to mitigate over-
10 pressurization and potential explosion. Often the drained mixed refrigerant is vented and flared. Then, when the portion of the natural gas liquefaction facility is brought back online, mixed refrigerant from storage is used to make up for the amount of vented and flared refrigerant. Alternate methods that conserve mixed refrigerant during facility shutdown provide an opportunity for significant cost savings.

15 SUMMARY

[0007] This disclosure relates generally to systems and methods for conserving mixed refrigerant during drain down operations of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility.

20 [0008] A method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility, can comprise: draining down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem into a high-pressure holding tank of a drain down subsystem, wherein draining down to the high-pressure holding tank is achieved by pumping the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem to the high-pressure holding tank or backfilling the
25 refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas; and optionally, transferring at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant into a low-pressure drum from the high-pressure holding tank.

[0009] A natural gas liquefaction facility can comprise: a refrigerant distribution subsystem that contains a mixed refrigerant; and a drain down subsystem that comprises a pump, a high-pressure holding tank, a low-pressure drum, and a valve separating the high-pressure holding
30 tank from the low-pressure drum; wherein a plurality of valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the drain down subsystem; and wherein in a drain down mode the pump transports at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution

subsystem to the high-pressure holding tank, and, when needed, mixed refrigerant from the high-pressure holding tank is allowed to enter the low-pressure drum via the valve.

[0010] A natural gas liquefaction facility can comprise: a refrigerant distribution subsystem that contains a mixed refrigerant; a drain down subsystem that comprises a high-pressure holding tank, a low-pressure drum, and a valve separating the high-pressure holding tank from the low-pressure drum, wherein a pressure in the high-pressure holding tank is lower than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; and a backfill subsystem that contains a backfill gas at a higher pressure than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; wherein a plurality of first valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the drain down subsystem; wherein a plurality of second valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the backfill subsystem; wherein in a drain down mode (a) at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem transports to the high-pressure holding tank via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves, (b) at least a portion of the backfill gas from the backfill subsystem transports to the refrigerant distribution subsystem via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves, and, (c) when needed, mixed refrigerant from the high-pressure holding tank is allowed to enter the low-pressure drum via the valve.

[0011] A method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility, can comprise: draining down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem into a low-pressure drum of a drain down subsystem; and backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas from a backfill subsystem; wherein a pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is higher than a pressure in the low-pressure drum, and wherein the pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is lower than a pressure of the backfill gas in the backfill subsystem.

[0012] A natural gas liquefaction facility can comprise: a refrigerant distribution subsystem that contains a mixed refrigerant; a drain down subsystem that comprises a low-pressure drum, wherein a pressure in the low-pressure drum is lower than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; and a backfill subsystem that contains a backfill gas at a higher pressure than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; wherein a plurality of first valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the drain down subsystem; wherein a plurality of second valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the backfill subsystem; and wherein in a drain down mode (a) at least a portion of the

mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem transports to the low-pressure drum **318** via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves and (b) at least a portion of the backfill gas from the backfill subsystem transports to the refrigerant distribution subsystem via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves.

5 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] The following figures are included to illustrate certain aspects of the embodiments, and should not be viewed as exclusive embodiments. The subject matter disclosed is capable of considerable modifications, alterations, combinations, and equivalents in form and function, as will occur to those skilled in the art and having the benefit of this disclosure.

10 [0014] FIG. 1 is an illustrative diagram of a portion of a natural gas liquefaction facility for conserving refrigerant during a drain down of a refrigerant distribution subsystem by implementing a first drain down subsystem of the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 2 is an illustrative diagram of a portion of a natural gas liquefaction facility for conserving refrigerant during a drain down of a refrigerant distribution subsystem by
15 implementing a second drain down subsystem of the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 3 is an illustrative diagram of a portion of a natural gas liquefaction facility for conserving refrigerant during a drain down of a refrigerant distribution subsystem by implementing a third drain down subsystem of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

20 [0017] This disclosure relates generally to systems and methods for conserving mixed refrigerant during drain down operations of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility.

[0018] FIG. 1 is an illustrative diagram of a portion **100** of a natural gas liquefaction facility. The portion **100** of the natural gas liquefaction facility includes a refrigerant
25 distribution subsystem **102** that maintains the mixed refrigerant at the desired temperatures and pressures and distributes the mixed refrigerant to components of the natural gas liquefaction facility. The illustrated components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** include a separator or drum **104**, a liquefaction heat exchanger **106**, and distribution lines **108**. One skilled in the art will recognize other components that can or should be included in the
30 refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** for proper and safe operation. Examples of components can include, but not limited to, additional heat exchangers (*e.g.*, for pre-cooling and sub-cooling), condensers, compressors, pumps, valves, and the like. Nonlimiting examples of

refrigerant distribution subsystems or portions thereof can be found in U. S. Patent Application Publication Nos. 2016/0040928, 2017/0097188, 2017/0167788, and 2018/0149424, each of which are incorporated herein by reference.

[0019] Inert gases, light hydrocarbons, and fluorocarbons can be used as components in a mixed refrigerant. Examples of components suitable for use in a mixed refrigerant include, but are not limited to, nitrogen, argon, krypton, xenon, carbon dioxide, natural gas, methane, ethane, ethylene, propane, propylene, tetrafluoro methane, trifluoro methane, fluoro methane, difluoro methane, octafluoro propane, 1,1,1,2,3,3,3-heptafluoro propane, 1,1,1,3,3-pentafluoro propane, hexafluoro ethane, 1,1,1,2,2 pentafluoro ethane, 1,1,1-trifluoro ethane, 2,3,3,3-tetrafluoropropene, 1,1,1,2-tetrafluoro ethane, 1,1difluoro ethane, 1,3,3,3-tetrafluoropropene, octafluoro cyclobutane, 1,1,1,3,3,3-hexafluoro propane, 1,1,2,2,3-pentafluoro propane, heptafluoropropyl, methyl ether, and the like. Specific examples of mixed refrigerants include, but are not limited to, propane and methane; propylene and methane; propane and propylene; propylene and propane; propane and ethane; propylene and ethane; propane and ethylene; propylene and ethylene; nitrogen and natural gas; tetrafluoro methane, trifluoro methane, difluoro methane, 1,1,1,2,3,3,3-heptafluoro propane, and 1,1,1,2,2 pentafluoro ethane; and the like.

[0020] The pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the various components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** is dependent on the composition of the mixed refrigerant and the temperature of the mixed refrigerant. Typically, the temperature of the mixed refrigerant is maintained at about -175 °C and about -25 °C. The pressure of the mixed refrigerant is maintained at about 2 bar absolute (bara) to about 25 bara, more typically about 5 bara to about 25 bara. One skilled in the art will recognize proper and safe operating temperatures and pressures for the various components of a refrigerant distribution subsystem depending on the mixed refrigerant composition and design of the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0021] The illustrated portion **100** of the natural gas liquefaction facility also includes a drain down subsystem **110**. As illustrated, a plurality of valves **112** separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** and the drain down subsystem **110**. The illustrated drain down subsystem **110** includes a pump **114**, a high-pressure holding tank **116**, a low-pressure drum **118**, a valve **120** separating the high-pressure holding tank **116** from the low-pressure drum **118**, and optionally a condenser/flare subsystem **122** associated with the low-pressure drum **118**. In alternative of the condenser/flare subsystem **122**, a simple vent to flare (not illustrated) can be included.

[0022] In operation, during a shutdown or partial shutdown, (referred to herein as “drain down mode”) the temperature of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** will increase, which increases the mixed refrigerant pressure. To avoid over-pressurization and potential explosion, the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** can be at least partially drained down. When draining down, the valves **112** allow at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant in one or more of the components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** to flow into the drain down subsystem **110**. The pump **114** transfers the mixed refrigerant at high-pressure to the high-pressure holding tank **116**. The high-pressure holding tank **116** stores and maintains the mixed refrigerant at suitable safe pressures (*e.g.*, about 5 bara to about 25 bara) and temperatures (about -175 °C and about -100 °C).

[0023] As the temperature rises in the high-pressure holding tank **116** and/or the high-pressure holding tank **116** is at capacity, the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank **116** can be drained to the low-pressure drum **118**. The valve **120** and any other suitable components of the drain down subsystem **110** allow the high-pressure holding tank **116** and the low-pressure drum **118** to operate at different pressures. The low-pressure drum **118** stores and maintains the mixed refrigerant at suitable safe pressures (*e.g.*, atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara) and temperatures (about -125 °C and about -25 °C).

[0024] In the low-pressure drum **118**, the most volatile components (*e.g.*, nitrogen and methane) of the mixed refrigerant evaporate from the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum **118**. The volatilized components pass through vent line **124** to either (a) a pressure valve **126** and then to flare or (b) a condenser **128** where the volatilized components are condensed and added back to the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum **118**.

[0025] One skilled in the art will recognize proper and safe operating temperatures and pressures for the various components of a drain down subsystem depending on the mixed refrigerant composition and design of the drain down subsystem.

[0026] Once the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** is ready to be put back online, the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank **116** and the low-pressure drum **118** can be added back into the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102**. The component of the mixed refrigerant lost during the shutdown can be added back to the mixed refrigerant for proper and safe operation of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** when back online.

[0027] To briefly summarize FIG. 1, a natural gas liquefaction facility can comprise: a refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** that contains a mixed refrigerant; and a drain down

subsystem **110** that comprises a pump **114**, a high-pressure holding tank **116**, a low-pressure drum **118**, and a valve **120** separating the high-pressure holding tank **116** from the low-pressure drum **118**; wherein a plurality of valves **112** separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** and the drain down subsystem **110**; and wherein in a drain down mode the pump **114** transports
5 at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102** to the high-pressure holding tank **116**, and, when needed, mixed refrigerant from the high-pressure holding tank **116** is allowed to enter the low-pressure drum **118** via the valve **120**.

[0028] As used herein, when describing a line that fluidly connects two components, the line is used as a general term to encompass the line or lines that fluidly connect the two
10 components and the other hardware like pumps, connectors, heat exchangers, and valves that may be installed along the line.

[0029] FIG. 2 is an illustrative diagram of a portion **200** of a natural gas liquefaction facility. The portion **200** of the natural gas liquefaction facility includes a refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** that maintains the mixed refrigerant at the desired temperatures and
15 pressures and distributes the mixed refrigerant to components of the natural gas liquefaction facility. The illustrated components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** include a separator or drum **204**, a liquefaction heat exchanger **206**, and distribution lines **208**. One skilled in the art will recognize other components that can or should be included in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** for proper and safe operation. Examples of components
20 can include, but not limited to, additional heat exchangers (*e.g.*, for pre-cooling and sub-cooling), condensers, compressors, pumps, valves, and the like. Nonlimiting examples of refrigerant distribution subsystems or portions thereof can be found in U. S. Patent Application Publication Nos. 2016/0040928, 2017/0097188, 2017/0167788, and 2018/0149424, each of which are incorporated herein by reference.

25 [0030] The pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the various components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** is dependent on the composition of the mixed refrigerant and the temperature of the mixed refrigerant. Typically, the temperature of the mixed refrigerant is maintained at about -175 °C and about -25 °C. The pressure of the mixed refrigerant is maintained at about 2 bara to about 25 bara, more typically about 5 bara to about 25 bara. One
30 skilled in the art will recognize proper and safe operating temperatures and pressures for the various components of a refrigerant distribution subsystem depending on the mixed refrigerant composition and design of the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0031] The illustrated portion **200** of the natural gas liquefaction facility also includes a

drain down subsystem **210**. As illustrated, a plurality of valves **212** separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** and the drain down subsystem **210**. The illustrated drain down subsystem **210** includes a high-pressure holding tank **216**, a low-pressure drum **218**, a valve **220** separating the high-pressure holding tank **216** from the low-pressure drum **218**, and
5 optionally a condenser/flare subsystem **222** associated with the low-pressure drum **218**. In alternative of the condenser/flare subsystem **222**, a simple vent to flare (not illustrated) can be included.

[0032] The illustrated portion **200** of the natural gas liquefaction facility also includes a backfill subsystem **230**. As illustrated, a plurality of valves **232** separate the refrigerant
10 distribution subsystem **202** and the backfill subsystem **230**.

[0033] In drain down mode, the temperature of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** will increase, which increases the mixed refrigerant pressure. To avoid over-pressurization and potential explosion, the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** can be at least partially drained down. When draining down, the valves **212** allow at least a
15 portion of the mixed refrigerant in one or more of the components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** to flow into the high-pressure holding tank **216** of the drain down subsystem **210**. The high-pressure holding tank **216** is maintained at a lower pressure than the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** to achieve transport of the mixed refrigerant to the high-pressure holding tank **216**.

[0034] To maintain the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** at a higher pressure than the high-pressure holding tank **216**, the backfill subsystem **230** adds a backfill gas to the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202**. The backfill gas is typically dry natural gas, nitrogen, or a mixture thereof. The backfill subsystem **230** stores and maintains the backfill gas at suitable safe pressures (*e.g.*, about 5 bara to about 35 bara) and temperatures (about -175 °C and about -100
25 °C).

[0035] The high-pressure holding tank **216** stores and maintains the mixed refrigerant at suitable safe pressures (*e.g.*, about 5 bara to about 25 bara) and temperatures (about -175 °C and about -100 °C).

[0036] As the temperature rises in the high-pressure holding tank **216** and/or the high-pressure holding tank **216** is at capacity, the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank **216** can be drained to the low-pressure drum **218**. The valve **220** and any other suitable components of the drain down subsystem **210** allow the high-pressure holding tank **216** and
30

the low-pressure drum **218** to operate at different pressures. The low-pressure drum **218** stores and maintains the mixed refrigerant at suitable safe pressures (*e.g.*, atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara) and temperatures (about -125 °C and about -25 °C).

5 **[0037]** In the low-pressure drum **218**, the most volatile components (*e.g.*, nitrogen and methane) of the mixed refrigerant evaporate from the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum **218**. The volatilized components pass through vent line **224** to either (a) a pressure valve **226** and then to flare or (b) a condenser **228** where the volatilized components are condensed and added back to the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum **218**.

10 **[0038]** In this illustrated portion **200** of the natural gas liquefaction facility, fluid pressure is used to transfer fluids between subsystems and between components of the drain down subsystem **210**. Therefore, the backfill subsystem **230** is at a higher pressure than the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202**, the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** is at a higher pressure than the high-pressure holding tank **216**, and the high-pressure holding tank **216** is at a higher pressure than the low-pressure drum **218**. Pressure drops as described can lead to
15 Joule-Thompson cooling of the mixed refrigerant, which reduces the cost associated with keeping each subsystem and components thereof cooled.

[0039] One skilled in the art will recognize proper and safe operating temperatures and pressures for the various components of a drain down subsystem depending on the mixed refrigerant composition and design of the drain down subsystem.

20 **[0040]** Once the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** is ready to be put back online, the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank **216** and the low-pressure drum **218** can be added back into the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202**. The composition of the mixed refrigerant will likely change during the drain down process because of volatilized components and mixing with backfill gas. Therefore, various components of the mixed refrigerant can be
25 added to the mixed refrigerant to get the proper composition and ensure proper and safe operation of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** when back online.

[0041] With reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, a method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem **102**, **202** in a natural gas liquefaction facility, can include: draining down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components
30 of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102**, **202** into a high-pressure holding tank **116**, **216** of a drain down subsystem **110**, **210**, wherein draining down to the high-pressure holding tank **116**, **216** is achieved by (a) pumping the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution

subsystem **102, 202** to the high-pressure holding tank **116, 216** or (b) backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem **102, 202** with a backfill gas; and optionally, transferring at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant into a low-pressure drum **118, 218** from the high-pressure holding tank **116, 216**.

5 **[0042]** To briefly summarize FIG. 2, a natural gas liquefaction facility can comprise: a refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** that contains a mixed refrigerant; a drain down subsystem **210** that comprises a high-pressure holding tank **216**, a low-pressure drum **218**, and a valve **220** separating the high-pressure holding tank **216** from the low-pressure drum **218**, wherein a pressure in the high-pressure holding tank **216** is lower than the mixed refrigerant in
10 the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202**; a backfill subsystem **230** that contains a backfill gas at a higher pressure than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202**; wherein a plurality of first valves **212** separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** and the drain down subsystem **210**; wherein a plurality of second valves **232** separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** and the backfill subsystem **230**; wherein in a drain down mode (a)
15 at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** transports to the high-pressure holding tank **216** via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves **212**, (b) at least a portion of the backfill gas from the backfill subsystem **230** transports to the refrigerant distribution subsystem **202** via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves **232**, and, (c) when needed, mixed refrigerant from the high-
20 pressure holding tank **216** is allowed to enter the low-pressure drum **218** via the valve **220**.

[0043] FIG. 3 is an illustrative diagram of a portion **300** of a natural gas liquefaction facility. The portion **300** of the natural gas liquefaction facility includes a refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** that maintains the mixed refrigerant at the desired temperatures and pressures and distributes the mixed refrigerant to components of the natural gas liquefaction
25 facility. The illustrated components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** include a separator or drum **304**, a liquefaction heat exchanger **306**, and distribution lines **308**. One skilled in the art will recognize other components that can or should be included in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** for proper and safe operation. Examples of components can include, but not limited to, additional heat exchangers (*e.g.*, for pre-cooling and sub-
30 cooling), condensers, compressors, pumps, valves, and the like. Nonlimiting examples of refrigerant distribution subsystems or portions thereof can be found in U. S. Patent Application Publication Nos. 2016/0040928, 2017/0097188, 2017/0167788, and 2018/0149424, each of which are incorporated herein by reference.

[0044] The pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the various components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** is dependent on the composition of the mixed refrigerant and the temperature of the mixed refrigerant. Typically, the temperature of the mixed refrigerant is maintained at about -175 °C and about -25 °C. The pressure of the mixed refrigerant is maintained at about 2 bara to about 25 bara, more typically about 5 bara to about 25 bara. One skilled in the art will recognize proper and safe operating temperatures and pressures for the various components of a refrigerant distribution subsystem depending on the mixed refrigerant composition and design of the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0045] The illustrated portion **300** of the natural gas liquefaction facility also includes a drain down subsystem **310**. As illustrated, a plurality of valves **312** separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** and the drain down subsystem **310**. The illustrated drain down subsystem **310** includes a low-pressure drum **318** and optionally a condenser/flare subsystem **322** associated with the low-pressure drum **318**. In alternative of the condenser/flare subsystem **322**, a simple vent to flare (not illustrated) can be included.

[0046] The illustrated portion **300** of the natural gas liquefaction facility also includes a backfill subsystem **330**. As illustrated, a plurality of valves **332** separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** and the backfill subsystem **330**.

[0047] In drain down mode, the temperature of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** will increase, which increases the mixed refrigerant pressure. To avoid over-pressurization and potential explosion, the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** can be at least partially drained down. When draining down, the valves **312** allow at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant in one or more of the components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** to flow into the low-pressure drum **318** of the drain down subsystem **310**. The low-pressure drum **318** is maintained at a lower pressure than the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** to achieve transport of the mixed refrigerant to the low-pressure drum **318**.

[0048] To maintain the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** at a higher pressure than the low-pressure drum **318**, the backfill subsystem **330** adds a backfill gas to the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302**. The backfill gas is typically dry natural gas, nitrogen, or a mixture thereof. The backfill subsystem **330** stores and maintains the backfill gas at suitable safe pressures (*e.g.*, about 5 bara to about 36 bara) and temperatures (about -175 °C and about -100 °C).

[0049] The low-pressure drum **318** stores and maintains the mixed refrigerant at suitable

safe pressures (*e.g.*, atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara) and temperatures (about -125 °C and about -25 °C).

5 [0050] In the low-pressure drum **318**, the most volatile components (*e.g.*, nitrogen and methane) of the mixed refrigerant evaporate from the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum **318**. The volatilized components pass through vent line **324** to either (a) a pressure valve **326** and then to flare or (b) a condenser **328** where the volatilized components are condensed and added back to the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum **318**.

10 [0051] In this illustrated portion **300** of the natural gas liquefaction facility, fluid pressure is used to transfer fluids between subsystems and between components of the drain down subsystem **310**. Therefore, the backfill subsystem **330** is at a higher pressure than the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302**, and the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** is at a higher pressure than the low-pressure drum **318**. Pressure drops as described can lead to Joule-Thompson cooling of the mixed refrigerant, which reduces the cost associated with keeping each subsystem and components thereof cooled. This is most prominent in the transfer of
15 mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** to the low-pressure drum **318**.

[0052] One skilled in the art will recognize proper and safe operating temperatures and pressures for the various components of a drain down subsystem depending on the mixed refrigerant composition and design of the drain down subsystem.

20 [0053] Once the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** is ready to be put back online, the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum **318** can be added back into the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302**. The composition of the mixed refrigerant will likely change during the drain down process because of volatilized components and mixing with backfill gas. Therefore, various components of the mixed refrigerant can be added to the mixed refrigerant
25 to get the proper composition and ensure proper and safe operation of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** when back online.

[0054] To briefly summarize FIG. 3, a natural gas liquefaction facility can comprise: a refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** that contains a mixed refrigerant; a drain down subsystem **310** that comprises a low-pressure drum **318**, wherein a pressure in the low-pressure drum **318** is lower than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302**; a
30 backfill subsystem **330** that contains a backfill gas at a higher pressure than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302**; wherein a plurality of first valves **312**

separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** and the drain down subsystem **310**; wherein a plurality of second valves **332** separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** and the backfill subsystem **330**; wherein in a drain down mode (a) at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** transports to the low-pressure drum **318** via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves **312** and (b) at least a portion of the backfill gas from the backfill subsystem **330** transports to the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves **332**.

[0055] With reference to FIG. 3, a method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** in a natural gas liquefaction facility, can include: draining down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** into a low-pressure drum **318** of a drain down subsystem **310**, wherein a pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** is higher than a pressure in the low-pressure drum **318**, and wherein the pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** is maintained at the higher pressure by backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem **302** with a backfill gas.

Examples

[0056] Example 1 is a method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility, comprising: draining down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem into a high-pressure holding tank of a drain down subsystem, wherein draining down to the high-pressure holding tank is achieved by pumping the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem to the high-pressure holding tank or backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas; and optionally, transferring at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant into a low-pressure drum from the high-pressure holding tank.

[0057] Example 2: Optionally, Example 1 can further comprise: returning the portion of the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0058] Example 3: Optionally, Example 1 and/or 2 can further comprise: returning the portion of the refrigerant in the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0059] Example 4: Optionally, one or more of Examples 1-3 can be performed wherein the

mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is at a pressure of about 2 bara to about 25 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -25 °C.

[0060] Example 5: Optionally, one or more of Examples 1-4 can be performed wherein the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank is at a pressure of about 5 bara to about 25
5 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -100 °C.

[0061] Example 6: Optionally, one or more of Examples 1-5 can be performed wherein the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum is at a pressure of atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara and a temperature of about -125 °C to about -25 °C.

[0062] Example 7: Optionally, one or more of Examples 1-6 can be performed wherein
10 draining down to the high-pressure holding tank is achieved by (b) backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas, wherein a pressure of the backfill gas prior to backfilling into the refrigerant distribution subsystem is higher than a pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem, and wherein the pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is greater than a pressure of the mixed
15 refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank.

[0063] Example 8: Optionally, one or more of Examples 1-7 can be performed wherein the refrigerant is a mixture comprising methane, ethane, propane, butane, and optionally nitrogen.

[0064] Example 9: Optionally, one or more of Examples 1-8 can be performed wherein the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum has a vent coupled to a condenser.

[0065] Example 10 is a natural gas liquefaction facility comprising: a refrigerant
20 distribution subsystem that contains a mixed refrigerant; and a drain down subsystem that comprises a pump, a high-pressure holding tank, a low-pressure drum, and a valve separating the high-pressure holding tank from the low-pressure drum; wherein a plurality of valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the drain down subsystem; and wherein in
25 a drain down mode the pump transports at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem to the high-pressure holding tank, and, when needed, mixed refrigerant from the high-pressure holding tank is allowed to enter the low-pressure drum via the valve.

[0066] Example 11 is a natural gas liquefaction facility comprising: a refrigerant
30 distribution subsystem that contains a mixed refrigerant; a drain down subsystem that comprises a high-pressure holding tank, a low-pressure drum, and a valve separating the high-pressure holding tank from the low-pressure drum, wherein a pressure in the high-pressure

holding tank is lower than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; and a backfill subsystem that contains a backfill gas at a higher pressure than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; wherein a plurality of first valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the drain down subsystem; wherein a plurality of second
5 valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the backfill subsystem; wherein in a drain down mode (a) at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem transports to the high-pressure holding tank via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves, (b) at least a portion of the backfill gas from the backfill
10 subsystem transports to the refrigerant distribution subsystem via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves, and, (c) when needed, mixed refrigerant from the high-pressure holding tank is allowed to enter the low-pressure drum via the valve.

[0067] Example 12: Optionally, Example 10 and/or 11 can further comprise: a subsystem for returning the portion of the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

15 **[0068]** Example 13: Optionally, one or more of Examples 10-12 can further comprise: a subsystem for returning the portion of the refrigerant in the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0069] Example 14: Optionally, one or more of Examples 10-13 can be configured wherein the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is at a pressure of about 2 bara to about 25 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -25 °C.
20

[0070] Example 15: Optionally, one or more of Examples 10-14 can be configured wherein the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank is at a pressure of about 5 bara to about 25 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -100 °C.

[0071] Example 16: Optionally, one or more of Examples 10-15 can be configured wherein
25 the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum is at a pressure of atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara and a temperature of about -125 °C to about -25 °C.

[0072] Example 17: Optionally, one or more of Examples 11-16 can be configured wherein the backfill gas in the backfill subsystem is at about 5 bara to about 35 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -100 °C.

30 **[0073]** Example 18: Optionally, one or more of Examples 11-17 can be configured wherein a pressure of the backfill gas prior to backfilling into the refrigerant distribution subsystem is higher than a pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem, and

wherein the pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is greater than a pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank.

[0074] Example 19: Optionally, one or more of Examples 10-18 can be configured wherein the refrigerant is a mixture comprising methane, ethane, propane, butane, and optionally
5 nitrogen.

[0075] Example 20: Optionally, one or more of Examples 10-19 can be configured wherein the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum has a vent coupled to a condenser.

[0076] Example 21 is a method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility, comprising: draining
10 down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem into a low-pressure drum of a drain down subsystem; and backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas from a backfill subsystem; wherein a pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is higher than a pressure in the low-pressure drum, and wherein the pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is lower than a
15 pressure of the backfill gas in the backfill subsystem.

[0077] Example 22: Optionally, Example 21 can further comprise: returning the portion of the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0078] Example 23: Optionally, Example 21 and/or 22 can further comprise: returning the
20 portion of the refrigerant in the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0079] Example 24: Optionally, one or more of Examples 21-23 can be performed wherein the pressure of the backfill gas in the backfill subsystem is at about 5 bara to about 35 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -100 °C.

25 [0080] Example 25: Optionally, one or more of Examples 21-24 can be performed wherein the pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is at about 2 bara to about 25 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -25 °C.

[0081] Example 26: Optionally, one or more of Examples 21-25 can be performed wherein the pressure in the low-pressure drum is at about atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara and a
30 temperature of about -125 °C to about -25 °C.

[0082] Example 27: Optionally, one or more of Examples 21-26 can be performed wherein

the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum has a vent coupled to a condenser.

[0083] Example 28 is a natural gas liquefaction facility comprising: a refrigerant distribution subsystem that contains a mixed refrigerant; a drain down subsystem that comprises a low-pressure drum, wherein a pressure in the low-pressure drum is lower than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; and a backfill subsystem that contains a backfill gas at a higher pressure than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; wherein a plurality of first valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the drain down subsystem; wherein a plurality of second valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the backfill subsystem; and wherein in a drain down mode (a) at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem transports to the low-pressure drum **318** via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves and (b) at least a portion of the backfill gas from the backfill subsystem transports to the refrigerant distribution subsystem via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves.

[0084] Example 29: Optionally, Example 28 can further comprise: a subsystem for returning the portion of the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0085] Example 30: Optionally, Example 28 and/or 29 can further comprise: a subsystem for returning the portion of the refrigerant in the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

[0086] Example 31: Optionally, one or more of Examples 28-30 can be configured wherein the pressure of the backfill gas in the backfill subsystem is at about 5 bara to about 35 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -100 °C.

[0087] Example 32: Optionally, one or more of Examples 28-31 can be configured wherein the pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is at about 2 bara to about 25 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -25 °C.

[0088] Example 33: Optionally, one or more of Examples 28-32 can be configured wherein the pressure in the low-pressure drum is at about atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara and a temperature of about -125 °C to about -25 °C.

[0089] Example 34: Optionally, one or more of Examples 28-33 can be configured wherein the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum has a vent coupled to a condenser.

[0090] Unless otherwise indicated, all numbers expressing quantities of ingredients,

properties such as molecular weight, reaction conditions, and so forth used in the present specification and associated claims are to be understood as being modified in all instances by the term “about.” Accordingly, unless indicated to the contrary, the numerical parameters set forth in the following specification and attached claims are approximations that may vary
5 depending upon the desired properties sought to be obtained by the embodiments of the present invention. At the very least, and not as an attempt to limit the application of the doctrine of equivalents to the scope of the claim, each numerical parameter should at least be construed in light of the number of reported significant digits and by applying ordinary rounding techniques.

[0091] One or more illustrative embodiments incorporating the invention embodiments
10 disclosed herein are presented herein. Not all features of a physical implementation are described or shown in this application for the sake of clarity. It is understood that in the development of a physical embodiment incorporating the embodiments of the present invention, numerous implementation-specific decisions must be made to achieve the developer's goals, such as compliance with system-related, business-related, government-
15 related and other constraints, which vary by implementation and from time to time. While a developer's efforts might be time-consuming, such efforts would be, nevertheless, a routine undertaking for those of ordinary skill in the art and having benefit of this disclosure.

[0092] While compositions and methods are described herein in terms of “comprising” various components or steps, the compositions and methods can also “consist essentially of”
20 or “consist of” the various components and steps.

[0093] Therefore, the present invention is well adapted to attain the ends and advantages mentioned as well as those that are inherent therein. The particular embodiments disclosed above are illustrative only, as the present invention may be modified and practiced in different but equivalent manners apparent to those skilled in the art having the benefit of the teachings
25 herein. Furthermore, no limitations are intended to the details of construction or design herein shown, other than as described in the claims below. It is therefore evident that the particular illustrative embodiments disclosed above may be altered, combined, or modified and all such variations are considered within the scope and spirit of the present invention. The invention illustratively disclosed herein suitably may be practiced in the absence of any element that is
30 not specifically disclosed herein and/or any optional element disclosed herein. While compositions and methods are described in terms of “comprising,” “containing,” or “including” various components or steps, the compositions and methods can also “consist essentially of” or “consist of” the various components and steps. All numbers and ranges disclosed above

may vary by some amount. Whenever a numerical range with a lower limit and an upper limit is disclosed, any number and any included range falling within the range is specifically disclosed. In particular, every range of values (of the form, “from about a to about b,” or, equivalently, “from approximately a to b,” or, equivalently, “from approximately a-b”) disclosed herein is to be understood to set forth every number and range encompassed within the broader range of values. Also, the terms in the claims have their plain, ordinary meaning unless otherwise explicitly and clearly defined by the patentee. Moreover, the indefinite articles “a” or “an,” as used in the claims, are defined herein to mean one or more than one of the element that it introduces.

10

CLAIMS

The invention claimed is:

1. A method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility, comprising:
 - 5 draining down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem into a high-pressure holding tank of a drain down subsystem, wherein draining down to the high-pressure holding tank is achieved by pumping the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem to the high-pressure holding tank or backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas; and
 - 10 transferring at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant into a low-pressure drum from the high-pressure holding tank.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - 15 returning the portion of the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.
3. The method of claim 1 or claim 2, further comprising:
 - 20 returning the portion of the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.
4. The method of any one of claims 1-3, wherein the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is at a pressure of about 2 bar absolute (bara) to about 25 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -25 °C.
- 25 5. The method of any one of claims 1-4, wherein the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank is at a pressure of about 5 bara to about 25 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -100 °C.
6. The method of any one of claims 1-5, wherein the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure drum is at a pressure of atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara and a temperature of about -125
30 °C to about -25 °C.

7. The method of any one of claims 1-6, wherein draining down to the high-pressure holding tank is achieved by backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas, wherein a pressure of the backfill gas prior to backfilling into the refrigerant distribution subsystem is higher than a pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem, and wherein the pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is greater than a pressure of the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure holding tank.
8. The method of any one of claims 1-7, wherein the mixed refrigerant is a mixture comprising methane, ethane, propane, butane, and optionally nitrogen.
9. The method of any one of claims 1-8, wherein the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum has a vent coupled to a condenser.
10. A method of operating, during an at least partial shutdown of a refrigerant distribution subsystem in a natural gas liquefaction facility, comprising:
- draining down at least a portion of a mixed refrigerant in one or more components of the refrigerant distribution subsystem into a low-pressure drum of a drain down subsystem; and
- backfilling the refrigerant distribution subsystem with a backfill gas from a backfill subsystem;
- wherein a pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is higher than a pressure in the low-pressure drum, and
- wherein the pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is lower than a pressure of the backfill gas in the backfill subsystem.
11. The method of claim 10, further comprising:
- returning the portion of the mixed refrigerant in the high-pressure refrigerant holding drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.
12. The method of claim 10 or claim 11, further comprising:
- returning the portion of the mixed refrigerant in the low-pressure refrigerant holding

drum to the refrigerant distribution subsystem.

13. The method of any one of claims 10-12, wherein the pressure of the backfill gas in the backfill subsystem is at about 5 bar absolute (bara) to about 35 bara and a temperature of about
5 -175 °C to about -100 °C.

14. The method of any one of claims 10-13, wherein the pressure in the refrigerant distribution subsystem is at about 2 bara to about 25 bara and a temperature of about -175 °C to about -25 °C.

10

15. The method of any one of claims 10-14, wherein the pressure in the low-pressure drum is at about atmospheric pressure to about 2 bara and a temperature of about -125 °C to about -25 °C.

15 16. The method of any one of claims 10-15, wherein the low-pressure refrigerant holding drum has a vent coupled to a condenser.

17. A natural gas liquefaction facility comprising:

a refrigerant distribution subsystem that contains a mixed refrigerant;

20 a drain down subsystem that comprises a high-pressure holding tank, a low-pressure drum, and a valve separating the high-pressure holding tank from the low-pressure drum, wherein a pressure in the high-pressure holding tank is lower than the mixed refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem; and

a backfill subsystem that contains a backfill gas at a higher pressure than the mixed
25 refrigerant in the refrigerant distribution subsystem;

wherein a plurality of first valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the drain down subsystem;

wherein a plurality of second valves separate the refrigerant distribution subsystem and the backfill subsystem;

30 wherein in a drain down mode (a) at least a portion of the mixed refrigerant from the refrigerant distribution subsystem transports to the high-pressure holding tank via a pressure

drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves, (b) at least a portion of the backfill gas from the backfill subsystem transports to the refrigerant distribution subsystem via a pressure drop across at least one of the plurality of first valves, and, (c) when needed, mixed refrigerant from the high-pressure holding tank is allowed to enter the low-pressure drum via the valve.

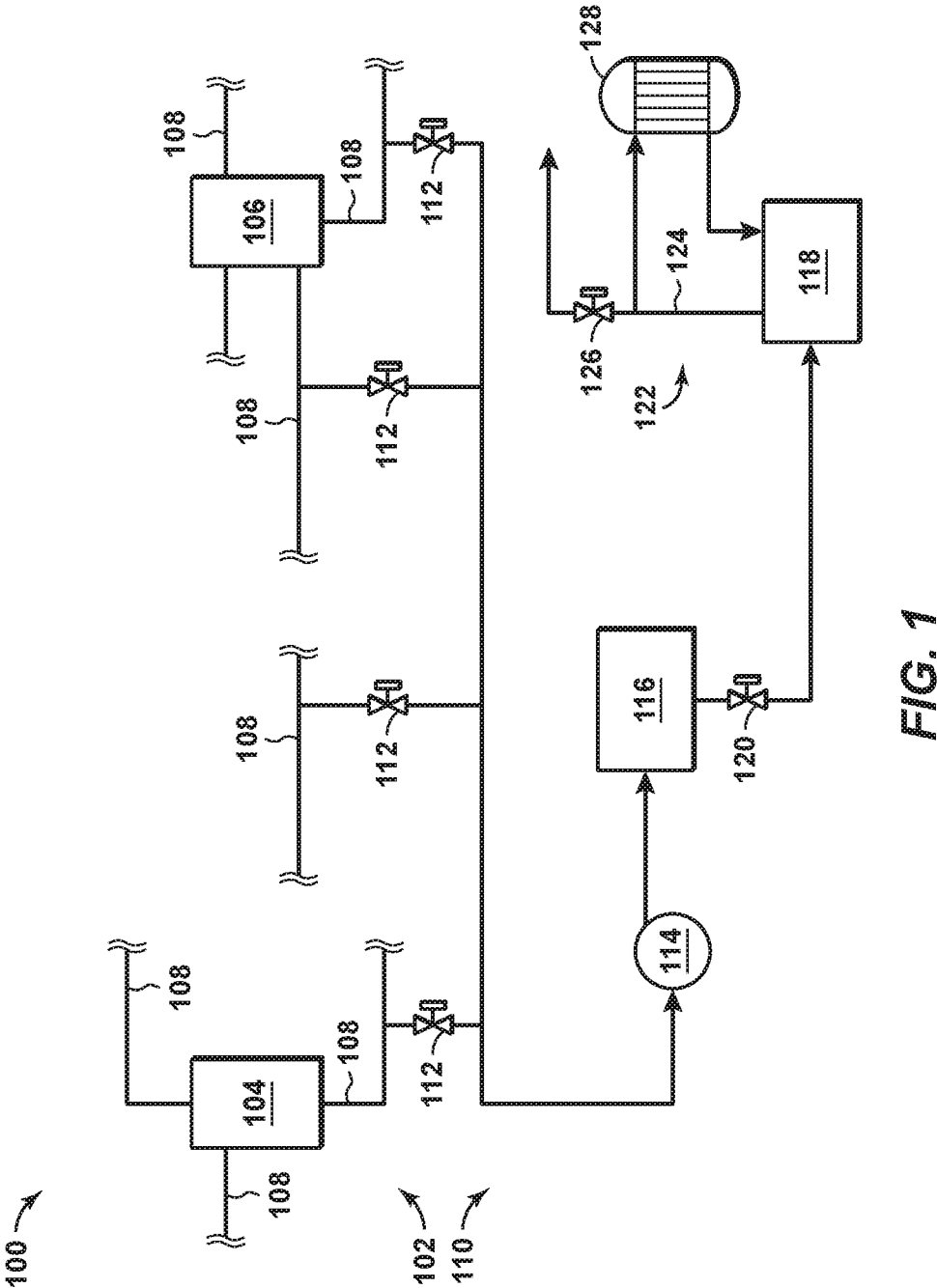


FIG. 1

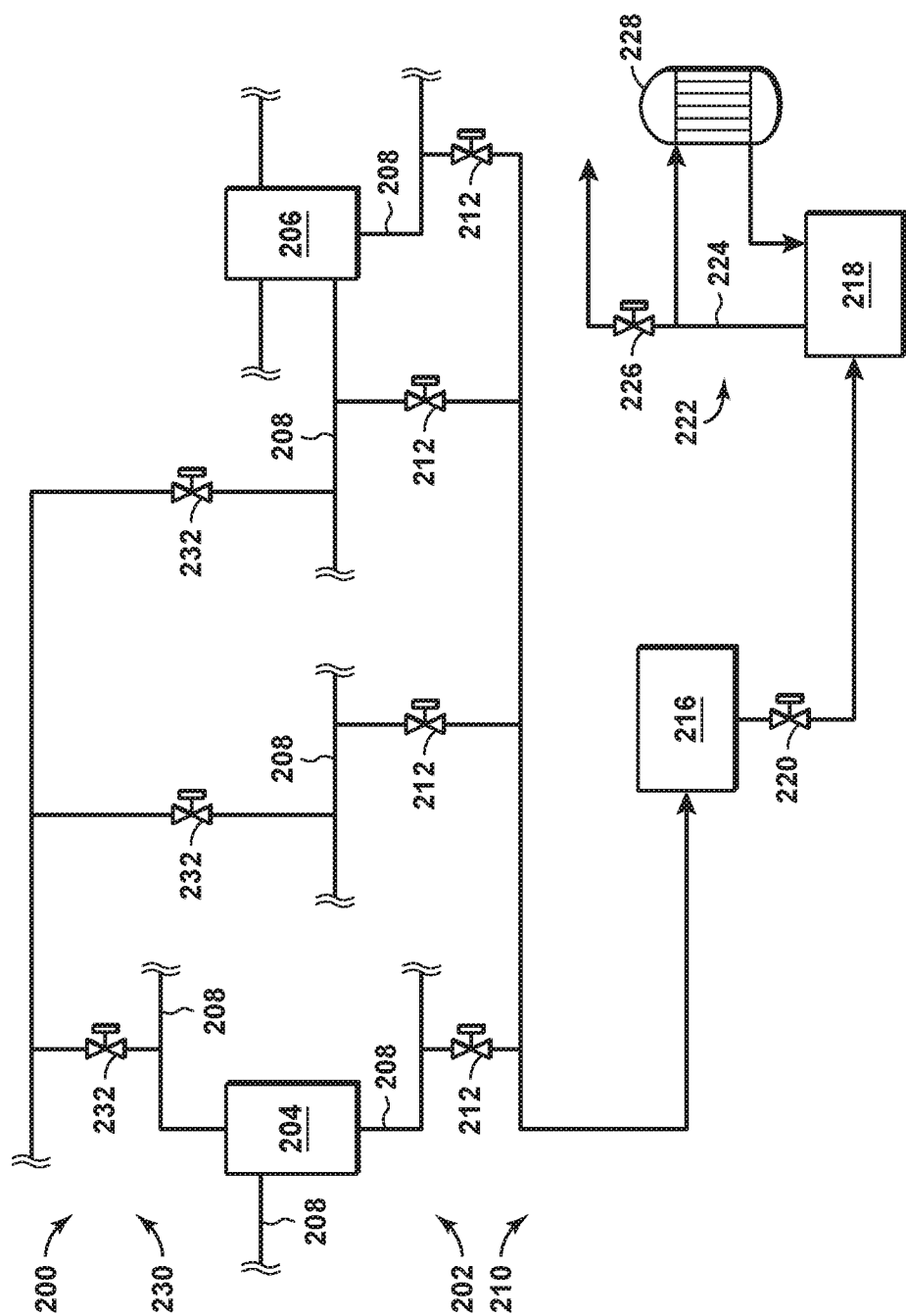


FIG. 2

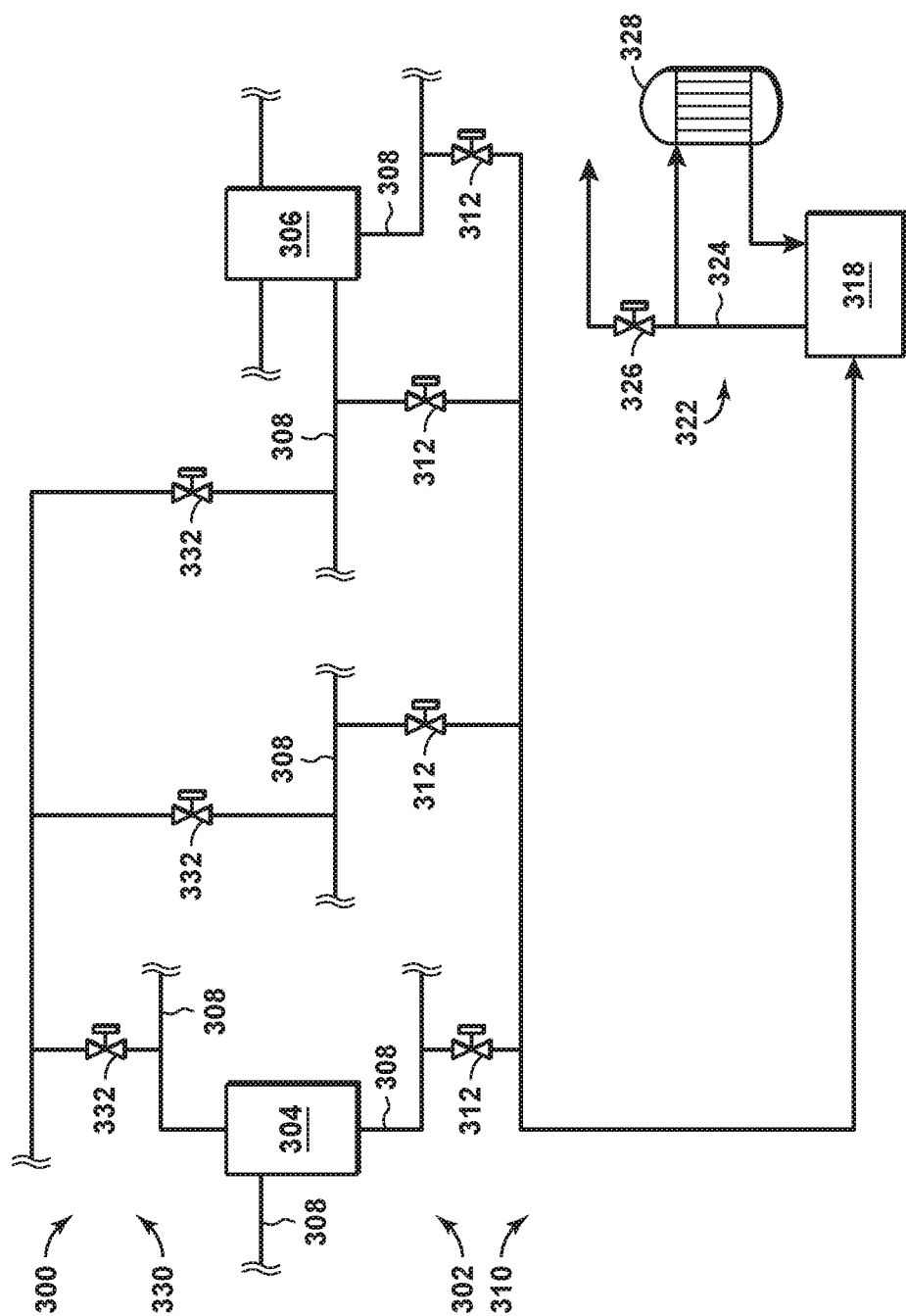


FIG. 3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/US2019/043014

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 INV. F25J1/00 F25J1/02
 ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
 F25J

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y A	EP 3 006 874 A1 (AIR PROD & CHEM [US]) 13 April 2016 (2016-04-13) paragraph [0066]; figures 2,6 -----	1-8, 10-15,17 9
Y	US 3 855 810 A (GRIMM P ET AL) 24 December 1974 (1974-12-24) claim 1 -----	1-8, 10-15,17
Y	US 6 553 772 B1 (BELANGER PAUL WILLIAM [US] ET AL) 29 April 2003 (2003-04-29) column 4, line 23 - line 33; figure 1 -----	1-8, 10-15,17
Y	CN 103 383 172 B (BEIJING ENCRYO ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY CO LTD) 10 February 2016 (2016-02-10) figure 1 -----	1-8, 10-15,17
	----- -/-	



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

5 November 2019

Date of mailing of the international search report

12/11/2019

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
 Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040,
 Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Schopfer, Georg

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/US2019/043014

C(Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y A	US 2017/160010 A1 (KENEFAKE D A; WILKINS J T; WILKINS T J) 8 June 2017 (2017-06-08) paragraphs [0001], [0006], [0007]; figure 1 -----	1-8, 10-15,17 9,16
Y A	US 2011/308482 A1 (HOTTOVY JOHN D [US]) 22 December 2011 (2011-12-22) figure 2 -----	1-8, 10-15,17 9,16

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

PCT/US2019/043014

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
EP 3006874	A1	13-04-2016	
		AU 2015238780 A1	28-04-2016
		CA 2908328 A1	10-04-2016
		CN 105509383 A	20-04-2016
		CN 205037679 U	17-02-2016
		EP 3006874 A1	13-04-2016
		JP 6110453 B2	05-04-2017
		JP 2016080344 A	16-05-2016
		KR 20160042778 A	20-04-2016
		PE 05182016 A1	21-05-2016
		RU 2015143167 A	20-04-2017
		US 2016102908 A1	14-04-2016
		US 2018058752 A1	01-03-2018
US 3855810	A	24-12-1974	
		CA 991531 A	22-06-1976
		DE 2206620 A1	23-08-1973
		US 3855810 A	24-12-1974
US 6553772	B1	29-04-2003	NONE
CN 103383172	B	10-02-2016	NONE
US 2017160010	A1	08-06-2017	
		AU 2016365113 A1	24-05-2018
		CA 3005978 A1	08-06-2017
		CN 108291768 A	17-07-2018
		JP 2019503857 A	14-02-2019
		SG 11201803309Y A	28-06-2018
		US 2017160010 A1	08-06-2017
		WO 2017095804 A2	08-06-2017
US 2011308482	A1	22-12-2011	
		BR 112012033031 A2	20-12-2016
		CA 2802982 A1	29-12-2011
		CN 103328774 A	25-09-2013
		EP 2582926 A2	24-04-2013
		MX 344213 B	07-12-2016
		RU 2013102521 A	27-07-2014
		US 2011308482 A1	22-12-2011
		US 2016097532 A1	07-04-2016
		WO 2011162960 A2	29-12-2011