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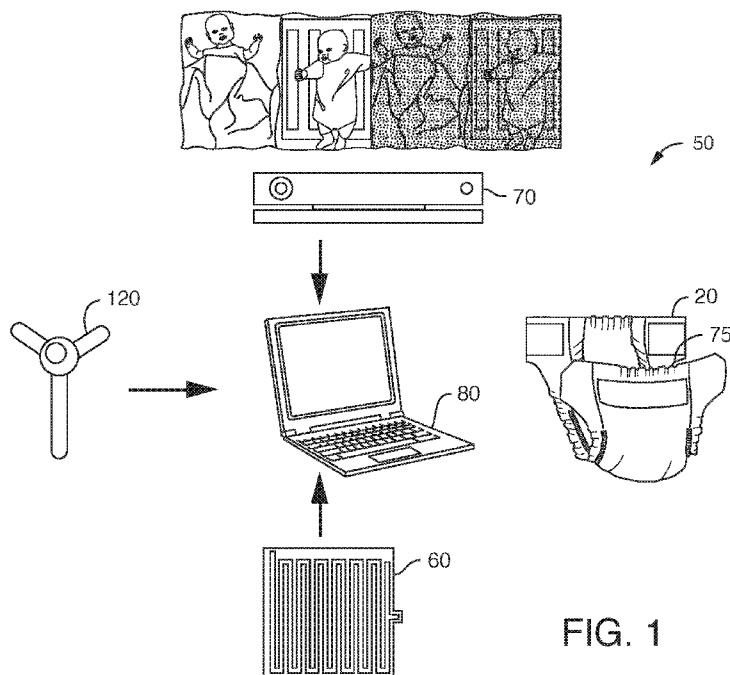
(54) **Title:** ABSORBENT ARTICLE LEAKAGE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

FIG. 1

(57) **Abstract:** A leakage assessment system for use with an absorbent article having an outer surface, the system including a computer and a signaling device adapted to be used in conjunction with the absorbent article, the signaling device adapted to sense wetness in the absorbent article, wherein the signaling device is in electronic communication with the computer. The system also includes a wetness detection mat in electronic communication with the computer, and an image capture device configured to continuously detect an absorbent article wearer position, wherein the image capture device is in electronic communication with the computer, wherein the computer is configured to electronically record wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and the wearer position captured by the image capture device.



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ABSORBENT ARTICLE LEAKAGE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

Absorbent articles such as diapers, training pants, incontinence products, feminine hygiene products, swim undergarments, and the like, conventionally include a liquid permeable body-side liner, a liquid impermeable outer cover, and an absorbent structure. The absorbent structure is typically
5 located between the outer cover and the liner for taking in and retaining liquids (e.g., urine) exuded by the wearer. The absorbent structure can be made of, for instance, superabsorbent particles. Due to a variety of potential reasons, some absorbent articles will leak urine or other body fluids, particularly in an overnight setting. These potential reasons can include body position, amount of urine already in the product, body geometries of wearers, and other potential reasons. It is typically difficult to
10 determine where, when, and how an absorbent article has leaked urine or other bodily fluids, especially when the absorbent article is being worn by a newborn or other very young wearers, and especially when the article is worn overnight.

Various types of moisture or wetness indicators have been suggested for use in absorbent articles. The wetness indicators include various passive indicators such as indicator strips, printing, or
15 other devices within each absorbent article. Wetness indicators can also include alarm devices that are designed to assist parents or attendants in identifying a wet absorbent article condition early on. The devices can produce an audible, tactile, electromagnetic, or visual signal. Many of these devices rely on electronics, including conductive elements within each absorbent article that can increase the expense of the absorbent article. None of these is designed to indicate leakage from the absorbent
20 article. Wetness-sensing bed pads are also available to indicate when urination has reached bedding, for example.

In view of the above, a need currently exists for an absorbent article leakage assessment system that can be used to determine under what circumstances an absorbent article leaks.

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SUMMARY

To understand the fundamental problem of overnight leakage, a determination of baby position, urination occurrence, leakage timing, and leakage location is required. The present inventors undertook intensive research and development efforts with respect to improving absorbent articles,

particularly in providing an absorbent article leakage assessment system that can be used to determine under what circumstances an absorbent article leaks. Technology that can be implemented without altering absorbent article construction is preferred.

5 The present disclosure is generally directed to a leakage assessment system for use with an absorbent article having an outer surface, the system including a computer and a signaling device adapted to be used in conjunction with the absorbent article, the signaling device adapted to sense wetness in the absorbent article, wherein the signaling device is in electronic communication with the computer. The system also includes a wetness detection mat in electronic communication with the computer, and an image capture device configured to continuously detect an absorbent article wearer
10 position, wherein the image capture device is in electronic communication with the computer, wherein the computer is configured to electronically record wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and the wearer position captured by the image capture device.

The present disclosure is also directed to a method for assessing leakage from an absorbent article in use by a wearer, the method including placing the absorbent article on the wearer, the
15 absorbent article comprising wetness detection indicia and a signaling device; positioning the wearer on a bed or other surface; and disposing a wetness detection mat between the absorbent article and the bed. The method also includes using a camera, continuously detecting the position of the wearer; electronically recording wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and wearer position; and viewing the wetness detection indicia to detect where leakage occurred.

20 Other features and aspects of the present disclosure are discussed in greater detail herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present disclosure will be more fully understood, and further features will become apparent, when reference is made to the following detailed description and the accompanying
25 drawings. The drawings are merely representative and are not intended to limit the scope of the claims.

Figure 1 is a schematic view of a leakage assessment system of the present disclosure; and

Figure 2 is a perspective view of a signaling device and an absorbent article of the present disclosure to be used in association with the leakage assessment system of Fig. 1.

30 Repeat use of reference characters in the present specification and drawings is intended to represent the same or analogous features or elements of the present disclosure. The drawings are

representational and are not necessarily drawn to scale. Certain proportions thereof might be exaggerated, while others might be minimized.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

5 It is to be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that the present discussion is a description of exemplary aspects only, and is not intended as limiting the broader aspects of the present disclosure.

 The present disclosure is generally directed to a leakage assessment system **50** for absorbent articles that indicate to researchers when a body fluid has insulted and then leaked from the absorbent
10 article. The signaling systems of the present disclosure, on the other hand, can sense the presence of a body fluid from an exterior surface of the article that can greatly simplify the incorporation of the signaling system into the article.

 In accordance with the present disclosure, the signaling system can have various configurations and designs. Referring to **Fig. 2**, for exemplary purposes, an absorbent article **20** that
15 can be used in conjunction with signaling systems of the present disclosure is shown. The absorbent article **20** can be disposable or not. It is understood that the present disclosure is suitable for use with various other absorbent articles intended for personal wear, including but not limited to diapers, training pants, swim pants, feminine hygiene products, incontinence products, medical garments, surgical pads and bandages, other personal care or health care garments, and the like, without
20 departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

 By way of illustration only, various materials and methods for constructing absorbent articles such as the absorbent article **20** of the various aspects of the present disclosure are disclosed in PCT Patent Disclosure WO 00/037009 published June 29, 2000 by A. Fletcher et al; U.S. Patent 4,940,464 issued July 10, 1990 to Van Gompel et al.; U.S. Patent 5,766,389 issued June 16, 1998 to Brandon et
25 al., and U.S. Patent 6,645,190 issued November 11, 2003 to Olson et al. which are incorporated herein by reference to the extent they are consistent (i.e., not in conflict) herewith.

 The illustrated absorbent article **20** includes an outer cover **40** and a waist region **90**.

 As illustrated in **Fig. 1**, a leakage assessment system **50** of the present disclosure is configured for use in conjunction with an absorbent article. The leakage assessment system **50**
30 includes a signaling device **120** for use in conjunction with the absorbent article **20**, a wetness detection mat **60** to detect leakage from the absorbent article **20**, and an image capture device **70** to

continuously detect the position of a wearer of the absorbent article **20**. In addition, the leakage assessment system **50** can include wetness detection indicia **75** on the absorbent article **20** itself to help determine the point of leakage. Finally, the leakage assessment system **50** includes a computer **80** to receive, interpret, and coordinate signals from the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and the image capture device **70**.

The signaling device **120** is adapted to be used in conjunction with the absorbent article **20** to sense wetness, such as from urine, feces, or other body exudates, within the absorbent article **20**. It is important that any signaling device **120** used should not alter the function of the absorbent article **20** or at least should have a minimal impact on the function of the absorbent article **20**. The leakage assessment system **50** is intended to identify opportunities to improve the absorbent article **20**, so the best results will be obtained if the absorbent article **20** functions as it normally would if it were not being observed. The signaling device **120** detects when a urination event starts and broadcasts, for example, a Bluetooth wireless signal to the computer **80**. The signaling device **120** can also detect multiple insults. The signaling device **120** can be configured to detect and indicate in addition to wetness dry time, time in wet product, number of insults to single diaper, fullness detection through algorithms, and fullness detection through sensing.

The reusable signaling device **120** is adapted to sense wetness without the use of conductors within the absorbent article **20**. Suitable wetness sensing technologies include capacitance-based sensors such as those described in co-pending U.S. Patent Disclosure Serial No. 12/648,645 (now U.S. Patent No. 8,866,624), inductance-based sensors such as those described in co-pending U.S. Patent Disclosure Serial No. 11/983,970 (now U.S. Patent No. 8,207,394), and infrared reflectance-based sensors such as those described in co-pending U.S. Patent Disclosure Serial No. 12/636,888, each of which is incorporated herein by reference to the extent it does not conflict herewith. Any other suitable sensor technology can be employed.

Sensors such as those described herein are further described, for instance, in U.S. Patent Disclosure Publication No. 2008/0048786 (now U.S. Patent No. 8,725,245), which is incorporated herein by reference to the extent it does not conflict herewith.

Referring to **Fig. 2**, the signaling device **120** can include a housing **125**. The housing **125** can be designed so that the signaling device **120** minimizes any discomfort when worn. In addition to being comfortable when attached to an absorbent article **20**, however, the signaling device **120** must also be durable. Based upon anthropomorphic modeling, signaling devices **120** made in accordance with the present disclosure are produced with dimensions that fall within a set of desirable ranges. In

addition, the signaling device **120** can also include radii on the corners of the signaling device **120** that are constrained by a set of desirable ranges to ensure that the corners do not impinge, scratch, or poke the body's surface.

In this aspect, the signaling device **120** can include internal components. The internal
5 components, for instance, can include a battery and can be configured to generate an audible signal, a tactile signal, an electromagnetic signal, a wireless signal, a visual signal, any other suitable signal, or any combination of these. The housing **125** in this aspect can have a rectangular shape, such as a square shape, with rounded corners, or the housing **125** can be circular, ovoid, or any other suitable shape. Housings **125** suitable for use in the signaling device **120** described herein include those
10 further described, for instance, in U.S. Patent Disclosure Serial No. 11/848,714, which is incorporated herein by reference to the extent it does not conflict herewith.

As illustrated in **Fig. 2**, the signaling device **120** can also include a flexible sensor band **130** extending from the housing **125**. The flexible sensor band **130** can be a flexible plastic film including an array of capacitive-based sensing elements. The sensing elements can take form of two planar
15 electrodes making an open-face virtual capacitor. The flexible sensor band **130** can be made by etching from copper sheets laminated onto a flexible and non-conductive substrate. Such flexible and non-conductive substrates include polyimide, polyester, and any other suitable material. An example of such material is KAPTON films made by E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company of Wilmington, Delaware. The etching method is widely used to make printed circuit boards in the electronic industry.
20 Other methods of making a flexible printed circuit board include silk screen printing, gravure printing, and flexographic printing. The conductive material forming open face capacitors is made with conductive materials such as copper, silver, or carbon black. The flexible sensing band **130** can be electrically connected to the signaling device **120** by a ZIF connector or any other suitable connector.

In one aspect of the present disclosure, the signaling device **120** includes a capacitive sensor
25 that is adapted to detect the presence of a body exudate in the absorbent article **20**. A noninvasive capacitive-based touch sensor can be used to determine the permittivity of material near the sensing element. The sensing element can take the form of an open face virtual capacitor that, when energized, creates an electric field.

The capacitive sensor includes a capacitive touch sensing means. The capacitive touch
30 sensing means can include two electrodes creating an electrostatic field that extends beyond the face of the antenna or electrodes, in this case beyond the face of the signaling device **120**. Conductive substances such as body exudates in the absorbent article **20** act as dielectrics that change field dynamics, causing a load on the system. This load amount can be read as merely the presence or the

extent of the presence of moisture, for example. Construction and the power applied to the electrodes can control the extent to which the field extends and the frequency of the power can be adjusted to fine tune selectivity to certain dielectrics.

For example, a noninvasive, capacitive-based touch sensor can be used to determine the permeability of material near the sensing element. The sensing element can take a form of an inter-digitized electrode forming an open-face virtual capacitor. Similar technology has been used to determine moisture content in soil and in touch sensors such as key pads, thumbwheels, etc. As described herein, this technology can be applied to detect wetness in an absorbent article from outside the outer cover. Key challenges, however, with such a capacitive touch sensing system are managing the penetration depth of the electric field and the ability of the system to detect a small amount of wetness from outside the outer cover. Such challenges can be resolved through signal conditioning and developing algorithms to ignore environmental interferences, as described below.

Sensor design is important in determining the sensitivity of the capacitive sensor to detect wetness in the absorbent article **20**. Some of the important parameters include the diameter of the capacitor pad, for example from 5 to 15 mm, the number of capacitors in one array, for example from 1 to 10, and the spacing between the capacitor and the ground plane, for example from 1 mm to 2.5 mm. A ground plane can be positioned at the back of the sensor to prevent interference from the back side of the sensor. There are several array geometries that can be used for a capacitive sensing array.

In various aspects of the present disclosure, different methods can be used in constructing a capacitive sensor. In a first method, the sensor can be viewed as a constant capacitance sensor because the sensor size and distance to the ground plane cannot change. Any parasitic capacitance, either trace capacitance, IC capacitance, or ADC capacitance, can be said to be constant. When the sensor is in open air, it is a parallel plate capacitor, with one side seeing electric fields normal to the ground plane below it. There is slight fringing to the adjacent ground plane.

When an absorbent article **20** or any material with a higher dielectric than air is present on the top of the sensor, the fringing fields present when air was only present now spread into the higher dielectric material and have a better path to a lower potential or ground. This increases the capacitance and can be detected using the ADC. When water is present in the absorbent article **20**, the dielectric constant now increases much more than when an absorbent article **20** or other dielectric was present. Water has a dielectric greater than 50 and now provides a better path for the electric fields to a lower potential or ground.

One example of a system design for this method includes a microcontroller made by Microchip Inc., part number PIC24FJ128GA106, which has a dedicated charge time measurement unit (CTMU). The CTMU is a module add-on to the microcontroller that can be used directly to detect changes in capacitance. In this system design, an array of capacitor sensors are attached to the A/D inputs of the
5 Microchip PIC 24FJ series microcontroller and used to compute the changes in capacitance as the dielectric changes in presence of wetness.

In a second method, changes are detected in the resonant frequency of an LC circuit. As the capacitance value of the resonator circuit changes the frequency of the oscillating frequency of the resonator changes, this can be detected by a frequency-to-voltage (F/V) converting chip such as TC
10 9400 made by Microchip Technologies Inc. of Chandler, Arizona U.S.A. The F/V converter produces a voltage used by a microcontroller. When a voltage setpoint is reached, as determined by the microcontroller, an alarm signal is generated.

A third method measures the time taken to discharge a capacitor. A resistor-capacitor (RC) circuit has a characteristic discharge curve dependent on the capacitor under test. A system capable
15 of measuring this time constant of this discharge curve can be used to detect the changes in the capacitance. In other words, as the capacitance of the system is different with an insulted absorbent article as compared to a dry absorbent article, the discharge curve will be different as well. In use, an open face virtual capacitor is manufactured using an RC circuit including a step function/pulse generator. The discharge time of the system capacitance is detected and processed using a digital
20 signal processing (DSP) algorithm in a microcontroller. When insult conditions are reached, as determined by the microcontroller, an alarm signal is generated as further described herein.

As illustrated in **Fig. 2**, the signaling device **120** includes flexible arms **185** having proximal and distal ends **190**, **192**. Each distal end **192** can include an attachment means **194**. The flexible arms **185** can be attachable to the outer cover **40** using adhesives, cohesives, mechanical fasteners
25 such as hook material, or any other suitable attachment means. The flexible sensor band **130**, if present, can also include an attachment means **196** such that the flexible sensor band **130** is attachable to the outer cover **40**. The flexible sensor band **130** can be attachable to the outer cover **40** using adhesives, cohesives, mechanical fasteners such as hook material, or any other suitable attachment means. Once the signaling device **120** is attached to the outer cover **40**, the signaling
30 device **120** is then ready to sense wetness within the article **20**. The flexible arms **185** and the flexible sensor band **130** can be manufactured from woven material or non-woven material such as SMS, spun-bond, film such as polypropylene, rubber, other elastomeric material, or from any other suitable material, either alone or laminated to a non-woven.

In an alternate aspect of the present disclosure, the flexible arms **185**, the flexible band **130**, and the signaling device **120** can be formed together as one unit of injection-molded plastic. The attachment means **194**, **196** can be an adhesive, a cohesive, hook material, or any other suitable attachment material.

5 Various attachment mechanisms include those disclosed in co-pending and co-assigned U.S. Patent Disclosure Publication No. 2007/0142797 to Long, et al. and entitled "Garments With Easy-To-Use Signaling Device"; U.S. Patent Disclosure Publication No. 2006/0244614 to Long and entitled "Connection Mechanisms" (now U.S. Patent No. 7,394,391); and U.S. Patent Disclosure Publication No. 2007/0024457 to Long, et al. and entitled "Connection Mechanisms In Absorbent Articles For Body
10 Fluid Signaling Devices" (now U.S. Patent No. 7,477,156), which are incorporated herein by reference to the extent they are consistent (i.e., not in conflict) herewith.

The signaling device **120** can emit any suitable signal to indicate to the user that the absorbent article **20** has been insulted. The signal, for instance, can include an audible signal, a tactile signal, an electromagnetic signal, a wireless signal, a visual signal, any other suitable signal, or any combination
15 of these. The audible signal, for instance, can be as simple as a beep or can include a musical tune. In still another aspect, the signaling device can emit a wireless signal that communicates with a remote device such as a computer **80**.

Further aspects of the signaling device **120** can be found in co-pending U.S. Patent Disclosure Serial No. 12/347,539, entitled "Remote Detection Systems For Absorbent Articles" (now U.S. Patent
20 No. 8,274,393), which is incorporated herein by reference to the extent it does not conflict herewith.

Referring to **Fig. 1**, the leakage assessment system **50** also includes a wetness detection mat **60**. The wetness detection mat **60** can be any suitable mat including those commonly known in the art. The wetness detection mat **60** is also in electronic communication with the computer **80** and sends a signal when the wetness detection mat **60** detects wetness such as that having leaked from
25 the absorbent article **20**. Currently-available wetness detection mats **60** include the WET CALL bed-side alarm sensor pad, the pad available in the DRY-ME bed-mat treatment system, the VIGILANT bed wetting urine alarm sensor pad mat kit, and the CHUMMIE INTELLIFLEX sensor. In one aspect, the wetness detection mat **60** can communicate with the computer **80** using a NATIONAL INSTRUMENTS USB-6001 Multifunction DAQ to interface the wetness detection mat **60** to a USB
30 port. In other aspects, suitable devices are available from other manufacturers including Measurement Computing. In an alternative aspect, the wetness detection mat **60** can interface to a USB port by

tapping into the alarm module of the wetness detection mat **60** by monitoring Alarm and Reset signals with a device such as the SPARKFUN USB to Serial Breakout - FT232RL.

The leakage assessment system **50** also includes an image capture device **70** such as a still camera, a video camera, a "web"-type camera, or any other suitable image capture device **70**. In a particular aspect, the image capture device **70** is a KINECT V2.0 system, which is an off-the-shelf imaging sensor commonly associated with gaming systems and that is available from Microsoft Corp. The KINECT system requires USB 3.0 and Windows 8.0 or higher. The KINECT system uses a combination of color and infrared (IR) sensors to create a multiple image data stream that can be processed to extract high resolution 3D-type images. Software libraries designed for the KINECT system present the data in various formats. For the leakage assessment system **50** described herein, the sensor system of the KINECT system is used to detect body position during insult, at intervals after that, and finally at leak detection. The imaging capture device **70** has another advantage in that the data can be present without providing a clear indication of the subject's identity.

The leakage assessment system **50** also includes wetness detection indicia **75** on the absorbent article **20** itself to help determine the point of leakage. For example, the perimeter of the absorbent article **20** (waist and leg openings in the case of a wearable absorbent article **20**) can be coated with color changing ink (urine activated) such that a visual inspection of the absorbent article **20** will determine where in the absorbent article **20** the leakage occurred. Other wetness detection indicia **75** contemplated herein include water-based color washing inks and color changing adhesives.

Finally, the leakage assessment system **50** includes a computer **80** configured to electronically record wetness and leakage incidents using the signaling device **120**, the wetness detection mat **60**, and the wearer position captured by the image capture device **70**. A commonly-available personal computer or laptop **80** is used to coordinate the sensor and output function. The computer **80** receives data and triggers from the signaling device **120**, which can use Bluetooth LE to communicate. The computer **80** also receives data and triggers from the wetness detection mat **60**, which can interface with the serial port(s) of the computer **80**. Finally, the computer **80** also receives data and triggers from the imaging capture device **70** (e.g., a KINECT V2.0 system), which can require at least a USB 3.0 interface to communicate. A program on the computer **80** monitors the ports and other inputs and captures for storage system images from the imaging capture device **70** at appropriate times. The leakage assessment system **50** can be monitored remotely for both data collection and to insure the system is functioning properly.

Understanding the risks of overnight leakage can be very important to the manufacturer of absorbent articles, and the results of such understanding can be very important to an absorbent article consumer. Components of this understanding include body position, when urination occurs, whether a leak occurs upon urination, where in the absorbent article **20** that leak emerges, and in which body positions the absorbent article **20** does not leak. Heretofore there was no reliable methodology to gather all of this information, which means that absorbent article manufacturers have not been sure that their absorbent articles are designed to meet criteria that minimize leakage rates and costs. The leakage assessment system **50** described herein can be used to collect overnight leakage and position data for an absorbent article **20** in use. The leakage assessment system **50** provides key metrics on overnight leakage in that it allows for the collection of quantitative data on insult time, body position, time of leakage, and position of leakage from an absorbent article while maintaining the anonymity of the wearer during placement. Other measurements that may aid in understanding the fundamental problem of overnight leakage (e.g., volume of liquid expelled in any urination) can also be incorporated into the leakage assessment system **50**. Although the leakage assessment system **50** is particularly useful in understanding the fundamental problem of overnight leakage, the leakage assessment system **50** can be used to understand the fundamental problem of leakage during other conditions, such as daytime conditions, particularly for immobile users of absorbent products.

In use, the leakage assessment system **50** can provide data related to overnight wear of an absorbent article **20** and any associated leakage event. Just prior to bed time or nap time, an absorbent article **20** is placed on the wearer. The absorbent article **20** includes wetness detection indicia **75** at the leg and waist openings. A wetness detection mat **60** is placed on or under the sheets of a bed and is then connected to the computer **80**. An image capture device **70** (e.g., a KINECT system) is placed adjacent to the bed using a stand as appropriate to insure safe placement, and then is connected to the computer **80**, such as by using a USB cable. A signaling device **120** is attached to the outer cover **40** of the absorbent article **20**. Finally, the wearer is placed on the bed or other surface above the wetness detection mat **60** and within range of the image capture device **70**. The computer is set to receive, coordinate, and interpret data from the signaling device **120**, the wetness detection mat **60**, and the image capture device **70**.

After the sleep period, the computer **80** is checked for the status of insult to and leakage from the absorbent article **20**. If an insult has occurred as indicated by the signaling device **120**, but no leak was detected by the wetness detection mat **60**, then the absorbent article **20** has performed as designed. If an insult has occurred as indicated by the signaling device **120**, and a leak was detected by the wetness detection mat **60**, then the wetness detection indicia **75** of the absorbent article **20** is

examined to determine where the leak occurred. From information provided by the signaling device 120, the wetness detection mat 60, the image capture device 70, and the wetness detection indicia 75, it can be determined when an insult occurred, when and where a leakage occurred, and the position of the wearer when the leakage occurred. This provides valuable input to a manufacturer to help
5 determine how to design absorbent articles to minimize leakage.

In a first particular aspect, a leakage assessment system for use with an absorbent article having an outer surface includes a computer and a signaling device adapted to be used in conjunction with the absorbent article, the signaling device adapted to sense wetness in the absorbent article, wherein the signaling device is in electronic communication with the computer. The leakage
10 assessment system also includes a wetness detection mat in electronic communication with the computer, and an image capture device configured to continuously detect an absorbent article wearer position, wherein the image capture device is in electronic communication with the computer, wherein the computer is configured to electronically record wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and the wearer position captured by the image capture device.

15 A second particular aspect includes the first particular aspect, wherein the absorbent article includes edges, and wherein the absorbent article edges include wetness detection indicia.

A third particular aspect includes the first or second aspect, wherein the wetness detection indicia include a color-changing ink.

A fourth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-3, wherein the signaling device is
20 configured to detect wetness using capacitance.

A fifth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-4, wherein the signaling device is configured to detect wetness using inductance.

A sixth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-5, wherein the signaling device is configured to detect wetness using infrared reflectance.

25 A seventh particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-6, wherein the signaling device is adapted to be attached to the outer surface of the absorbent article.

An eighth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-7, wherein the signaling device includes a mechanical attachment means.

A ninth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-8, wherein the mechanical
30 attachment means is hook material.

A tenth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-9, wherein the signaling device includes an adhesive attachment means.

An eleventh particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-10, wherein the signaling device includes a housing and a flexible sensor band extending from the housing.

5 A twelfth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-11, wherein the image capture device is a KINECT imaging sensor.

A thirteenth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 1-12, wherein the wetness detection mat is configured to electronically detect wetness.

10 In a fourteenth particular aspect, a method for assessing leakage from an absorbent article in use by a wearer includes placing the absorbent article on the wearer, the absorbent article comprising wetness detection indicia and a signaling device; positioning the wearer on a bed or other surface; and disposing a wetness detection mat between the absorbent article and the bed. The method also includes using a camera, continuously detecting the position of the wearer; electronically recording wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and wearer position; and
15 viewing the wetness detection indicia to detect where leakage occurred.

A fifteenth particular aspect includes the fourteenth particular aspect, wherein the wetness detection indicia include a color-changing ink.

A sixteenth particular aspect includes the fourteenth or fifteenth aspect, wherein the signaling device is configured to detect wetness using capacitance.

20 A seventeenth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 14-16, wherein the absorbent article includes an outer surface, and wherein the signaling device is adapted to be attached to the outer surface of the absorbent article.

An eighteenth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 14-17, wherein the signaling device includes a housing and a flexible sensor band extending from the housing.

25 A nineteenth particular aspect includes one or more of aspects 14-18, wherein the image capture device is a KINECT imaging sensor.

In a twentieth particular aspect, a leakage assessment system for use with an absorbent article having an outer surface includes a computer and a signaling device adapted to be used in conjunction with the absorbent article, the signaling device adapted to sense wetness in the absorbent
30 article using capacitance, wherein the signaling device is in electronic communication with the computer, and wherein the signaling device is adapted to be attached to the outer surface of the

absorbent article. The system also includes a wetness detection mat in electronic communication with the computer, wherein the wetness detection mat is configured to electronically detect wetness; and an image capture device configured to continuously detect an absorbent article wearer position, wherein the image capture device is in electronic communication with the computer, wherein the computer is
5 configured to electronically record wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and the wearer position captured by the image capture device.

These and other modifications and variations to the present disclosure can be practiced by those of ordinary skill in the art, without departing from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure, which is more particularly set forth in the appended claims. In addition, it should be understood that
10 elements of the various aspects can be interchanged both in whole and in part. Furthermore, those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the foregoing description is by way of example only, and is not intended to limit the disclosure so further described in such appended claims.

What Is Claimed:

1. A leakage assessment system for use with an absorbent article having an outer surface, the system comprising:

a computer;

a signaling device adapted to be used in conjunction with the absorbent article, the signaling device adapted to sense wetness in the absorbent article, wherein the signaling device is in electronic communication with the computer;

a wetness detection mat in electronic communication with the computer; and

an image capture device configured to continuously detect an absorbent article wearer position, wherein the image capture device is in electronic communication with the computer, wherein the computer is configured to electronically record wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and the wearer position captured by the image capture device.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the absorbent article includes edges, and wherein the absorbent article edges include wetness detection indicia.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the wetness detection indicia include a color-changing ink.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the signaling device is configured to detect wetness using capacitance.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the signaling device is configured to detect wetness using inductance.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the signaling device is configured to detect wetness using infrared reflectance.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the signaling device is adapted to be attached to the outer surface of the absorbent article.
8. The system of claim 7, wherein the signaling device includes a mechanical attachment means.
9. The system of claim 8, wherein the mechanical attachment means is hook material.
10. The system of claim 7, wherein the signaling device includes an adhesive attachment means.
11. The system of claim 1, wherein the signaling device includes a housing and a flexible sensor band extending from the housing.
12. The system of claim 1, wherein the image capture device is a KINECT imaging sensor.
13. The system of claim 1, wherein the wetness detection mat is configured to electronically detect wetness.

14. A method for assessing leakage from an absorbent article in use by a wearer, the method comprising:

placing the absorbent article on the wearer, the absorbent article comprising wetness detection indicia and a signaling device;

positioning the wearer on a bed or other surface;

disposing a wetness detection mat between the absorbent article and the bed;

using a camera, continuously detecting the position of the wearer;

electronically recording wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and wearer position; and

viewing the wetness detection indicia to detect where leakage occurred.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the wetness detection indicia include a color-changing ink.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the signaling device is configured to detect wetness using capacitance.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein the absorbent article includes an outer surface, and wherein the signaling device is adapted to be attached to the outer surface of the absorbent article.

18. The method of claim 14, wherein the signaling device includes a housing and a flexible sensor band extending from the housing.

19. The method of claim 14, wherein the image capture device is a KINECT imaging sensor.

20. A leakage assessment system for use with an absorbent article having an outer surface, the system comprising:

a computer;

a signaling device adapted to be used in conjunction with the absorbent article, the signaling device adapted to sense wetness in the absorbent article using capacitance, wherein the signaling device is in electronic communication with the computer, and wherein the signaling device is adapted to be attached to the outer surface of the absorbent article;

a wetness detection mat in electronic communication with the computer, wherein the wetness detection mat is configured to electronically detect wetness; and

an image capture device configured to continuously detect an absorbent article wearer position, wherein the image capture device is in electronic communication with the computer, wherein the computer is configured to electronically record wetness incidents using the signaling device, the wetness detection mat, and the wearer position captured by the image capture device.

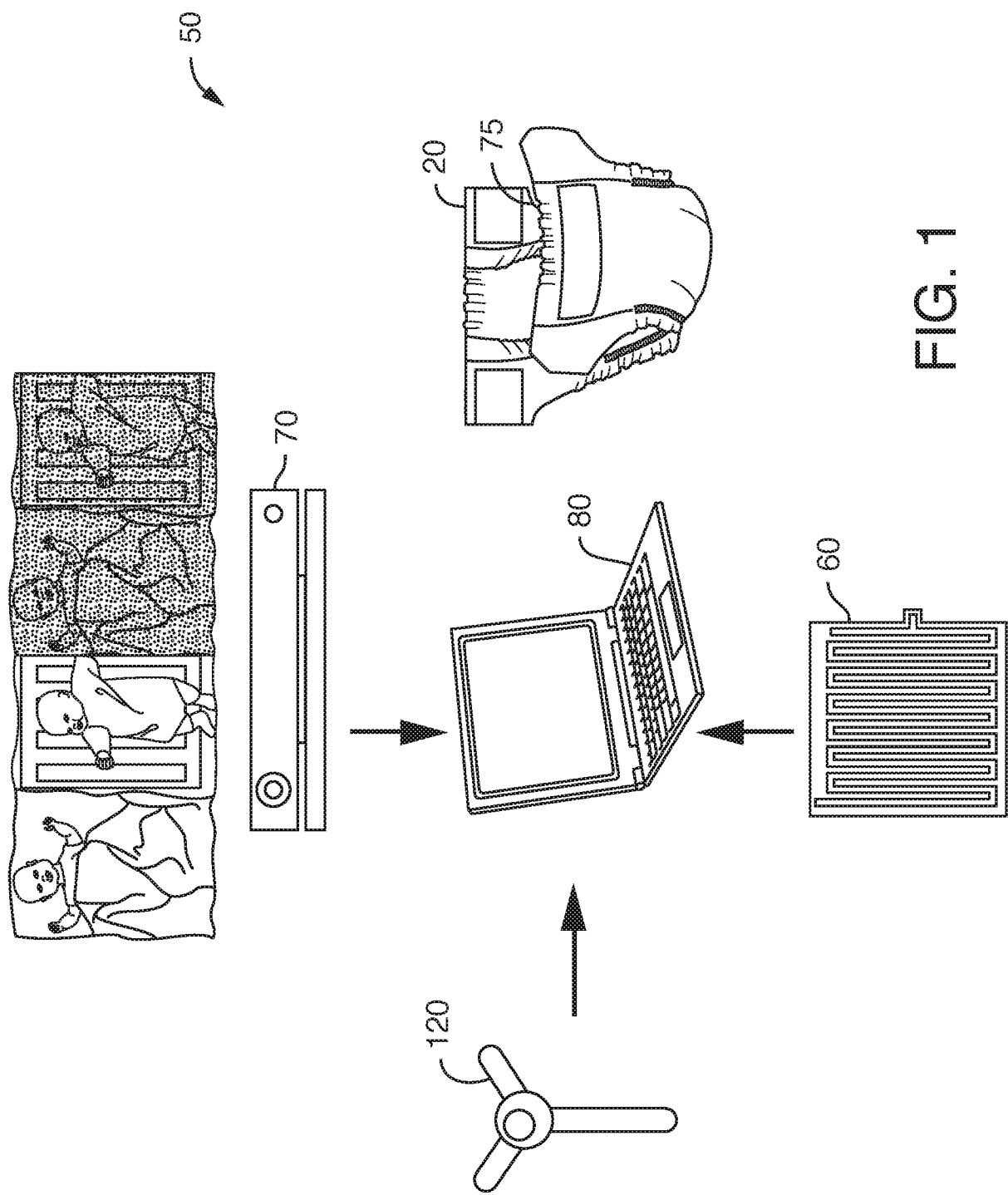


FIG. 1

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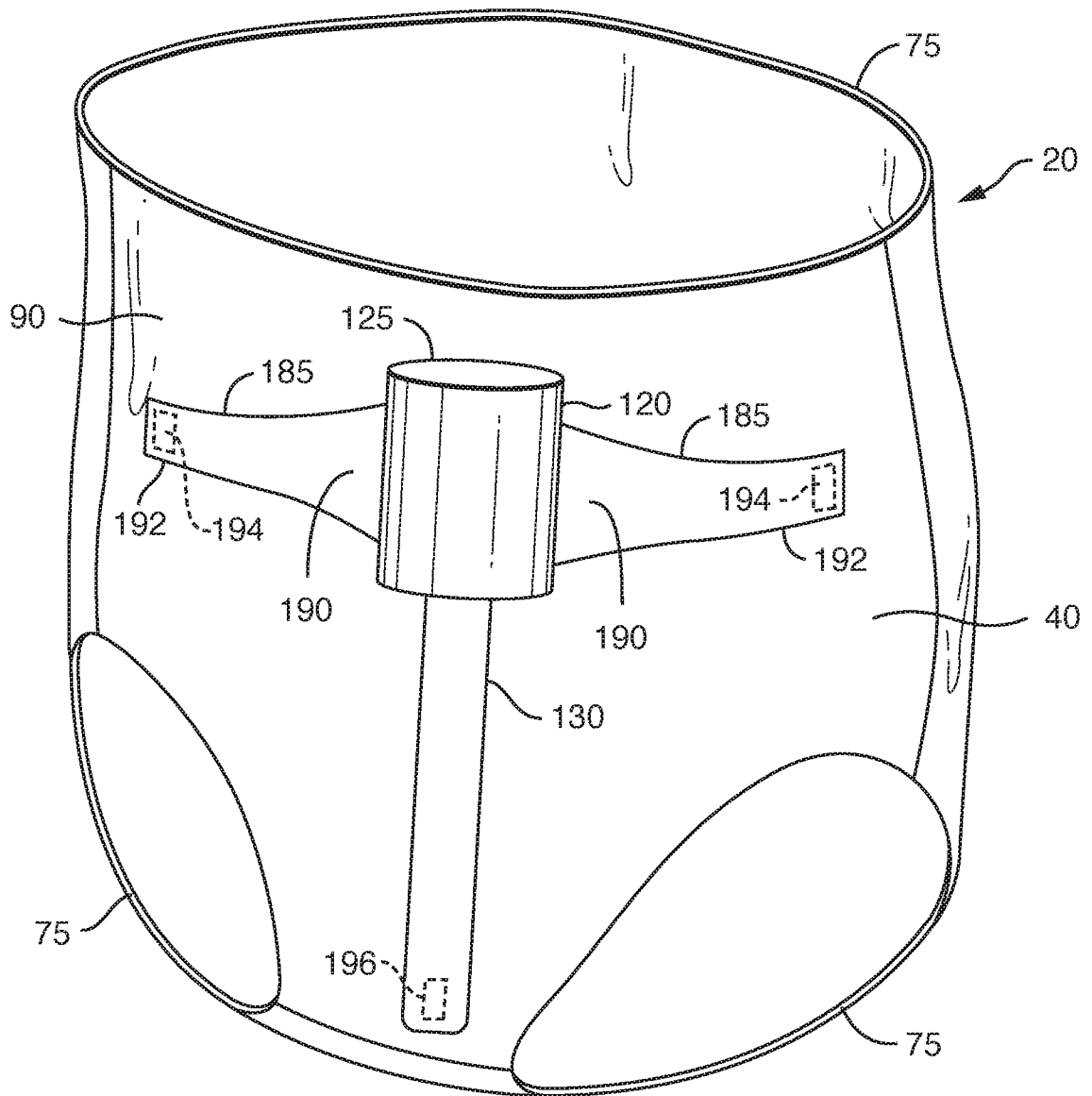


FIG. 2

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2016/019672**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER****A61F 13/42(2006.01)i, A61F 13/49(2006.01)i, G06K 9/62(2006.01)i**

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)

A61F 13/42; A61B 5/08; A01K 1/01; A61F 13/15; G01N 5/02; A01K 15/02; G08B 21/20; A61B 5/00; A61F 13/49; G06K 9/62

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

Korean utility models and applications for utility models

Japanese utility models and applications for utility models

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

eKOMPASS(KIPO internal) & Keywords: leakage assessment, wetness, signaling, image, absorbent transmitter

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 2014-0121473 A1 (BANET, M. et al.) 01 May 2014 See abstract; figures 1-7; paragraphs [0040]-[0073]; claims 1-48.	1-20
Y	WO 2010-043368 A1 (ARMSTRONG, G.) 22 April 2010 See abstract; figures 1-2; claims 1-21.	1-20
A	US 2007-0270774 A1 (BERGMAN, F. et al.) 22 November 2007 See abstract; figures 1-7; claims 1-75.	1-20
A	US 2012-0216607 A1 (SJOHOLM, J. et al.) 30 August 2012 See abstract; figures 1-4; claims 1-14.	1-20
A	US 2012-0268278 A1 (LEWIS, P. M. et al.) 25 October 2012 See abstract; figures 1-11; claims 1-3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 17, 19, 20, and 27.	1-20



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

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"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

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02 June 2016 (02.06.2016)

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/US2016/019672

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