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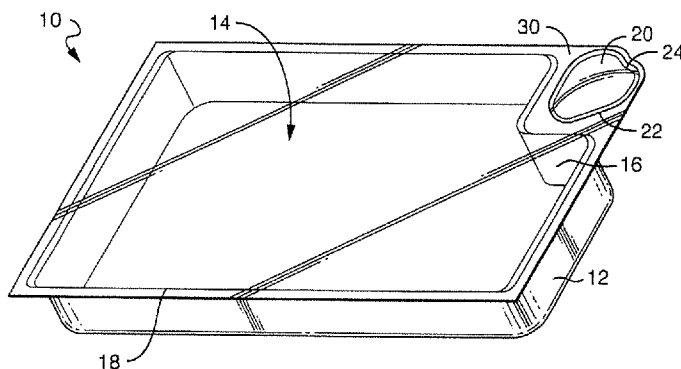


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A rigid holding container has a flexible cover sheet extending over the holding area for sealing the contents. The container has a wide, flat perimeter lip which provides a firm base for the seal between the cover sheet and the container. A breaching bubble is formed in the seal, under the cover and over the perimeter lip. The consumer breaches the bubble by pressing the bubble against the lip between the thumb and forefinger. The pressure compresses the air in the bubble causing the bubble to expand laterally. The expanding bubble breaches along the perimeter of the lip, producing a peel flap of flexible cover material. The consumer pulls the peel flap while holding the rigid container down, to remove the cover sheet.

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RIGID HOLDING CONTAINER WITH BREACHABLE PERIMETER BUBBLE

RELATED APPLICATIONS

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The present application is based upon and claims priority to United States Provisional Patent Application No. 61/009,491, filed on December 31, 2007, and to United States Provisional Patent Application No. 61/046,655, filed on April 21, 2008.

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BACKGROUND

Thermo-formed plastic containers are used to hold many different items and products. Such containers, for instance, are used to hold food items including meal ready-to-eat ("MRE") rations, medical products, and various general merchandise. In some applications, the containers may be vacuum packaged in a sealed container containing a reduced pressure environment.

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In one embodiment, the thermo-formed container may comprise a rigid, molded base that is sealed around the perimeter to a clear plastic film. Such containers, for instance, are used to package sliced lunch meats. Such containers, however, can be difficult to open. The containers, for instance, typically include a frayed corner where the rigid base has been partially separated from the plastic film top. In order to open the container, a user can grasp the plastic film in the corner and peel the film away from the rigid base.

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Unfortunately, difficulties can arise in attempting to separate the two parts of the container. These problems can become more enhanced in operating rooms where technicians are attempting to open the package wearing gloves. In addition, the frayed corner can provide a space for collecting or harboring contaminants, such as microorganisms, in between the plastic film and the rigid base prior to opening.

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In view of the above, a need currently exists for a thermo-formed container as described above that includes an improved mechanism for opening the container.

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SUMMARY

In general, the present disclosure is directed to a rigid holding container that includes a breachable bubble for facilitating opening of the container. For example, in one embodiment, the container includes a rigid support that defines an

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item compartment.

As used herein, the term "rigid" includes not only rigid containers but semi-rigid containers. Specifically, a rigid container as used herein refers to any container made from a material that retains its shape. A flexible closure, which
5 may comprise a single or multi-layer film, is attached to the rigid support for closing the item compartment and forming part of the container. More particularly, a peripheral seal is located between the rigid support and the flexible closure. The peripheral seal circumscribes an access opening into the item compartment.

In accordance with the present disclosure, a breachable bubble is present
10 between the rigid or semi-rigid support and the flexible closure and is located outside of the peripheral seal. A breachable seal is formed along an edge of the breachable bubble. The breachable bubble is spreadable under applied pressure into the breachable seal. The spreading separates the flexible closure from the rigid support until the spreading bubble produces an edge breach through the
15 breachable seal to the exterior environment. In this manner, the rigid support becomes separated from the flexible closure allowing a user to peel the flexible closure away from the rigid support to produce the access opening.

The following is a list of different embodiments and features that may be incorporated into the container.

20

FOOD TRAY EMBODIMENT

The holding container may be a cardboard, aluminum or thermo-formed serving tray for packaged foods. The cover sheet may be thin tear-away film, which is transparent
25 to permit viewing the food. The cover-lid seal preserves the food.

STACKING

Packaged foods are stacked during shipment, in the stores, and in the consumer's
30 freezer. The bubble in the under-packages is not affected by the tray of the over-package because of a perimeter lip. Vertical stacking registration prevents the weight of the upper trays from pressing down on the bubbles of the lower trays.

UNDER BUBBLE EMBODIMENT

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The trays of packaged foods may be presented in individual outer cardboard cartons.

Placing the bubble on the underside of the lip isolates the bubble from the carton. The under bubble embodiment may include a wraparound cover over the perimeter of the tray. The wrap-around cover protects the lip surfaces during normal handling and packaging. When the wrap-around cover is peeled away, these lip surfaces are free of pathogens and other contaminants.

MULTIPLE BUBBLE EMBODIMENTS

The serving tray may have multiple bubbles in multiple locations around the lip. There may be a primary bubble for first use, and a secondary bubble for back-up in case the primary bubble fails. The serving tray may contain more than one item which are accessed by separate bubbles. Each item is not exposed to adjacent items until the consumer removes one or more of the separate covers.

US Patent 6,726,364 issued on Apr 27, 2004 to the present inventor shows a breaching bubble which forms opposed peel flaps along perimeter breach. The flaps are peeled back by the user to open a chamber and present a product. The subject matter of US Patent 6,726,364 is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety into this disclosure. Breachable bubbles are also disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 6,938,394; U.S. Patent No. 7,306,371; U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0231292; U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2006/0126970; U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0295766; U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0286535; U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0235369; U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0237431; U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0241024; U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0235357; and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0284375, which are all incorporated herein by reference.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A full and enabling disclosure of the present invention, including the best mode thereof to one skilled in the art, is set forth more particularly in the remainder of the specification, including reference to the accompanying figures, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a container made in accordance with the present disclosure;

Figure 2 is a plan view of the container illustrated in Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a side view of the container illustrated in Figure 1;

Figure 4 is a side view with cutaway portions of an alternative embodiment of a container made in accordance with the present disclosure;

Figure 5 is a side view with cutaway portions illustrating multiple containers being stacked together in accordance with the present disclosure;

5 Figure 6 is a plan view of another embodiment of a container made in accordance with the present disclosure; and

Figure 7 is a plan view of still another embodiment of a container made in accordance with the present disclosure.

10 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 invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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

In general, the present disclosure is directed to a sealed container having an improved opening mechanism. In one embodiment, the container includes a rigid base that is sealed along at least one side to a film. The film can be
20 transparent or translucent so that one can view the contents of the container. In an alternative embodiment, the film can be opaque, especially when the contents are light sensitive. In still another embodiment, the film can be printed with a design or text and can be made to include transparent or translucent sections in addition to opaque sections. In accordance with the present disclosure, the
25 container further includes a breachable bubble located in between the film and the rigid base. By breaching the bubble, a portion of the film and the rigid base separate allowing a user to peel the film away from the rigid base to open the container.

Referring to **Figs. 1-3**, for instance, one exemplary embodiment of a
30 container **10** made in accordance with the present disclosure is illustrated. As shown, the container **10** includes a rigid support **12** that defines an item compartment **14**. The item compartment **14** can have any suitable size and shape and can be designed to hold various different items. For example, the item

compartment **14** may be configured to hold food items, medical instruments, general merchandise, and the like.

The rigid support **12** can be made from any suitable material capable of retaining the desired shape. The rigid support **12**, for instance, may be made from a paperboard including cardboard, a metal such as aluminum, or from any suitable plastic or polymeric material. In one embodiment, for instance, the rigid support can be made from a plastic material that is thermo-formed. Suitable plastics that may be used to form the rigid support **12** include, for instance, polyvinyl chloride, polystyrene, polyester, a polyamide such as nylon, mixtures thereof, and the like. The rigid support **12**, for instance, may be made from any suitable homopolymer or copolymer.

Attached to the rigid support **12** is a flexible closure **16**. The flexible closure **16**, in the embodiment illustrated, covers an access opening to the item compartment **14**. More particularly, the flexible closure **16** is attached to the rigid support **12** by a peripheral seal **18**. The peripheral seal **18**, for instance, can create a fluid-tight attachment between the flexible closure **16** and the rigid support **12**.

The flexible closure **16** can generally comprise any suitable planar material. For example, the flexible closure **16** can be made from paper, a fabric such as a woven or nonwoven fabric, or a film material. When made from a film material, the flexible closure can be made from any suitable polymer. Polymers that may be used to form the flexible closure **16** include, for instance, polyolefins such as polyethylene and polypropylene, polyesters, polyamides, polyvinyl chloride, mixtures thereof, copolymers and terpolymers thereof, and the like. In addition, the flexible closure **16** can also be made from any suitable elastomeric polymer.

When the flexible closure **16** is made from a polymer, the flexible closure can include a single layer of material or can include multiple layers. For instance, in one embodiment, the flexible closure can include a core layer of polymeric material coated on one or both sides with other functional polymeric layers. The other functional polymeric layers may include, for instance, a heat sealing layer for thermally bonding the flexible closure to the rigid support **12**, an oxygen barrier layer, an ultraviolet filter layer, an anti-blocking layer, a printed layer, and the like.

The flexible closure **16**, especially when made from polymer materials, can

be translucent or transparent. If translucent or transparent, for instance, the contents of the item compartment **14** can be viewed from the outside of the container. In other embodiments, however, the flexible closure can be opaque. For instance, in one embodiment, light sensitive materials may be contained in the
5 container.

The manner in which the flexible closure **16** is attached to the rigid support **12** can also vary depending upon the particular application and the different materials used to construct the container. For instance, the flexible closure can be attached to the rigid support through thermal bonds, ultrasonic bonds, adhesive
10 bonds, or the like.

In accordance with the present disclosure, the container **10** as shown in **Figs. 1-3** further includes a breachable bubble **20**. In the embodiment illustrated, the breachable bubble **20** is formed in between the rigid support **12** and the flexible closure **16**. In other embodiments, however, the breachable bubble **20** may be
15 formed in between only one of the above container components as long as the bubble is capable of producing a peelable edge between the rigid support and the flexible closure as will be described in greater detail below.

In the embodiment illustrated in **Figs. 1-3**, the breachable bubble **20** is also located outside of the peripheral seal **18**. The breachable bubble **20** is surrounded
20 by and defined by a seal **22** that is at least partially breachable. For example, the bubble seal **22** can include a breachable portion **24** that faces the outermost edge of the container **10**. The breachable portion **24** represents a portion of the bubble seal **22** that more easily separates than the remainder of the seal. The breachable portion **24** can be made using any suitable method or technique. For instance,
25 less adhesive may be used in this portion if the bubble seal **22** is made using an adhesive. If the bubble seal **22** is made by applying heat and pressure to form a thermal bond, the breachable portion **24** may be made by varying the pressure of the seal bar, varying the temperature, or varying the amount of time the seal bar is in contact with the materials along the breachable portion.

In other embodiments, the breachable portion **24** or the entire bubble seal
30 **22** may comprise a peel seal. Various different methods and techniques are used to form peel seal portions. For example, in one embodiment, the breachable portion **24** of the bubble seal **22** or the entire bubble seal may include a first

portion that is adhesively secured to a second portion along the seal. The first portion may be coated with a pressure sensitive adhesive. The adhesive may comprise, for instance, any suitable adhesive, such as an acrylate.

The second and opposing portion of the peel seal, on the other hand, may
5 comprise a film coated or laminated to a release layer. The release layer may comprise, for instance, a silicone.

When using an adhesive layer opposite a release layer as described above, the bubble seal is resealable after the bubble is breached.

In an alternative embodiment, each opposing portion of the peel seal may
10 comprise a multi-layered film. The major layers of the film may comprise a supporting layer, a pressure sensitive adhesive component, and a thin contact layer. In this embodiment, the two portions of the peel seal can be brought together and attached. For instance, the thin contact layer of one portion can be attached to the thin contact layer of the opposing portion using heat and/or
15 pressure. When the locking bubble **18** is breached, and the peel seal is peeled apart, a part of the sealed area of one of the contact layers tears away from its pressure sensitive adhesive component and remains adhered to the opposing contact layer. Thereafter, resealing can be affected by re-engaging this torn away contact portion with the pressure sensitive adhesive from which it was separated
20 when the layers were peeled apart.

In this embodiment, the contact layer can comprise a film having a relatively low tensile strength and having a relatively low elongation at break. Examples of such materials include polyolefins such as polyethylenes, copolymers of ethylene and ethylenically unsaturated comonomers, copolymers of an olefin and an
25 ethylenically unsaturated monocarboxylic acid, and the like. The pressure sensitive adhesive contained within the layers, on the other hand, may be of the hot-melt variety or otherwise responsive to heat and/or pressure.

In still another embodiment, the breachable portion **24** of the bubble seal **22**
30 or the entire bubble seal can include a combination of heat sealing and adhesive sealing. For instance, in one embodiment, the bubble seal may comprise a first portion that is heat sealed to a second portion. Along the breachable portion, however, may also exist a peel seal composition that may, in one embodiment, interfere with the heat sealing process of the bubble seal to produce a breachable

portion. The peel seal composition, for instance, may comprise a lacquer that forms a weak portion along the bubble seal.

In an alternative embodiment, an adhesive may be spot coated over the length of the breachable point. Once the breachable portion is breached, the adhesive can then be used to reseal the two portions together after use.

The breachable bubble **20** is expandable to open the container **10** by external pressure applied by a consumer. For small bubbles, the consumer may simply pinch a bubble or bubbles between his thumb and forefinger. Slightly larger bubbles may require thumb-to-thumb pressure. Pressure can also be applied to the bubble by placing the bubble against a flat surface and applying pressure with one's fingers or palm. For example, when the container **10** is to be opened in an operating room, a nurse or physician may want to apply pressure to the bubble by laying the bubble adjacent to a surface and applying pressure in order to facilitate opening of the container, especially when the attendants in the operating room are wearing medical or surgical gloves.

When pressure is applied to the breachable bubble **20**, the atmosphere within the bubble applies pressure to the bubble seal **24** which causes the two layers of material used to form the bubble to separate. Separation occurs along the breachable portion **24** creating an edge breach.

Once the edge of the container is breached, a pair of opposing flaps are formed. At least one of the flaps forms a peelable tab that can be grasped by the user for manually peeling the flexible closure **16** away from the rigid support **12**.

Of particular advantage, the peelable tab is formed by breaching the bubble as opposed to being formed during the manufacturing process of the container **10** itself. In this manner, the outside perimeter of the container **10** can be completely sealed against the environment to prevent any contamination of the container or the product contained inside. Also of advantage is that the breachable bubble does not provide any small spaces or locations where contaminants such as microorganisms may harbor. In addition, opening the container by breaching the bubble may be much easier than opening many of the conventional containers made in the past that are intended to include peel away corners.

As described above, once the bubble **20** is breached, a peelable tab is formed that allows the user to peel the flexible closure **16** away from the rigid

support **12**. In this regard, the peripheral seal **18** can be designed to be completely frangible so that the flexible closure **16** can be completely separated from the rigid support **12**. Alternatively, the peripheral seal **18** can be designed so as to only be partially frangible. In this embodiment, once the flexible closure is peeled away from the rigid support, the flexible closure **16** will remain connected to the rigid support **12**.

In general, the breachable bubble **20** can have any suitable shape. For example, in one embodiment, as shown in **Figs. 1-3**, the breachable bubble **20** can have a triangular-like shape. In particular, the breachable bubble **20** illustrated in the figures has a heart-like shape positioned within the corner of the container **10**. In other embodiments, however, the breachable bubble can have a circular shape, an oval shape, a rectangular shape, or any other suitable shape.

As shown in **Figs. 1 and 2**, the breachable bubble **20** is positioned on an overhang **30** that is generally in the same plane as the top of the rigid support **12**. In accordance with the present disclosure, the breachable bubble **20** can be designed so as to project upwards and downwards, only project upwards, or only project downwards. For example, in **Fig. 3**, the breachable bubble includes a top portion **26** and a bottom portion **28**. The top portion **26** extends above the overhang **30** while the bottom portion **28** extends below the overhang **30**.

Referring to **Fig. 4**, an alternative configuration of a container generally **10** made in accordance with the present disclosure is illustrated. Like reference numerals have been used to indicate similar elements. In the embodiment illustrated in **Fig. 4**, the container **10** includes a flexible closure **16** attached to a rigid support **12**. The rigid support **12** further includes an overhang **30** where a breachable bubble **20** is positioned. In this embodiment, the breachable bubble **20** only extends in a downward direction. Thus, the bubble **20** includes only a bottom portion. The embodiment illustrated in **Fig. 4** is well suited to applications where it may be desirable to breach the bubble by placing the bubble against an adjacent surface and applying pressure.

Referring to **Fig. 5**, still another embodiment of a plurality of containers generally **10** made in accordance with the present disclosure are illustrated. Each container **10** includes a rigid support **12** attached to a flexible closure **16**. Each container **10** further includes an overhang **30** where a breachable bubble **20** is

located. In this embodiment, each breachable bubble **20** only extends in an upward direction. Thus, each bubble **20** only includes a top portion.

As shown in **Fig. 5**, the containers can also be designed so as to stack conveniently together during shipment, in retail stores, and at the location of use.

5 When designing a container that is intended to stack together, the breachable bubble **20** can be designed so as to not interfere with the stacking arrangement. For example, in one embodiment, the container can include an overhang where the breachable bubble is located so that the bubble does not contact an opposing container.

10 Referring to **Fig. 6**, still another embodiment of a container **10** made in accordance with the present disclosure is shown. In this embodiment, the container **10** includes a rigid support **12** that has been molded to have multiple compartments. Each compartment can be sealed by a different flexible closure or, alternatively, a single flexible closure can cover all of the compartments. As shown
15 in **Fig. 6**, in this embodiment, the container **10** can include multiple breachable bubbles **20**. For example, in the embodiment illustrated in **Fig. 6**, the container **10** includes four breachable bubbles positioned at each of the corners. In particular, a breachable bubble is present for each subcompartment formed by the rigid support **12**. Each breachable bubble **20** can be used to open and access one of the
20 subcompartments.

Referring to **Fig. 7**, still another embodiment of a container **10** made in accordance with the present disclosure is shown. The reference numerals used in the previous figures have also been used in this figure to show similar elements. As illustrated, the container **10** includes a rigid support **12** attached to a flexible
25 closure **16** by a peripheral seal **18**. The rigid support **12** defines an item compartment **14**. The container **10** further includes an overhang **30** where a breachable bubble **20** made in accordance with the present disclosure is positioned. In this embodiment, the breachable bubble has an elongated shape and extends a substantial portion along a length of the end of the container. For
30 example, the breachable bubble **20** can extend greater than one-half the distance of the side of the container **10**, such as greater than about 60% of the distance of the side of the container, such as greater than about 80% of the side of the container. By creating an elongated breachable bubble **20** as shown in **Fig. 7**, the

bubble may be easier to breach for the user, especially when pressure is applied to the bubble as it rests against an adjacent surface.

The embodiment illustrated in **Fig. 7**, for instance, may be particularly well suited for containing sterile medical supplies including bandages, surgical
5 instruments, implants, and the like. Such items must typically be delivered to an operating room contained in a package in a sterile condition. The package then must be opened by a medical personnel while wearing medical or surgical gloves. The presence of the gloves can interfere with the ability to open a sealed package. By having an elongated bubble as shown in **Fig. 7**, however, one can breach the
10 bubble by placing the bubble against an adjacent surface and applying pressure. In one embodiment, for instance, the bubble **20** may extend downwardly as shown in **Fig. 4**. Once breached, the elongated bubble may produce a relatively large peelable tab that can be grasped by a user even when wearing gloves.

It should be understood, however, that the embodiment illustrated in **Fig. 7**
15 may equally be applicable to hold various other items, such as food items or other general merchandise. For instance, such packages may also be easily opened by the elderly and those that suffer from hand ailments such as arthritis.

As described above, in one embodiment, the container made in accordance with the present disclosure can be liquid tight and/or gas tight. In one
20 embodiment, the item compartment **14** can be made with a controlled atmosphere. For instance, the contents of the container can be vacuum sealed. In this embodiment, for instance, the pressure within the item compartment **14** can be less than atmospheric pressure. In other embodiments, however, the item compartment **14** can be constructed so as to have a pressure greater than
25 atmospheric pressure.

The gas contained within the item compartment **14** can also vary depending upon the particular application. For instance, in one embodiment, the item compartment can simply contain air either below atmospheric pressure, at atmospheric pressure, or above atmospheric pressure.

30 In an alternative embodiment, however, the item compartment, prior to opening, may contain reduced oxygen levels. For instance, oxygen may be contained in the item compartment in an amount less than about 5% by volume. In one embodiment, for instance, the item compartment can be filled with an inert gas

during construction of the container. Suitable inert gases that may be used include, for instance, nitrogen gas or any of the other noble gases. Constructing the container so that the item compartment is vacuum sealed and/or contains an oxygen-starved environment may be well suited to packaging food items that may otherwise spoil faster.

In still another embodiment, the item compartment can contain an antimicrobial agent that may create a substantially sterile environment. For instance, antimicrobial agents that may be contained in the item compartment include various gaseous chemosterilizers such as ethylene oxide, propylene oxide, beta-propiolactone, ozone, carbon dioxide, a halogen gas, or the like.

The fluid contained within the breachable bubble can also vary depending upon the particular application. For instance, in one embodiment, the breachable bubble can contain air at any suitable pressure. In other embodiments, however, an inert gas may be placed within the bubble. In still another embodiment, the breachable bubble may contain any of the antimicrobial agents described above to ensure that the entire package remains sterile and does not harbor any contaminants.

It should also be understood that the atmosphere within the item compartment can be the same or different than the atmosphere within the breachable bubble. For instance, in one embodiment, the fluid or gas contained within the item compartment can be different than the fluid or gas contained within the breachable bubble. In one particular embodiment, for instance, the item compartment may contain an inert gas or may otherwise contain an oxygen-starved gas mixture, while the breachable bubble may contain a gaseous hemosterilizer.

In still another embodiment, the antimicrobial agent may comprise a coating that can be present on the inside surface of the item compartment and on the inside surface of the breachable bubble.

The containers made according to the present disclosure can be made using any suitable manufacturing process. For example, when formed from plastic materials, the container can be made using similar packaging machines to those disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,685,130 and U.S. Patent No. 4,069,645, which are incorporated herein by reference.

These and other modifications and variations to the present invention may be practiced by those of ordinary skill in the art, without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention, which is more particularly set forth in the appended claims. In addition, it should be understood that aspects of the various
5 embodiments may be interchanged both in whole or 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 invention so further described in such appended claims.

WE CLAIM AS OUR INVENTION:

1. A container, which is sealed against the exterior environment, and which provides easy access to an item contained therein, comprising:
 - an item compartment;
 - an access opening into the item compartment;
 - 5 a rigid support for supporting the item compartment and forming part of the container;
 - a flexible closure for closing the item compartment and forming part of the container;
 - a peripheral seal between the rigid support and the flexible closure,
 - 10 and circumscribing the access opening for closing the item compartment located inside the peripheral seal;
 - a breachable bubble between the rigid support and the flexible closure located outside the perimeter seal;
 - a breachable seal formed along an edge of the breachable bubble
 - 15 and
 - wherein the breachable bubble is spreadable under applied pressure into the breachable seal, which spreading separates the flexible closure from the rigid support, until the spreading bubble produces an edge breach through the breachable seal to the exterior environment.
2. The container of Claim 1, further comprising:
 - a flexible peel tab formed by the flexible closure material along the edge breach as the bubble breaches, for peeling the flexible closure away from the rigid support to disengage the perimeter seal for opening the item compartment and
 - 5 providing access to the contained item.
3. The container of Claim 2, wherein the flexible peel tab is proximate a fringe of the flexible closure.
4. The container of Claim 1, wherein:
 - the breachable bubble defines a volume, and the volume within the breachable bubble displaces the flexible closure away from the rigid support, and
 - the edge breach is created by pressing the flexible closure against
 - 5 the rigid support creating pressure in the breachable bubble.
5. The container of Claim 1, wherein the rigid support outside the

peripheral seal carrying the breachable bubble, forms an overhang extending beyond the item compartment.

6. The container of Claim 5, further comprising a void adjacent to the overhang on the rigid support side.

7. The container of Claim 6, wherein:
the breachable bubble defines a volume, and
the volume within the breachable bubble displaces the rigid support away from the flexible closure, and the edge breach is created by pressing the rigid support against the flexible closure creating pressure in the breachable bubble.

8. The container of Claim 6, wherein:
the breachable bubble defines a volume, and
the volume within the breachable bubble displaces the flexible closure away from the rigid support and displaces the rigid support away from the flexible closure forming a double displacement, and the edge breach is created by pressing the displacements together.

9. The container of Claim 2, wherein the flexible closure has at least one triangular shaped corner, and the peel tab is located proximate that corner and is triangular in shape.

10. The container of Claim 1, wherein the breachable bubble is elongated, and extends along one end of the item compartment.

11. The container of Claim 1, wherein the peripheral seal is frangible for permitting disengagement of the flexible closure from the rigid support along the peripheral seal.

12. The container of Claim 1, wherein the peripheral seal has
a frangible portion extending partially around the access opening permitting partial disengagement of the flexible closure; and
a destruct portion extending partially around the access opening preventing complete detachment of the flexible closure from the rigid support.

13. The container of Claim 1, further comprising an item contained within the item compartment.

14. The container of Claim 13, wherein the rigid support functions as a serving tray for the contained item after the item compartment has been accessed.

15. The container of Claim 14, wherein the item in the serving tray is vacuum packed.

16. The container of Claim 14, wherein the item in the serving tray is in a controlled atmosphere.

17. The container of Claim 1, further comprising a plurality of storage compartments.

18. The container of Claim 1, wherein the breachable bubble contains a gas, the gas comprising an antimicrobial agent.

19. The container of Claim 18, wherein the antimicrobial agent comprises ethylene oxide, propylene oxide, beta-propiolactone, ozone, carbon dioxide, a halogen gas, or mixtures thereof.

20. The container of Claim 1, wherein the breachable bubble is positioned at one side of the container, the side of the container having a length, the length of the breachable bubble being greater than half the length of the side of the container.

21. The container of Claim 1, wherein the item compartment contains a gas and the breachable bubble contains a gas and wherein the gas within the item compartment is different than the gas contained within the breachable bubble.

22. A plurality of individual stackable containers, which are sealed against the exterior environment, and which provide easy access to items contained therein, comprising:

5 item compartment in each individual container for the contained items;

access opening into each item compartment for accessing the contained item;

compartment support for supporting the item compartment forming part of each individual container;

10 flexible closure for closing the item compartment forming part of each individual container;

15 peripheral seal between the compartment support and the flexible closure forming each individual container, pressed into sealing engagement, and circumscribing the access opening for closing the item compartment located inside the perimeter seal;

an overhang formed by the compartment support and extending beyond the item compartment outside the perimeter seal;

breachable bubble between the compartment support and the flexible closure forming each individual container, pressed into sealing engagement, and
20 carried on the overhang;

an under void adjacent to the overhang, on the compartment support side;

breachable seal formed along the edge of each breachable bubble;

the breachable bubbles spreadable under applied pressure into the
25 breachable seal thereof, which spreading separates the flexible closure from the compartment support, until the spreading bubble produces an edge breach through the breachable seal to the exterior environment.

23. The stackable containers of Claim 22, wherein the lower surface of each individual container engages the upper surface of the individual container thereunder.

24. The stackable containers of Claim 23, wherein the lower surface and upper surface of each individual container is planar to facilitate stacking.

25. The stackable containers of Claim 22, wherein the compartment supports are rigid.

26. The stackable containers of Claim 22, wherein the compartment supports are semi-rigid.

27. The stackable containers of Claim 22, wherein the compartment supports are flexible.

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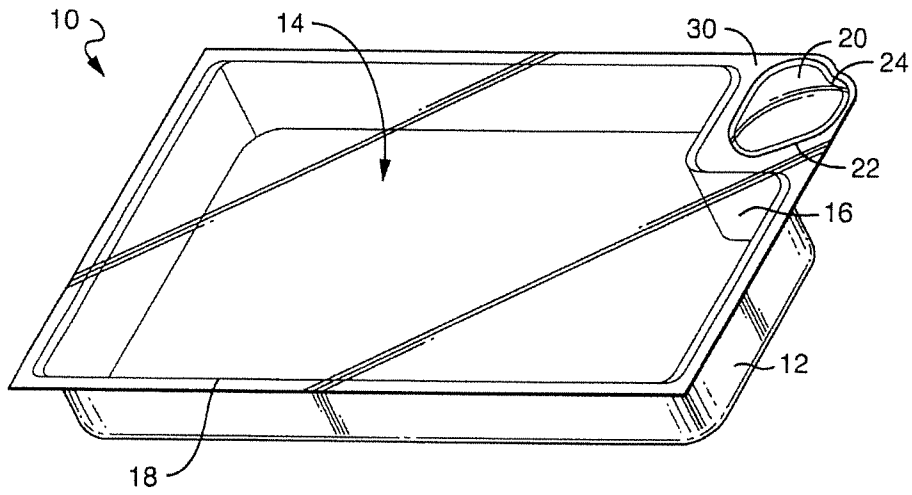


FIG. 1

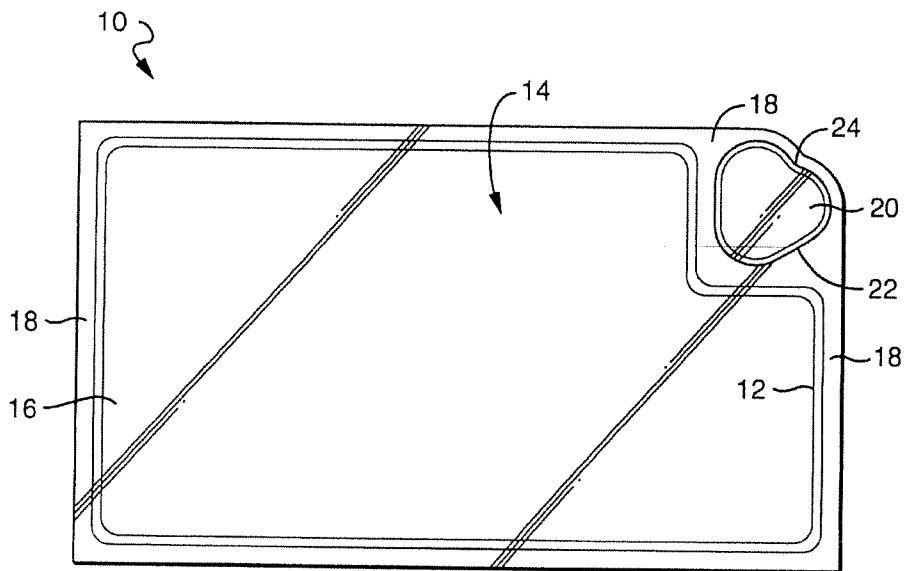


FIG. 2

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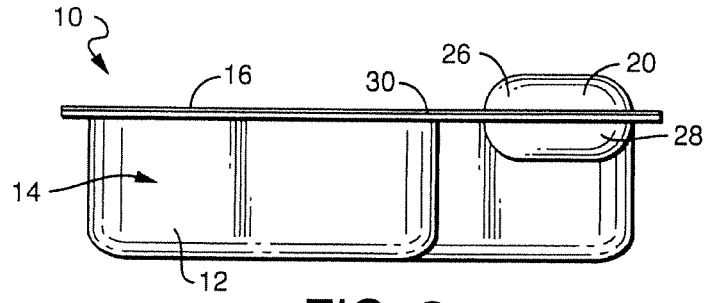


FIG. 3

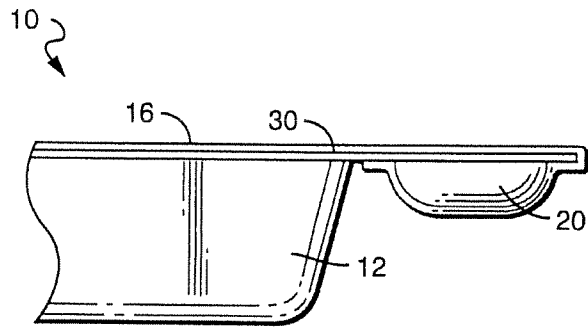


FIG. 4

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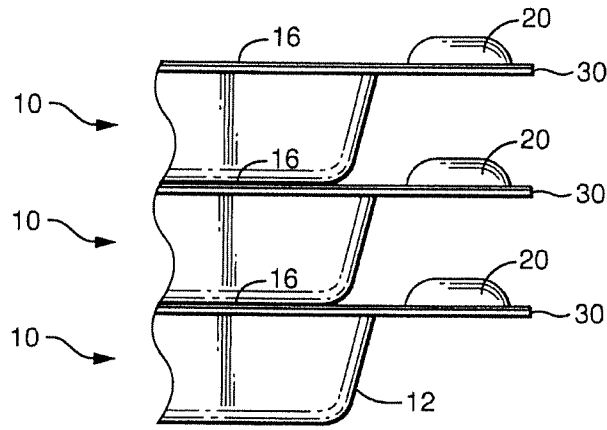


FIG. 5

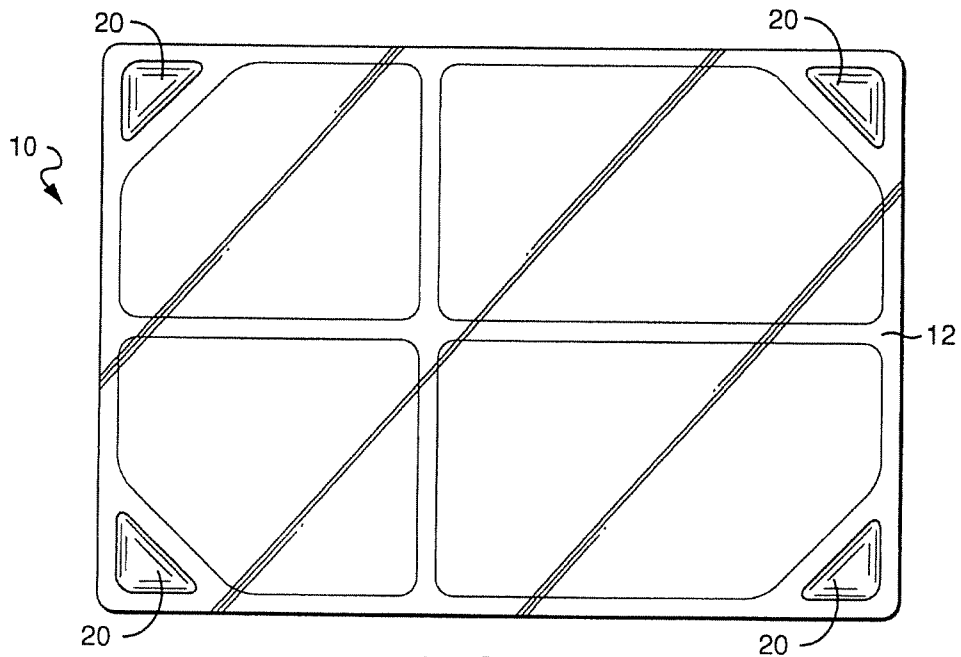


FIG. 6

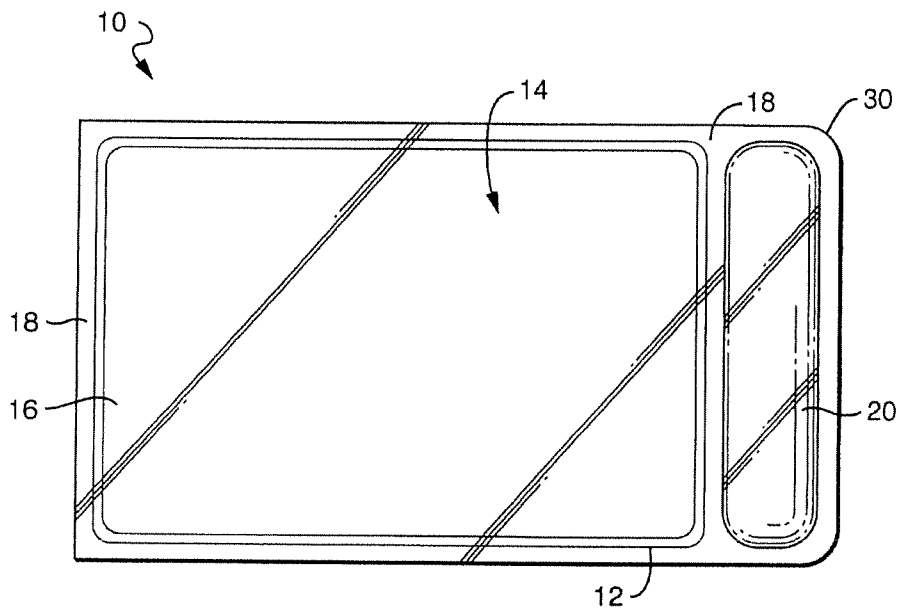


FIG. 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2008/088100**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER***B65D 75/32(2006.01)i, B65D 75/58(2006.01)i, B65D 77/30(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)

IPC: B65D

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 since 1975
Japanese Utility models and applications for Utility models since 1975

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

eKIPASS (KIPO internal) & Keywords: pack, breach, bubble

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 6726364 B2 (WILLIAM S. PERELL; NEIL S. HAYDEN) 27 April 2004 See Figure 1, Column 4 Line 10 - Column 4 Line 34, and Column 6 Line 66 - Column 7 Line 26	1-27
Y	EP 0709302 A1 (DUPOYET GUY) 1 May 1996 See Figures 1,6 and Abstract	1-27
A	JP 2003-146364 A (DAINIPPON PRINTING CO., LTD.) 21 May 2003 See Figure 1 and Paragraphs [0012]-[0013]	1-27

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

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"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

31 MARCH 2009 (31.03.2009)

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Telephone No. 82-42-481-8468



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/US2008/088100

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EP 0709302 A1	01.05.1996	FR 2726252 B1	24.01.1997
JP 2003-146364 A	21.05.2003	None	