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(54) **PACKAGE OF TOBACCO-RELATED ARTICLES**

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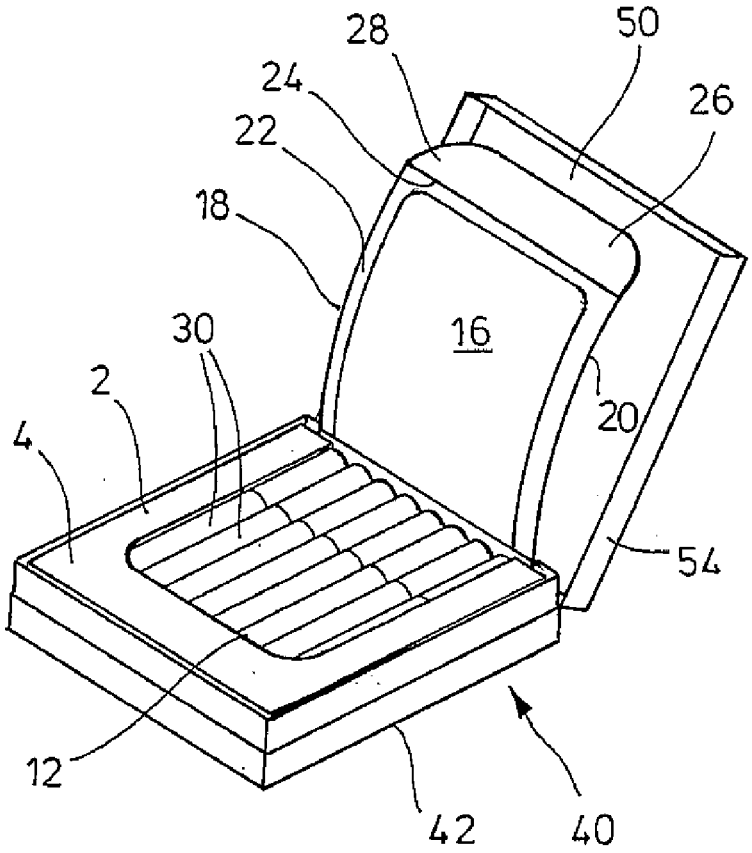
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A package (**40**) of tobacco-related articles comprises a sealed enclosure (**2**) comprising flexible barrier sheet material wrapping a charge of tobacco-related articles (**30**) and forming a front wall (**4**), a rear wall, two lateral walls, a top wall and a bottom wall, the front wall (**4**) having a larger area than the top wall. An access opening (**12**) extends over part of the front wall (**4**)and optionally part of the top wall and is covered by a resealable flap (**20**) which is foldable about a hinge line located at or close to the top wall to permit access to the interior of the package. The flap (**20**) comprises a label (**18**) having adhesive edge zones (**22**) adapted to seal the flap (**20**) when the flap covers the access opening (**12**). The portion of the label (**18**) extending at the front wall (**4**) of the enclosure(**2**) has a length of at least 65% of the length of the front wall (**4**).



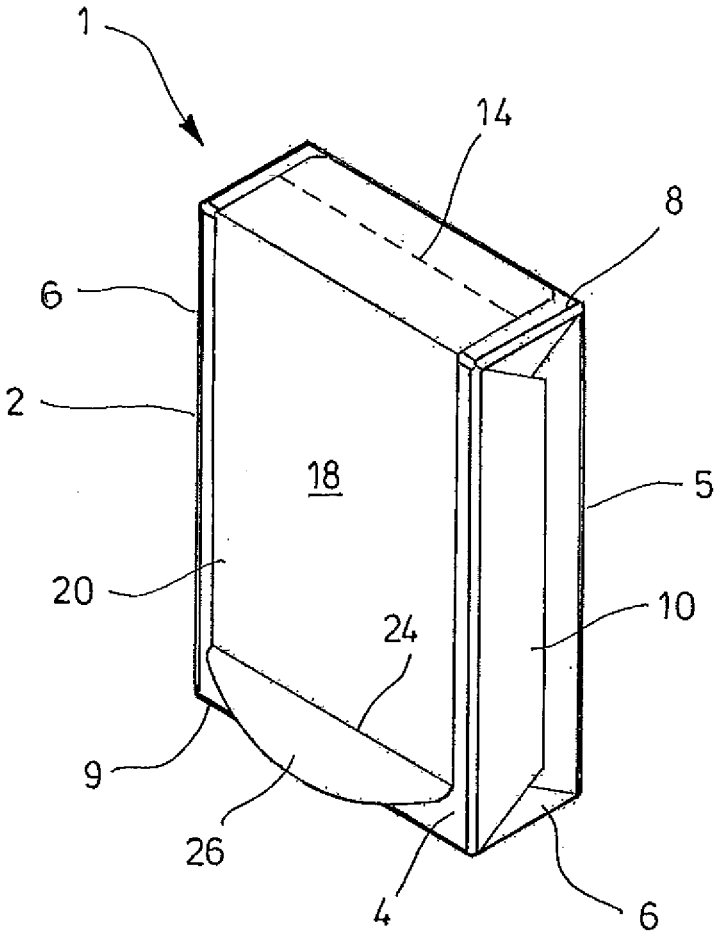


FIG.1

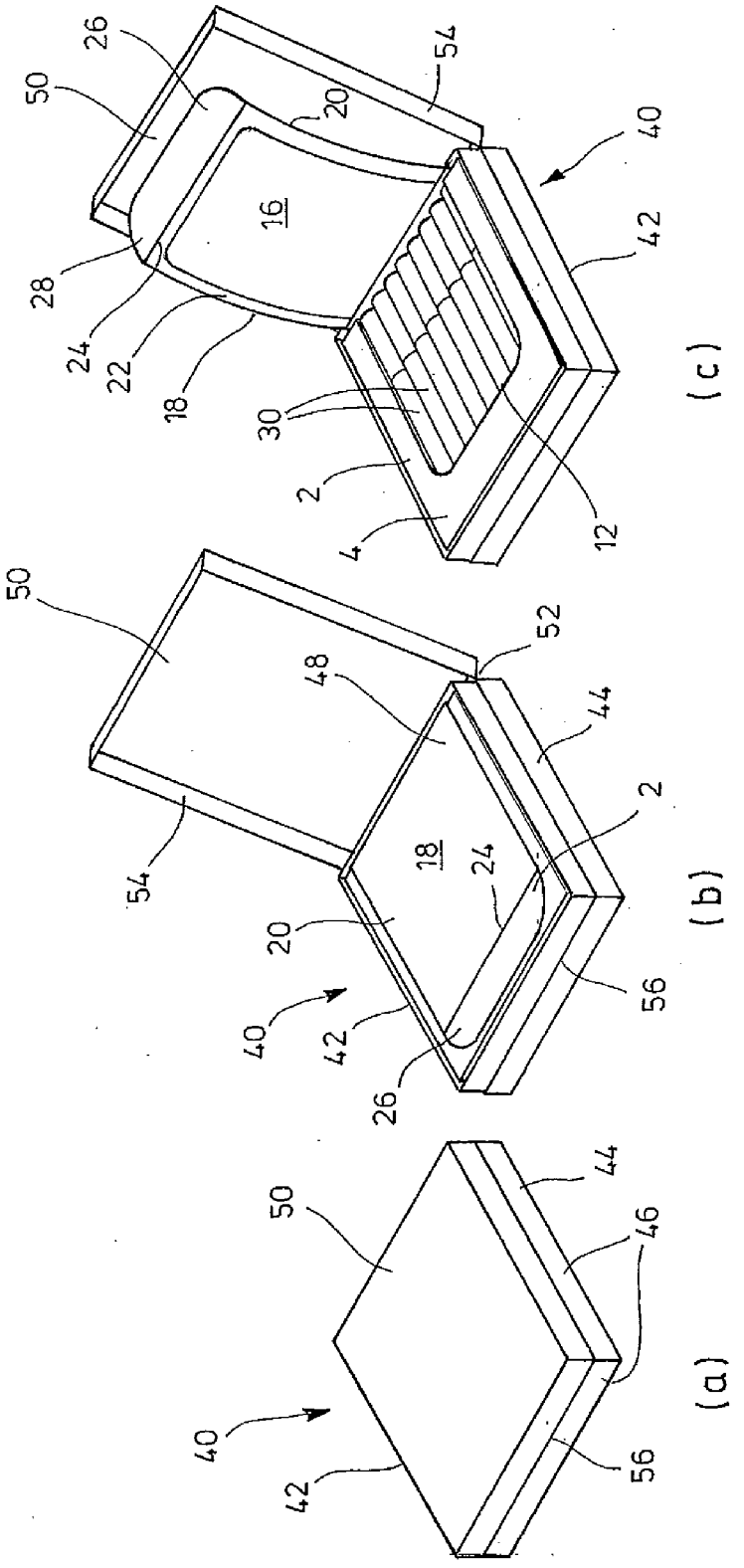


FIG. 2

PACKAGE OF TOBACCO-RELATED ARTICLES

[0001] The invention relates to a package of tobacco-related articles.

[0002] WO 98/22368 A discloses a pack or package comprising a frame (including a major panel, two side wings, and an end flap) and a sealed enclosure made of flexible barrier sheet material, which wraps a smoking-article charge and the frame. The sealed seams of the enclosure at least partially overlay the frame. The enclosure can have a re-sealable access aperture.

[0003] A similar pack is known from WO 98/22367 A. In this case, an access aperture in the sealed enclosure extends from a top side to a major side of the enclosure and can be closed by a relatively short re-sealable adhesive cover, which is foldable about a hinge line at an edge of the top side (remote from said major side) to permit access to the interior of the package. Parts of the frame provide a counter-pressure when the cover is re-sealed. The pack can be inserted in an additional rigid outer pack.

[0004] WO 00/01594 A discloses a lamella (tacky or adhesive label) for application to the barrier sheet material in the area of the access opening of the sealed enclosure of a pack similar to the packs explained before. In this way, a re-sealable flap having adhesive edges is formed, which is foldable about a hinge line located at an edge of the top side of the pack (remote from the major side). The label comprises two layers (plus adhesive), wherein the inner layer includes a major portion and a non-adhesive minor portion separated from the major portion by a cut through the inner layer. The minor portion serves as a gripping tab, wherein the cut has the effect that the gripping tab somewhat lifts from the barrier sheet material underneath the gripping tab, which facilitates the handling of the tab. The manufacture of the lamella involves some expenditure, however.

[0005] The object of the invention is to improve the label used for a re-sealable access aperture in packages of tobacco-related articles comprising a sealed enclosure.

[0006] This object is achieved by the package of tobacco-related articles defined in claim **1**. Advantageous versions of the invention follow from the dependent claims.

[0007] The package of tobacco-related articles according to the invention comprises a sealed enclosure comprising flexible barrier sheet material, which wraps a charge of tobacco-related articles and forms a front wall, a rear wall, two lateral walls, a top wall and a bottom wall. The lateral walls may be flat, but other designs (e.g. roundish or with bevelled edge zones) are possible as well. Moreover, the term "wall" is not to imply that these walls are rigid. Using this terminology (and irrespective of the actual orientation of the package), the front wall has a larger area than the top wall.

[0008] An access opening extends over part of the front wall and optionally additionally part of the top wall and is covered by a re-sealable flap which is foldable about a hinge line located at the top wall to permit access to the interior of the enclosure. If the access opening does not include an area at the top wall of the enclosure, the hinge line may be located at the front wall, close to or at the edge where the top wall is connected to the front wall.

[0009] The flap comprises a label having adhesive edge zones adapted to seal the flap when the flap covers the access opening. According to the invention, the portion of the label extending at the front wall of the enclosure has a length of at least 65% of the length of the front wall, wherein the length of the front wall is measured between the edges where the bottom wall and the top wall of the enclosure are connected to the front wall. The length of the label may exceed 65% of the length of the front wall, and may even exceed 70%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 90% or 95% of the length of the front wall.

[0010] Thus, the portion of the label extending at the front wall of the enclosure has a large length, even if that is not required to cover a large access opening. A large label may be used as a striking marker or as a carrier for information. Since the label can be produced and, e.g., printed with information in a process independent of the preparation of the barrier sheet material, the overall manufacturing process gets more flexible.

[0011] Generally, the label can be designed in multiple ways. For example, the label may be blank, it may be printed with decorative elements and/or information, it may be coloured or non-coloured, it may comprise straight or non-straight edges, etc. Moreover, the label may be provided with punched holes or punched graphical elements. The latter will not deteriorate the sealing effect of the enclosure if such holes or punched elements overlay barrier sheet material of the enclosure after the label has been placed. Any combinations of different design elements of the label are conceivable as well.

[0012] In advantageous embodiments of the invention, the flap comprises a layer which includes barrier sheet material cut from the barrier sheet material of the enclosure. This layer of the flap is covered by the label, and the adhesive edge zones of the label extend beyond the cut edges of this layer. The label can be provided with a bottom side which is completely covered with an adhesive, which forms the adhesive edge zones of the label and permits the label to be glued to the barrier sheet material layer of the flap in an easy manner. If the barrier sheet material layer of the flap which covers the access opening is significantly smaller than the label, it may be advantageous if part of the adhesive at the bottom side of the label in the area outside of the access opening is missing or neutralised (e.g. removed, chemically treated, or covered) or if the adhesive in this area is weak. Otherwise, it might be too difficult to open the flap.

[0013] Preferably, the flap comprises a gripping tab located at the front wall of the enclosure. The gripping tab can be grasped by the user and facilitates the opening of the flap. To form a gripping tab which is accessible at the front wall of the enclosure, the label, in an area opposite to the hinge line of the flap, may be folded back about a fold line. For sealing purposes, there can be an adhesive zone between the fold line of the gripping tab and the cut edge of the barrier sheet material layer of the flap close to this fold line. Preferably, the gripping tab is non-adhesive. In the area of the gripping tab, the adhesive can be removed or neutralised or covered by, e.g., paper or some film material.

[0014] The fold line defining the gripping tab can be a fold line at which the gripping tab is folded back by about 180°. Since the gripping tab will not stay in such a strongly folded state but will lift somewhat, it can be easily grasped in order to open the flap. To this end, a particular treatment of the label in the area of the fold line is generally not required so that the label can be manufactured at relatively low cost.

[0015] To stabilize the package, an inner frame can be provided between the charge of tobacco-related articles and the enclosure. The inner frame, e.g. made of cardboard, has

a shape so that it does not obstruct the area of the access opening. Generally, it is not required that the inner frame encompasses the tobacco-related articles completely because the barrier sheet material has already some stiffness and the tobacco-related articles also contribute to stabilisation. Examples for an inner frame are well known in the art, e.g. from WO 98/22368 A or from WO 98/22367 A. Embodiments which do not use an inner frame are conceivable as well.

[0016] The package according to the invention may further comprise an outer shell, which at least partially surrounds the enclosure. The outer shell, e.g. made of cardboard, can be designed in various ways. Generally, the re-sealable flap of the enclosure has to be accessable from the outer shell or has to be made accessable, e.g. by opening a lid of the outer shell and/or by moving the enclosure relative to the outer shell. Such designs combine the advantages of a re-sealable enclosure, e.g. freshness of its contents, and an outer shell, e.g. rigidity and larger carrier for information and brand names.

[0017] In an embodiment, the outer shell is designed as a shoulder pack comprising a body and a lid. The lid is swivelable about a hinge line located at a wall of the body. When the lid is closed, it covers a major face of the body. The wall of the enclosure defined as the front wall, i.e. the major wall provided with the access aperture (or at least part thereof), is oriented towards the lid when the lid is closed. Thus, the resealable flap is easily accessable in a typical shoulder pack, which comprises a body having relatively low walls and a relatively large hinged lid. In typical use of the shoulder pack, the front wall of the enclosure points upwardly.

[0018] In a different embodiment, the outer shell is designed as a hinge lid pack comprising a body and a lid, which is swivelable about a hinge line located at a wall of the body. In this case, the lid is adapted to cover a minor face of the body. The wall of the enclosure defined as the top wall is oriented towards the lid. When the lid is swivelled to an open state, a cutout in the body permits a better access to the flap of the enclosure. In typical use of the hinge lid pack, the top wall of the enclosure points upwardly.

[0019] The package can also be designed as a so-called slide shell pack. In a closing position, the enclosure is at least partially surrounded by the outer shell so that the outer shell at least partially covers the access opening of the enclosure. The enclosure is slidably moveable with respect to the outer shell from the closing position to an access position, in which the re-sealable flap is accessable to be folded for permitting access to the interior of the enclosure.

[0020] If the material of the flap is relatively stiff, the flap may tend to close by itself after it has been opened to get access to the contents of the package. To avoid this self-closing effect, the flap can comprise, e.g. in a region remote from the hinge line of the flap, a self-sticking area comprising a sticking means facing outwardly. The self-sticking area can be used to stick or adhere the flap, in the opened state when the flap is bent or folded backwards, e.g. to a wall of the enclosure or to a wall of the outer shell, respectively. To close the flap again, it is easy to pull off the self-sticking area from its counterface. The sticking means of the self-sticking area can be provided in various ways, e.g. with a pressure-sensitive adhesive (which preferentially sticks better to itself and to the material of the flap than to the material of the enclosure or outer shell, respectively, to avoid adhesive remainders at the wrong face), or with suction devices, etc.

[0021] In the following, the invention is further described by means of embodiments. The drawings show in

[0022] FIG. **1** a three-dimensional view of an embodiment of the package according to the invention, which is designed as a sealed (and re-sealable) enclosure, from the front side, a re-sealable flap comprising a long label being closed, and

[0023] FIG. **2** three-dimensional views of another embodiment of the package according to the invention, wherein a sealed (and re-sealable) enclosure similar to that of FIG. **1** is inserted in an outer shell designed as a shoulder pack, i.e. in part (a) with the lid of the shoulder pack being closed, in part (b) with the lid being opened and the re-sealable flap of the enclosure being closed, and in part (c) with the lid being opened and the re-sealable flap being opened.

[0024] FIG. **1** illustrates an embodiment of a package of tobacco-related articles, which is formed as a soft pack **1** comprising a sealed (and re-sealable) enclosure **2**.

[0025] The enclosure **2** is made of flexible barrier sheet material. Such barrier sheet material is well-known in the art. When sealed, it keeps the moisture and the aromas of the tobacco-related articles contained therein. In the embodiment, the flexible barrier sheet material is arranged as a wrapping about a charge of cigarettes. This wrapping forms a front wall **4**, a rear wall **5** (not directly visible in FIG. **1**), two lateral walls **6** (of which only one is directly visible in FIG. **1**), a top wall **8** and a bottom wall **9** (not directly visible in FIG. **1**). In this context, the term "wall" is used instead of "side", which does not have a special meaning, however, and does not imply any properties with respect to rigidity. The designation of the walls refers to the upright position of the enclosure **2** as shown in FIG. **1**, but does not include further implications. In other embodiments, the orientation may be different (see FIG. **2**). In any case, however, the front wall **4** has a larger area than the top wall **8**. The enclosure **2** is sealed, e.g. by means of heat-sealing, gluing, and/or friction or by other means known in the art, at seams **10**. FIG. **1** shows one of these seams.

[0026] An access opening permits access to the interior of the enclosure **2**. In the embodiment of FIG. **1**, the access opening extends over part of the front wall **4** and part of the top wall **8** and can be covered by a re-sealable flap. This re-sealable flap is closed in the view shown in FIG. **1**. In the embodiment illustrated by means of FIG. **2**, however, an enclosure very similar to the enclosure **2** is used, which is shown in FIG. **2**(*c*) with the re-sealable flap being opened so that the corresponding access opening can be seen. Because of the similarity of the enclosures, the same reference numerals are used for corresponding parts in FIG. **1** and in FIG. **2**, and FIG. **2**(*c*) can be considered for reference purposes concerning the embodiment of FIG. **1**. It is to be noted that, in FIG. **2**, the front wall **4** of the enclosure points upwardly, in contrast to FIG. **1**.

[0027] In the embodiments, the access opening, designated by reference numeral **12**, is defined by a cutline made as a straight cut through the material of the enclosure **2** along three sides of the access opening **12**, whereas the forth side of the access opening **12** is defined by a hinge line **14**. In this way, a layer **16** of barrier sheet material is partially cut out from the enclosure **2**. To the outside of this layer **16**, a flexible, adhesive label **18** (see also FIG. **1**) is glued by

means of an adhesive covering most of the area of the inner face of the label **18**. In this way, the flap (designated by **20**) is formed.

[0028] The area of the label **18** is greater than that of the layer **16** so that adhesive edge zones **22** are provided (see FIG. **2**(*c*)).

[0029] At a fold line **24**, the label **18** is sharply bent backwards in order to form a gripping tab **26**. The inner face **28** of the gripping tab **26** is not adhesive, which can be achieved, e.g., by removing the adhesive of the label **18** in this area or by covering it with a film material. A zone between the fold line **24** and the cut edge of the layer **16** is adhesive, however.

[0030] FIG. **2**(*c*) shows the enclosure **2** in a state when the flap **20** has been folded back to open the access opening **12**. The contents of the enclosure **2**, i.e. cigarettes **30**, can be conveniently removed. The flap **20** deflects from the enclosure **2** along the hinge line **14**. The hinge line **14** does not have to be a precise line, but it roughly describes where the flap **20** starts to deflect from the enclosure **2**.

[0031] When the flap **20** is closed, the adhesive in the edge zones **22** and the zone adjacent to the fold line **24** seals the enclosure **2**. The flap **20** can be easily opened by pulling at the gripping tab **26** and deflecting the flap **20** to the position shown in FIG. **2**(*c*).

[0032] Moreover, an inner frame made of cardboard may be arranged between the cigarettes **30** and the inner face of the enclosure **2**. The inner frame partially surrounds the bundle of cigarettes **30** to provide some rigidity to the enclosure **2** and to facilitate the re-sealing of the flap **20** by slightly pressing against its edge zones, in particular after part of the cigarettes **30** has been taken out of the enclosure **2**. In FIG. **2**(*c*), the inner frame is not visible because it is not present in the area of the access opening **12**.

[0033] The label **18** is made as an adhesive label from a material different from the barrier sheet material. The area of the gripping tab **26** is not adhesive. As seen in FIG. **1** and in FIG. **2**, the length of the label **18** (measured in a direction from the top wall **8** to the bottom wall **9**) is almost as large as the length of the front wall **4**. An advantage of the large area of the label **18** is the possibility of using this area as an information carrier or marker, which can be prepared in a process independent of the manufacture and preparation of the barrier sheet material of the enclosure **2**. In the embodiment of FIG. **1**, the access opening might be significantly smaller than in the embodiment of FIG. **2**, although in both cases a long label **18** is used. In any case, a large label allows for a large access opening so that the cigarettes **30** can be conveniently taken out of the package.

[0034] FIG. **2** shows an embodiment of a package **40**, in which the enclosure **2** is inserted into an outer shell **42** designed as a shoulder pack. In the orientation of FIG. **2**, which corresponds to normal use, the front wall **4** of the enclosure **2** points upwardly.

[0035] The outer shell **42** includes a body **44** comprising four walls **46**, which are relatively low and surround a bottom (not visible in FIG. **2**). Access to the body **44** is provided via a major face **48**. A lid **50** is swivelably connected, at a hinge line **52**, to one of the walls **46**. When the lid **50** is closed, a rim (see FIG. **2**(*b*)) of the lid **50** rests at a step **56** provided at the body **44**.

[0036] FIGS. **2**(*b*) and **2**(*c*) illustrate how the enclosure **2** is positioned in the body **44** of the outer shell **42**. The details of the enclosure **2** have already been explained in the context of the embodiment according to FIG. **1**. If the lid **50** is open, see FIG. **2**(*b*), the gripping tab **26** can be easily grasped so that the flap **20** including the label **18** can be opened, see FIG. **2**(*c*). The large label **18** and the large access opening **12** permit a convenient access to the cigarettes **30**. Before the lid **50** is closed again, the flap **20** is closed and re-sealed by gentle pressure to its peripheral zone.

[0037] As can be seen in FIG. **2**(*c*), the access opening **12** of the enclosure **2** extends from the front wall **4** into the top wall **8** of the enclosure **2**. In the terminology used, the top wall **8** faces the wall **46** of the body **44** including the hinge line **52**. In a variant of the embodiment, the hinge line **14** of the flap **20** is at the edge between front wall **4** and top wall **8**. In that case, it would be advantageous if the label **18** extends up onto the top wall **8** of the enclosure **2** in order to ensure a tight re-sealing of the flap **20**.

[0038] The outer shell may be provided in many further forms, e.g. as a hinge lid pack or as part of a slide shell pack, as generally known in the art. In these cases, the re-sealable enclosure can be similar to the enclosure **2** of FIGS. **1** and **2**, but the proportions of the enclosure may be different.

1. A package of tobacco-related articles,

comprising a sealed enclosure (**2**) comprising flexible barrier sheet material wrapping a charge of tobacco-related articles (**30**) and forming a front wall (**4**), a rear wall (**5**), two lateral walls (**6**), a top wall (**8**) and a bottom wall (**9**), the front wall (**4**) having a larger area than the top wall (**8**),

wherein an access opening (**12**) extending over part of the front wall (**4**) and optionally part of the top wall (**8**) is covered by a re-sealable flap (**20**) which is foldable about a hinge line (**14**) located at or close to the top wall (**8**) to permit access to the interior of the enclosure (**2**), and

wherein the flap (**20**) comprises a label (**18**) having adhesive edge zones (**22**) adapted to seal the flap (**20**) when the flap covers the access opening (**12**),

characterised in that the portion of the label (**18**) extending at the front wall (**4**) of the enclosure (**2**) has a length of at least 65% of the length of the front wall (**4**), wherein the length of the front wall (**4**) is measured between the edges where the bottom wall (**9**) and the top wall (**8**) of the enclosure (**2**) are connected to the front wall (**4**).

2. The package according to claim **1**, characterised in that the length of the portion of the label (**18**) extending at the front wall (**4**) of the enclosure (**2**), related to the length of the front wall (**4**), is greater than at least one of the values selected from the following list: 70%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95%.

3. The package of tobacco-related articles according to claim **1**, characterised in that the flap (**20**) comprises a layer (**16**) which includes barrier sheet material cut from the barrier sheet material of the enclosure (**2**), wherein said layer (**16**) is covered by the label (**18**) and the adhesive edge zones (**22**) of the label extend beyond the cut edges of said layer (**16**).

4. The package according to claim **1**, characterised in that the flap (**20**) comprises a gripping tab (**26**) located at the front wall (**4**) of the enclosure (**2**).

5. The package according to claim **4**, characterised in that the label (**18**), in an area opposite to the hinge line (**14**) of

the flap (**20**), is folded back about a fold line (**24**) and forms a gripping tab (**26**), which is accessible at the front wall (**4**) of the enclosure (**2**).

6. The package according to claim **5**, characterised in that the gripping tab (**26**) is non-adhesive.

7. The package according to claim **1**, characterised in that an inner frame, preferably comprising cardboard, is provided between the charge of tobacco-related articles (**30**) and the enclosure (**2**), the inner frame not obstructing the area of the access opening (**12**).

8. The package according to claim **1**, characterised by further comprising an outer shell (**42**), which at least partially surrounds the enclosure (**2**).

9. The package according to claim **8**, characterised in that the outer shell (**42**) is designed as a shoulder pack comprising a body (**44**) and a lid (**50**), which is swivelable about a hinge line (**52**) located at a wall (**46**) of the body (**44**) and adapted to cover a major face (**48**) of the body (**44**), wherein, by definition, the front wall (**4**) of the enclosure (**2**) is oriented towards the lid (**50**) when the lid (**50**) is closed.

10. The package according to claim **8**, characterised in that the outer shell is designed as a hinge lid pack comprising a body and a lid, which is swivelable about a hinge line located at a wall of the body and adapted to cover a minor face of the body, wherein, by definition, the top wall of the enclosure (**2**) is oriented towards the lid, and wherein a cutout in the body permits access to the flap (**20**) of the enclosure (**2**) when the lid is swivelled to an open state.

11. The package according to claim **8**, characterised in that, in a closing position, the enclosure (**2**) is at least partially surrounded by the outer shell so that the outer shell at least partially covers the access opening (**12**) of the enclosure, and wherein the enclosure (**2**) is slidably moveable with respect to the outer shell from the closing position to an access position, in which the re-sealable flap (**20**) is accessable to be folded for permitting access to the interior of the enclosure (**2**).

12. The package according to claim **1**, characterised in that the flap (**20**) comprises a self-sticking area comprising a sticking means facing outwardly.

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