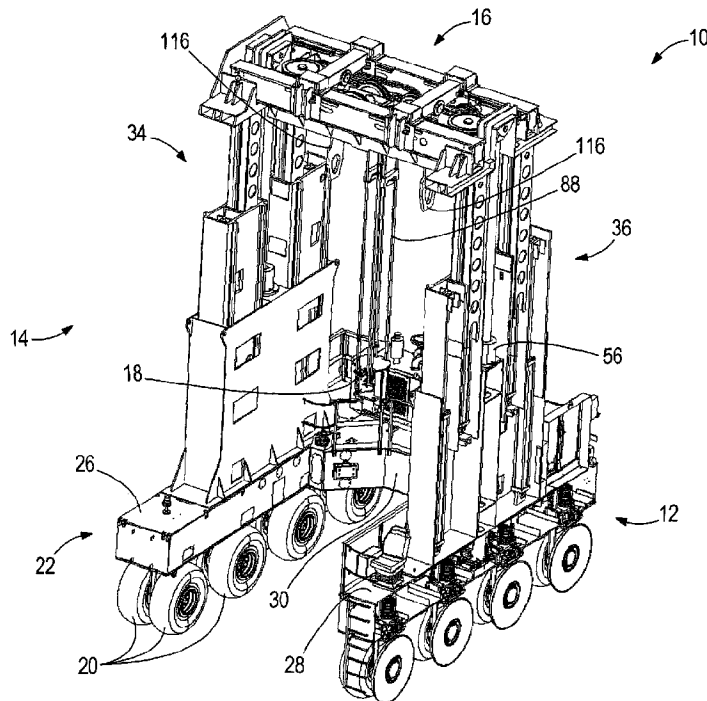




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(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A cask transport system (10) includes a support assembly (12) including a plurality of wheels (20) and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels. The cask transport system also includes a tower (14) disposed above the support assembly, the tower including a base portion and a tower frame coupled to the base portion, the tower frame movable relative to the base portion. The cask transport system also includes an upper beam assembly (16) coupled to the tower frame, and a bottom block assembly (18) coupled to the upper beam assembly, the bottom block assembly movable relative to the upper beam assembly.

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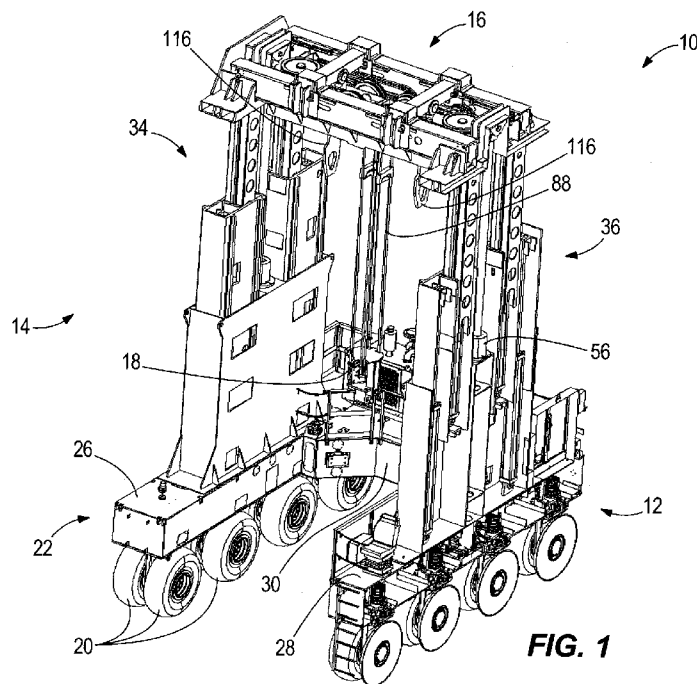


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A cask transport system (10) includes a support assembly (12) including a plurality of wheels (20) and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels. The cask transport system also includes a tower (14) disposed above the support assembly, the tower including a base portion and a tower frame coupled to the base portion, the tower frame movable relative to the base portion. The cask transport system also includes an upper beam assembly (16) coupled to the tower frame, and a bottom block assembly (18) coupled to the upper beam assembly, the bottom block assembly movable relative to the upper beam assembly.

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CASK TRANSPORT ASSEMBLY

FIELD OF INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to lifting and transporting of casks and multi-purpose canisters in the nuclear power field. Specifically, the present invention relates to lifting and transporting spent nuclear fuel casks and canisters.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Canisters are commonly used to hold nuclear fuel in the nuclear power field. Once these canisters have been used and are spent, the canisters need to be transported to large storage tanks positioned in pits in the ground for safety reasons. The process of lifting and transporting spent nuclear fuel canisters requires careful planning and precision. In particular, it is possible for seismic or other movement events to take place during the transport of the canisters, particularly in regions of the world susceptible to earthquakes. Additionally, it is possible to have single failures within a transport system (e.g., a component breaking) during the transport of canisters. Without a system built to handle these types of events, the canisters could tip, fall, be released, and/or otherwise be damaged or compromised.

SUMMARY

[0004] In one construction, the invention provides a cask transport system that includes a support assembly including a plurality of wheels and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels. The cask transport system also includes a tower disposed above the support assembly, the tower including a base portion and a tower frame coupled to the base portion, the tower frame movable relative to the base portion. The cask transport system also includes an upper beam assembly coupled to the tower frame, and a bottom block assembly coupled to the upper beam assembly, the bottom block assembly movable relative to the upper beam assembly.

[0005] In another construction, the invention provides a cask transport system that includes a support assembly including a plurality of wheels and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels. The cask transport system also includes a tower disposed above the support assembly, the tower including a base portion and a plurality of tower frames coupled to the base portion, the tower frames movable relative to each other and to the base portion. The cask transport system also includes an upper beam assembly coupled to the tower frames, the upper beam assembly including a plurality of pulley systems. The cask transport system also includes a bottom block assembly coupled to the upper beam assembly, the bottom block assembly movable relative to the upper beam assembly via the pulley systems.

[0006] In another construction, the invention provides a method of using a cask transport system having a support assembly including a plurality of wheels and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels, a tower disposed above the support assembly, the tower including a base portion and a tower frame coupled to the base portion, an upper beam assembly coupled to the tower frame, and a bottom block assembly coupled to the upper beam assembly. The method includes coupling the bottom block assembly to a canister, changing the vertical position of the tower frame relative to the base portion, and changing the vertical position of the bottom block assembly relative to the upper beam assembly.

[0007] In another construction, the invention provides a cask transport system including a support assembly including a plurality of wheels and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels. The cask transport system also includes a tower disposed above the support assembly. The cask transport system also includes an upper beam assembly coupled to the tower frame, the upper beam assembly including a winch drum. The cask transport system also includes a bottom block assembly coupled to the upper beam assembly, the bottom block assembly movable from a first vertical position relative to the upper beam assembly to a second vertical position relative to the upper beam assembly.

[0008] In another construction, the invention provides a method of using a cask transport system having a support assembly including a plurality of wheels and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels, a tower disposed above the support assembly, the tower including a base portion and a tower frame coupled to the base portion, an upper beam assembly coupled to

the tower frame, and a bottom block assembly coupled to the upper beam assembly, the upper beam assembly including a support arm extending beneath the upper beam assembly. The method includes changing the vertical position of the tower frame relative to the base portion, coupling the support arm of the upper beam assembly to a storage tank, moving the cask transport system from a first location to a second location with the storage tank coupled to the upper beam assembly, and lowering the storage tank into a pit at the second location.

[0009] In another construction, the invention provides a method of transporting a canister with a cask transport system having a support assembly including a plurality of wheels and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels, a tower disposed above the support assembly, the tower including a base portion and a tower frame coupled to the base portion, an upper beam assembly coupled to the tower frame, and a bottom block assembly coupled to the upper beam assembly, the upper beam assembly including a support arm extending beneath the upper beam assembly. The method includes moving a cask underneath the support arm, the cask including a canister disposed inside the cask. The method also includes changing the vertical position of the tower frame relative to the base portion, coupling the support arm to the cask, and raising the cask. The method also includes moving the cask transport system from a first location to a second location with the cask coupled to the upper beam assembly.

[0010] FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of a cask transport assembly according to one construction of the invention, with a second leg portion of the assembly system shown in cross section.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a side view of the assembly shown in FIG. 1 with hydraulic cylinders shown in a fully extended position.

[0012] FIG. 3 is similar to FIG. 2, but illustrates the hydraulic cylinders in a fully retracted position.

[0013] FIG. 4 is a front view of the cask transport assembly with the bottom block assembly in a first, stowed position.

[0014] FIG. 5 is a front view of the cask transport assembly with the bottom block assembly in a second, deployed position.

[0015] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a lift beam assembly with the bottom block assembly in the first, stowed position.

[0016] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of the lift beam assembly with the bottom block assembly in the second, deployed position.

[0017] FIG. 8 is a top view of the lift beam assembly with the bottom block assembly in the first, stowed position.

[0018] FIG. 9 is a bottom view of the lift beam assembly with the bottom block assembly in the first, stowed position.

[0019] FIG. 10 is a top view of the lift beam assembly with the bottom block assembly in the second, deployed position.

[0020] FIG. 11 is a bottom view of the lift beam assembly with the bottom block assembly in the second, deployed position.

[0021] FIG. 12 is a perspective view of the bottom block assembly showing wire ropes extending through roller guides.

[0022] FIG. 13 is an exploded view of the bottom block assembly.

[0023] FIG. 14 is a perspective view of a cask transport assembly according to another construction of the invention, with a portion of the assembly system shown in cross section, and hydraulic cylinders shown in a fully extended position.

[0024] FIG. 15 is a perspective view of the cask transport assembly of FIG. 14, with the hydraulic cylinders in a fully retracted positioned.

[0025] FIG. 16 is a perspective view of an upper beam assembly and bottom block assembly of the cask transport assembly of FIG. 14.

[0026] FIG. 17 is a front perspective view of inner components of the upper beam assembly and bottom block assembly of FIG. 16.

[0027] FIG. 18 is a back perspective view of the inner components of the upper beam assembly and bottom block assembly of FIG. 16.

[0028] FIG. 19 is a top perspective view of the inner components of the upper beam assembly and bottom block assembly of FIG. 16.

[0029] FIG. 20 is a perspective view of a weighted limit switch portion of the upper beam assembly of FIG. 16.

[0030] FIG. 21 is a top perspective view of a frame of the upper beam assembly of FIG. 16.

[0031] FIG. 22 is a bottom perspective view of the frame of the upper beam assembly of FIG. 16.

[0032] FIG. 23 is a top view of the frame of the upper beam assembly of FIG. 16.

[0033] FIG. 24 is a partial, bottom perspective view of the upper beam assembly and bottom block assembly of FIG. 16.

[0034] FIG. 25 is a perspective view of rope reeving utilizing components of the upper beam assembly and bottom block assembly of FIG. 16, the bottom block assembly being in a retracted position.

[0035] FIG. 26 is a perspective view of rope reeving utilizing components of the upper beam assembly and bottom block assembly of FIG. 16, the bottom block assembly being in an extended position.

[0036] FIG. 27 is a perspective view of a cask transport assembly, such as the cask transport assembly of FIG. 1 or FIG. 14, coupled to and transporting a storage tank.

[0037] FIG. 28 is a perspective view of the cask transport assembly lowering the storage tank into a pit.

[0038] FIG. 29 is a perspective view of the cask transport assembly removing a lid off of the storage tank.

[0039] FIG. 30 is a perspective view of the cask transport assembly lowering a mating device on top of a base portion of the storage tank.

[0040] FIG. 31 is a perspective view of a dolly transporting a cask to the cask transport assembly.

[0041] FIG. 32 is a perspective view of the cask transport assembly coupled to, and raising, the cask.

[0042] FIG. 33 is a perspective view of the cask transport assembly positioning the cask over the mating device.

[0043] FIG. 34 is a perspective view of the cask transport assembly lowering a canister disposed within the cask, into the storage tank.

[0044] FIG. 35 is a perspective view of the cask transport assembly replacing the lid back on the storage tank.

[0045] Before any embodiments of the invention are explained in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangement of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the following drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced or of being carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0046] FIG. 1 illustrates a cask transport assembly 10 including a support assembly 12, a tower 14, an upper beam assembly 16 and a bottom block assembly 18. The support assembly 12 includes wheels 20 (e.g., sixteen in the illustrated construction), a U-shaped frame 22 and a prime mover 24. The frame 22 includes first and second legs 26, 28 and a middle portion 30. Each of the legs 26, 28 is supported on eight of the plurality of wheels 20. The prime mover 24

is supported on the middle portion 30. The prime mover 24 is part of a hydraulic system that is operable to drive the wheels 20 and thereby move the U-shaped frame 22, as well as actuate the various hydraulic cylinders described herein. Other arrangements and configurations are possible, and the illustrated construction is given by way of example only.

[0047] As shown in FIG. 1, the tower 14 includes a first side 34 and a second side 36, which is substantially a mirror-image of the first side 34. The first side 34 is coupled to the first leg 26, while the second side 36 is coupled to the second leg 28. Because the first side 34 is a substantial mirror-image of the second side 36, only the second side 36 will be discussed in detail; however, the discussion of the second side 36 applies equally to the first side 34. A portion of the second side 36 is shown in cross section.

[0048] Turning now to FIGS. 2 and 3, the second side 36 is shown in greater detail. The second side 36 includes a base portion 38, a first pair of moving frames 40, 42, a first pair of hydraulic cylinders 44, 46, a second pair of moving frames 48, 50, a second pair of hydraulic cylinders 52, 54, and a safety catch 56. The base portion 38 is substantially fixed to the second side 36 of the frame 22 and extends upwardly therefrom. The base portion 38 is a substantially hollow rectangular frame.

[0049] The first pair of moving frames 40, 42 are coupled to the base portion 38 and telescope vertically in and out of the substantially hollow rectangular frame defined by the base portion 38. The first pair of moving frames 40, 42 are substantially hollow rectangular frames. The first pair of hydraulic cylinders 44, 46 are coupled to the base portion 38 at one end and to a respective one of the first pair of moving frames 40, 42 at the other end. The first pair of hydraulic cylinders 44, 46 are heavy duty double-acting hydraulic cylinders and are operable to move the first pair of moving frames 40, 42 vertically both up and down. FIG. 2 shows the first pair of hydraulic cylinders 44, 46 in a fully extended position, whereas FIG. 3 shows the first pair of hydraulic cylinders 44, 46 in a fully retracted position.

[0050] The second pair of moving frames 48, 50 are coupled to the respective first pair of moving frames 40, 42 and telescope vertically in and out of the substantially hollow rectangular frames defined by the first pair of moving frames 40, 42. The second pair of moving frames 48, 50 are substantially hollow rectangular frames. The second pair of hydraulic cylinders 52, 54 are

coupled to the first pair of moving frames 40, 42 on one end and to the upper beam assembly 16 at the other end. The second pair of hydraulic cylinders 52, 54 are heavy duty double-acting hydraulic cylinders and are operable to move the second of moving frames 48, 50 vertically both up and down. FIG. 2 shows the second pair of hydraulic cylinders 52, 54 in a fully extended position, whereas FIG. 3 shows the second pair of hydraulic cylinders 52, 54 in a fully retracted position. In some constructions, the first pair of hydraulic cylinders 44, 46 are fully extended before the second pair of hydraulic cylinders 52, 54 begin to extend.

[0051] The safety catch 56 is included to catch the upper beam assembly 16 in the event of hydraulic pressure loss.

[0052] FIG. 2 illustrates the upper beam assembly 16 spaced a first distance 58 from a support surface 62 (e.g., the ground). In some constructions, the first distance 58 is between about 17 feet and about 58 feet. In some constructions, the first distance 58 is between about 25 feet and about 50 feet. In some constructions, the first distance 58 is between about 33 feet and about 42 feet.

[0053] FIG. 3 illustrates the upper beam assembly 16 spaced a second distance 60 from the support surface 62. In some constructions, the second distance 60 is between about 4 feet and about 42 feet. In some constructions, the second distance 60 is between about 12 feet and about 33 feet. In some constructions, the second distance 60 is between about 21 feet and about 25 feet.

[0054] FIGS. 4 and 5 illustrate a range of travel 64 of the bottom block assembly 18 with respect to the upper beam assembly 16, as well as with respect to a ground surface 62. In FIG. 4, the bottom block assembly 18 is positioned a first distance 66 from the upper beam 16. The bottom block assembly 18 is also positioned a first distance 68 from the support surface 62. In FIG. 4, the tower 14 is fully extended and the bottom block assembly 18 is fully retracted, so that the bottom block assembly 18 is as far above the support surface 62 as possible.

[0055] In FIG. 5, the bottom block assembly 18 is positioned a second distance 70 from the upper beam assembly 16. The bottom block assembly 18 is also positioned a second distance 71 from the support surface 62. In the illustrated construction, the bottom block assembly 18 is

below the support surface 62, and is coupled to a multi-purpose canister 72. In FIG. 5, the tower 14 is fully retracted and the bottom block assembly 18 is fully extended, so that the bottom block assembly 18 is as far below the ground surface 62 as possible.

[0056] In some constructions, the range of travel 64 of the bottom block assembly 18 with respect to the upper beam assembly 16 is between about 8 feet and about 42 feet. In some constructions, the range of travel 64 is between about 17 feet and about 33 feet. In some constructions, the range of travel 64 is between about 21 feet and about 29 feet.

[0057] In the illustrated construction, the tower 14 travels between the first height 58 and the second height 60 and independently, the bottom block assembly 18 moves with respect to the upper beam assembly 16 over the range of travel 64. These travel ranges can be added to create an even greater range of motion for the bottom block assembly 18 with respect to the ground, as shown in FIGS. 4 and 5.

[0058] Turning now to FIGS. 6 and 7, the bottom block assembly 18 is shown in the retracted position (FIG. 6) and the extended position (FIG. 7) with respect to the upper beam assembly 16. The upper beam 16 includes a pair of frame bars 76, 78, a pair of cross bars 80, 82, a pair of pulley systems 84, 86, and wires 88. The frame bars 76, 78 and the cross bars 80, 82 support the pulley systems 84, 86. The pulley systems 84, 86 are substantially mirror-images, so only the pulley system 84 will be discussed in detail; however, the discussion of pulley system 84 applies equally to pulley system 86.

[0059] With reference to FIGS. 6-11, the pulley system 84 includes a horizontal (i.e., oriented horizontally relative to the frame 22) sheave 90, a pair of stationary vertical (i.e., oriented vertically relative to the frame 22) sheaves 92, 94, a fixed sheave 96, an adjustable sheave 98, and hydraulic cylinders 100. The sheave 90 and the sheaves 92, 94 are fixed with respect to the upper beam 16. The fixed sheave 96 is fixed with respect to the upper beam 16, whereas the adjustable sheave 98 is moveable with respect to the upper beam 16. The hydraulic cylinders 100 move the second sheave 98 with respect to the upper beam 16 (FIGS. 9 and 11). The hydraulic cylinders 100 extend substantially horizontally and the adjustable sheave 98 moves substantially horizontally. Therefore, the height of the pulley system 84 and thus, the upper beam 16 is minimized.

[0060] The adjustable sheave 98 is positioned a first distance 102 (FIGS. 8 and 9) from the fixed sheave 96 when the bottom block assembly 18 is retracted. The adjustable sheave 98 is positioned a second distance 104 (FIGS. 10 and 11) from the fixed sheave 96 when the bottom block assembly 18 is extended. The difference between the first distance 102 and the second distance 104 defines a range of motion of the adjustable sheave 98 with respect to the fixed sheave 96. In some constructions, the range of motion is between about 1 foot and about 8 feet. In some constructions, the range of motion is between about 2 feet and about 6 feet. In some constructions, the range of motion is between about 3 feet and about 5 feet.

[0061] The wires 88 extend around the various sheaves in the upper beam 16 and are connected to the bottom block assembly 18. When the hydraulic cylinders 100 move the adjustable sheave 98, the wires 88 are either drawn up into the upper beam 16 (FIGS. 6, 8, 9) or are deployed from the upper beam 16 (FIGS. 7, 10, 11). Therefore, by moving the adjustable sheave 98, the bottom block assembly 18 is moved between the retracted and extended positions.

[0062] Turning now to FIGS. 12 and 13, the bottom block assembly 18 includes a bottom block 106, a lift block 108, a first roller guide 110, a second roller guide 112 and a pin 114. The pin 114 connects the bottom block 106 and the lift block 108 and retains the first and second roller guides 110, 112 between the bottom block 106 and the lift block 108. The roller guides 110, 112 each include multiple rollers that guide the wires 88 around the bottom block assembly 18. The lift block 108 includes slots that permit over-travel to thereby allow removal of secondary lifting devices, such as slings or chains, after a load is connected to the bottom block assembly 18.

[0063] The bottom block assembly 18 is reeved to be single failure proof per ASME NOG-1-2004. The second roller guide 112 is installed perpendicular to the centerline of a path of at least one of the wires 88. The first and second roller guides 110, 112 permit the bottom block assembly 18 to have a small outside diameter in which the wires 88 cross below the bottom block assembly 18. The outside diameter of the illustrated bottom block assembly 18 is about 26 inches. This permits the bottom block assembly 18 to be inserted into small openings. The rollers in the roller guides 110, 112 can be arranged as a half circle in which the outer diameter

of each roller is tangent to the arc corresponding to the minimum bend radius of the specified wire rope utilized.

[0064] With continued reference to FIGS. 1 and 4-7, the upper beam assembly 16 further includes support arms 116. The support arms 116 are rigid structures extending vertically beneath the upper beam assembly 16, and are used to releasably couple to devices that are being transported (e.g., a cask storage container). Two support arms 116 are illustrated, though in other constructions different numbers or arrangements of support arms 116 are used. Each of the support arms 116 includes a coupling component 118 (FIGS. 6 and 7), for example in the form of an opening, that is used to releasably couple the support arm 116 to a device to be transported.

[0065] With reference to FIGS. 14 and 15, another construction of a cask transport assembly 210 is illustrated. The cask transport assembly 210 is similar to the cask transport assembly 10 above. For example, the cask transport assembly 210 generally includes a support assembly 212, a tower 214, an upper beam assembly 216, and a bottom block assembly 218. The support assembly 212 includes wheels 220 (e.g., sixteen in the illustrated construction), a U-shaped frame 222 and a prime mover 224. The U-shaped frame 222 includes first and second legs 226, 228 and a middle portion 230. Each of the legs 226, 228 is supported on eight of the wheels 220. The prime mover 224 is supported on the middle portion 230. The prime mover 224 is part of a hydraulic system that is operable to drive the wheels 220 and thereby move the U-shaped frame 222, as well as actuate the various hydraulic cylinders described herein.

[0066] As shown in FIG. 14, the tower 214 includes a first side 234 and a second side 236 which is substantially a mirror-image of the first side 234. The first side 234 is coupled to the first leg 226, while the second side 236 is coupled to the second leg 228. Because the first side 234 is a substantial mirror-image of the second side 236, only the second side 236 will be discussed in detail; however, the discussion of the second side 236 applies equally to the first side 234. A portion of the second side 236 is shown in cross section.

[0067] The second side 236 includes a base portion 238, a single pair of moving frames 240, 244, and a single pair of hydraulic cylinders 248, 252. The second side 236 also includes a safety catch 256. The base portion 238 is substantially fixed to the second side 236 of the frame

222 and extends upwardly therefrom. The base portion 238 is a substantially hollow rectangular frame.

[0068] The pair of moving frames 240, 244 are coupled to the base portion 238 and telescope vertically in and out of the substantially hollow rectangular frame defined by the base portion 238. The moving frames 240, 244 are substantially hollow rectangular frames. The hydraulic cylinders 248, 252 are coupled to the base portion 238 at one end and to a respective one of the pair of moving frames 240, 244 at the other end. The pair of hydraulic cylinders 248, 252 are heavy duty double-acting hydraulic cylinders and are operable to move the pair of moving frames 240, 244 vertically both up and down. FIG. 14 shows the pair of hydraulic cylinders 248, 252 in a fully extended position, whereas FIG. 15 shows the pair of hydraulic cylinders 248, 252 in a fully retracted position.

[0069] The safety catch 256 is included to catch the upper beam assembly 16 in the event of hydraulic pressure loss.

[0070] Similar to the cask transport assembly 10, the cask transport assembly 210 is adjustable vertically so that the upper beam assembly 216 may be raised as high as between about 17 feet and about 58 feet above a support surface (e.g., support surface 62 in FIG. 2). In some constructions, the upper beam assembly 216 may be raised to as high as between about 25 feet and about 50 feet above the support surface. In some constructions, the upper beam assembly 216 may be raised as high as between about 33 feet and about 42 feet above the support surface.

[0071] The upper beam assembly 216 may be lowered to as low as between about 4 feet and about 42 feet above the support surface. In some constructions, the upper beam assembly 216 may be lowered to as low as between about 12 feet and about 33 feet above the support surface. In some constructions, the upper beam assembly 216 may be lowered to as low as between about 21 feet and about 25 feet above the support surface.

[0072] With reference to FIGS. 16-19, the upper beam assembly 216 includes a frame 260 that houses an upper sheave 264. As illustrated in FIG. 19, the sheave 264 includes a central elongate sheave pin 268 defining an axis 272. The sheave 264 includes two grooved portions

274, 276 located adjacent one another at one end of the pin 268 and two other grooved portions 280, 282 located adjacent one another at an opposite end of the pin 268. With reference to FIG. 21, the pin 268 sits within two notched regions 284, 288 along a top of the frame 260.

[0073] As illustrated in FIGS. 25 and 26, the sheave 264 is generally centrally located within the upper beam assembly 216. Each of the four grooved portions 274, 276, 280, and 282 receives a wire 296 (e.g., in the form of cable, rope, or any other flexible structure configured to be guided by the grooved portions 274, 276, 280, 282).

[0074] With reference to FIGS. 17-19, on either side of the sheave 264 is a winch drum 300. Two winch drums 300 are illustrated, though in other constructions different numbers of winch drums 300 are used. The winch drums 300 extend along axes 304 that are parallel to, and located below, the axis 272. Each of the winch drums 300 is driven by two planetary hydraulic gearbox motors 308. The gearbox motors 308 are located at opposite ends of the winch drums 300. The gearbox motors 308 each include a set of planetary gears that reduces the transmission of the motor and generates rotational movement of the winch drum 300 about the axis 304. The winch drums 300 further include grooved portions 312 disposed along outside surfaces 316 of the winch drums 300.

[0075] As illustrated in FIGS. 25 and 26, the grooved portions 312 receive the wires 296, and are used to help guide and wind the wires 296 about the winch drums 300 as the winch drums 300 are rotated about their respective axes 304.

[0076] With reference to FIGS. 17, 18, and 24, the upper beam assembly 216 further includes an equalizer 320. The equalizer 320 is used to help stabilize the overall system, and inhibit the bottom block assembly 218 from swaying. The equalizer 320 is located below the sheave 264. The equalizer 320 includes two dead end elements 324. Each of the dead end elements 324 includes a pin 328, a first linkage member 332 coupled to and disposed below the pin 328, a second linkage member 336 coupled to and disposed below the first linkage member 332, and a pair of third linkage members 340 coupled to and disposed below the second linkage member 336.

[0077] As illustrated in FIGS. 25 and 26, each of the third linkage members 340 is an anchor point, or dead end, for one of the wires 296.

[0078] With reference to FIGS. 22 and 24, the equalizer 320 is coupled to the frame 260. Specifically, and with reference to FIG. 22, the frame 260 includes two recessed areas 344 along the bottom of the frame 260. The recessed areas 344 are bounded by three walls 348, which include four openings 352. As illustrated in FIG. 24, the two pins 328 sit within the recessed areas 344, with ends of the pins 328 extending through the openings 352, such that the equalizer 320 is coupled to the frame 260 directly below the sheave 264.

[0079] With reference to FIGS. 17-19 and 24, the bottom block assembly 218 is disposed below the equalizer 320. The bottom block assembly 218 is reeved to be single failure proof per ASME NOG-1-2004. The bottom block assembly 218 includes a housing 356, and a bottom sheave 360 partially disposed within the housing 356. The sheave 360 includes eight grooved portions 364, though in other constructions a different number of grooved portions are used.

[0080] As illustrated in FIGS. 25 and 26, the grooved portions 364 receive and guide the wires 296. The wires 296 are directed to wind about both the sheaves 264 and 360, and are fastened at one end to the third linkage members 340, and at another end to the winch drums 300.

[0081] With reference to FIGS. 22-24, the frame 260 further includes openings 368 that are used to help guide and provide access for the wires 296 between the sheave 264, the winch drums 300, and the sheave 360.

[0082] With reference to FIGS. 17, 18, and 24, a bottom block 372 is coupled to, and partially disposed below, the housing 356 and the sheave 360. The bottom block 372 includes a first opening 376 and a second opening 380. The first opening 376 is disposed above the second opening 380, and is oriented perpendicular to the second opening 380. The bottom block 372 is configured to couple with a device to be transported. For example, the first and second openings 376, 380 are configured to receive wires, ropes, pins, chains, or other coupling structures on a device such as a cask, such that the cask may be releasably attached to the bottom block 372. Other constructions of the bottom block 372 include different structures and/or openings for releasably coupling the bottom block 372 with a device to be transported.

[0083] Overall, the range of travel of the bottom block assembly 372 with respect to the upper beam assembly 216, through use of the wires 296, the sheave 264, the winch drums 300, and the sheave 360, is between about 8 feet and about 42 feet. In some constructions, the range of travel is between about 17 feet and about 33 feet. In some constructions, the range of travel is between about 21 feet and about 29 feet.

[0084] With reference to FIGS. 17, 18, and 20, the upper beam assembly 216 further includes a weighted limit switch 384. The weighted limit switch 384 is configured to shut down the prime mover 224 and/or the gearbox motors 308 in the event the cask transport assembly 210 begins to tilt and/or sway too far in one or more directions. For example, during an earthquake or other seismic event, the cask transport assembly 210 may begin to sway. Attempting to use the cask transport assembly 210 during this event could damage the cask transport assembly 210, any structure coupled to the cask transport assembly 210, and/or any structure nearby the cask transport assembly 210.

[0085] As illustrated in FIG. 20, the weight limit switch 384 includes a sensor 388. The sensor 388 is coupled to the sheave 264, though in other constructions the sensor 388 is coupled elsewhere in the upper beam assembly 216. Beneath the sensor 388 is a weighted swing bar 392. The swing bar 392 is coupled to the sensor 388 with two wires 396. The swing bar 392 is free to swing underneath the sheave 264. In the event the swing bar 392 swings too far in one direction, the sensor 388 senses the movement, and an electrical connection is broken within the sensor 388, thereby shutting down operation of the prime mover 224 and/or the gearbox motors 308.

[0086] With reference to FIGS. 17-19, the upper beam assembly 216 further includes conduits 398. The conduits 398 are coupled to the pin 268 of the sheave 264, and are used to provide lubrication from an outside source (not shown) located either within the cask transport 210 or outside of the cask transport 210 to the pin 268. Four conduits 398 are provided, with two conduits 398 directed toward a first end of the pin 268, and the remaining two conduits 398 directed toward an opposite end of the pin 268. Other constructions include different numbers or arrangements of conduits 398.

[0087] With reference to FIGS. 16 and 24, the upper beam assembly 216 further includes support arms 400. The support arms 400 are similar to the support arms 116 described above for

the cask transport assembly 210. The support arms 400 are rigid structures extending vertically beneath the upper beam assembly 216, and are used to releasably couple to devices that are being transported (e.g., a cask storage container). Two support arms 400 are illustrated, though in other constructions different numbers or arrangements of support arms 400 are used. Each of the support arms 400 includes a coupling component 402, for example in the form of an opening as seen in FIG. 16, that is used to releasably couple the support arm 400 to a device to be transported.

[0088] With reference to FIGS. 27-35, a method of using a vertical cask transport is illustrated. While the Figures illustrate vertical cask transport 10, the method applies equally to vertical cask transport 210.

[0089] With reference to FIGS. 27 and 28, the method includes transporting a storage tank 404 to a storage pit 408. The storage tank 404 includes a base 412, a cover 416 releasably coupled to the base 412, and rigid coupling arms 420 releasably coupled to the cover 416. The coupling arms 420 are releasably coupled to the support arms 116 of the upper beam assembly 16.

[0090] As illustrated in FIGS. 27 and 28, the moving frames 40, 42 and/or 48, 50, are raised slightly to allow for clearance between the bottom of the storage tank 104 and the ground surface 62. With the storage tank 404 secured to the vertical cask transport 10, the vertical cask transport 10 is moved along the ground surface 62 until the storage tank 404 is positioned directly over the pit 408.

[0091] With reference to FIG. 29, the storage tank 404 is then lowered into the pit 408 by moving the frames 40, 42 and/or 48, 50 down, until the storage tank 404 is resting in the pit 408. With the storage tank 404 inside the pit 408, the coupling arms 420 are removed, and a four-point harness 424 is coupled to both the bottom block assembly 18 and to shackles 428 located along the cover 416. Other constructions utilize devices other than a four-point harness. The cover 416 is then removed (e.g., by raising the frames 40, 42 and/or 48, 50), thereby exposing an interior chamber 432 inside the base 412.

[0092] With reference to FIG. 30, after the cover 416 is removed, a mating device 436 is placed on top of the exposed the base 412. The same four-point harness 424 that was used to move the cover 416 is also used to move the mating device 436 into position. The mating device 436 includes an opening 440 corresponding to, and aligned with, the chamber 342. The mating device 436 rests on top of the base 412, although in other constructions the mating device 436 is releasably coupled to the base 412.

[0093] With reference to FIGS. 31 and 32, after the storage tank 404 has been lowered into the pit 408, the vertical cask transport 10 is used to transport a cask 444 to the storage tank 404. To transport the cask 444, the cask 444 is first moved underneath vertical cask transport 10 with a dolly 448. The dolly 448 includes a recessed area 452 and wheels 456. The cask 444 sits within the recessed area 452, and rides along with the dolly as the dolly moves over the ground surface 62.

[0094] With the cask 444 positioned underneath the upper beam assembly 16, the upper beam assembly 16 is lowered. Specifically, the frames 40, 42 and/or 48, 50 are lowered, until the support arms 116 are positioned adjacent two outwardly protruding pins 460 on the cask 444. The cask 444 is then coupled to the support arms 116, for example by inserting the pins 460 through the coupling components 118 on the support arms 116. Other constructions include different methods by which the cask 444 may be coupled to the upper beam assembly 16. With the cask 444 coupled to the upper beam assembly 16, the upper beam assembly 16 is raised, thereby lifting the cask 444 off of the dolly 448 so that the vertical cask transport 10 and cask 444 may be moved together toward the pit 408.

[0095] With reference to FIGS. 33 and 34, once the vertical cask transport 10 arrives at the pit 408, the cask 444 is positioned over the mating device 436. The cask 444 is then lowered down onto the mating device 436. The mating device 436 includes an inner ridge 464. The cask 444 is lowered until it rests along the inner ridge 464, with the cask 444 nested partially within the mating device 436.

[0096] With reference to FIGS. 31 and 34, the cask 444 includes an opening 468 along its top surface. Beneath the opening 468, and disposed within the cask 444, is a multi-purpose canister 472. The canister 472 contains, for example, spent nuclear fuel and/or other material

intended for storage within the storage tank 404. As illustrated in FIG. 34, the method includes lowering the bottom block assembly 18 down through the opening 468 and coupling the bottom block assembly 18 to the canister 472. The compact design of the bottom block assembly 18 permits the bottom block assembly 18 to fit inside this opening 468.

[0097] While not illustrated, the cask 444 further includes a lower cover that is removable from the cask 444. Once this lower cover is removed, the upper beam assembly 16 is then used to lower the bottom block assembly 18, and the coupled canister 472, down into the storage tank 404. In particular, the pulley systems of upper assembly 16, or in the case of cask transport 210 the winch drum and sheave systems of upper assembly 216, are used to lower the canister down into the chamber 432 of the storage tank 404.

[0098] As illustrated in FIG. 34, the alignment of the storage tank 404, the mating device 436, and the canister 472 facilitates a smooth, downward movement of the canister 472 into the chamber 432 of the storage tank 404. The cask transport assembly 10 (and similarly the cask transport 210) thus has the ability to secure both the cask 444 and the canister 472 at the same time. This not only reduces the number of lift operations, but also allows the entire operation to be seismically qualified.

[0099] With reference to FIG. 35, once the canister 472 has been inserted into the chamber 432, the cask 444 and mating device 436 are removed, for example with the four-point harness 424. The cover 416 is then re-attached to the base 412.

[00100] Although the invention has been described in detail with reference to certain preferred constructions, variations and modifications exist within the scope and spirit of one or more independent aspects of the invention as described.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A cask transport system comprising:

a support assembly including a plurality of wheels and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels;

a tower disposed above the support assembly, wherein the tower includes a base portion coupled to the support frame and a moving frame coupled to the base portion, wherein the moving frame is telescopingly received in and out of an opening in the base portion;

an upper beam assembly coupled to the moving frame, the upper beam assembly including a housing and two winch drums coupled to the housing, the upper beam assembly including an upper sheave disposed between the two winch drums, the upper beam assembly including an equalizer disposed below the upper sheave, the equalizer including two dead end elements, each dead end element including a pin, a first linkage member coupled to and disposed below the pin, a second linkage member coupled to and disposed below the first linkage member, and a pair of third linkage members coupled to and disposed below the second linkage member, wherein the pin is coupled to the housing; and a bottom block assembly coupled to the upper beam assembly, the bottom block assembly movable from a first vertical position relative to the upper beam assembly to a second vertical position relative to the upper beam assembly.

2. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein the upper sheave includes a plurality of grooved portions to receive wires, and wherein the cask transport system includes a plurality of wires that are each coupled at a first end to one of the third linkage members and are each coupled at second, opposite end to one of the two winch drums.

3. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein each winch drum includes a plurality of grooved portions to receive wires.
4. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein the upper beam assembly includes a weighted limit switch coupled to the upper sheave.
5. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein the upper sheave includes a pin and a plurality of lubrication conduits coupled to the pin of the upper sheave.
6. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein the bottom block assembly includes a bottom sheave.
7. The cask transport system of claim 6, wherein the bottom sheave includes a plurality of grooved portions to receive wires.
8. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein the upper sheave includes four grooved portions to receive wires, and the bottom block assembly includes a bottom sheave having eight grooved portions to receive wires.
9. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein each winch drum includes a planetary gear box motor.
10. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein each winch drum includes two planetary gear box motors.
11. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein the upper beam assembly includes two rigid support arms extending beneath the upper beam assembly.
12. The cask transport system of claim 4, wherein the weighted limit switch includes a sensor coupled to the upper sheave and a swing bar coupled to the sensor.

13. The cask transport system of claim 12, wherein the swing bar is free to swing underneath the upper sheave.
14. The cask transport system of claim 11, wherein the support arms include coupling components that are configured to releasably couple the support arms to a device to both lift the device vertically and to transport the device laterally with lateral movement of the cask transport system, and wherein the bottom block assembly is configured to move vertically along an axis between the two support arms.
15. The cask transport system of claim 14, wherein the coupling components include openings disposed in the support arms.
16. The cask transport system of claim 14, wherein each of the support arms is an elongate structure that includes a first end rigidly connected to the upper beam assembly and a second, opposite end exposed openly below the first end.
17. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein the tower includes a plurality of moving frames coupled to the base portion, wherein the moving frames are telescopingly received in and out of openings in the base portion, and wherein the upper beam assembly is coupled to the moving frames.
18. The cask transport system of claim 1, wherein the bottom block assembly includes a bottom block housing, a bottom sheave disposed at least partially in the bottom block housing, and a bottom block coupled to and disposed below the bottom block housing, the bottom block including a first opening and a second opening, wherein the first opening is disposed above the second opening.
19. A cask transport system comprising:

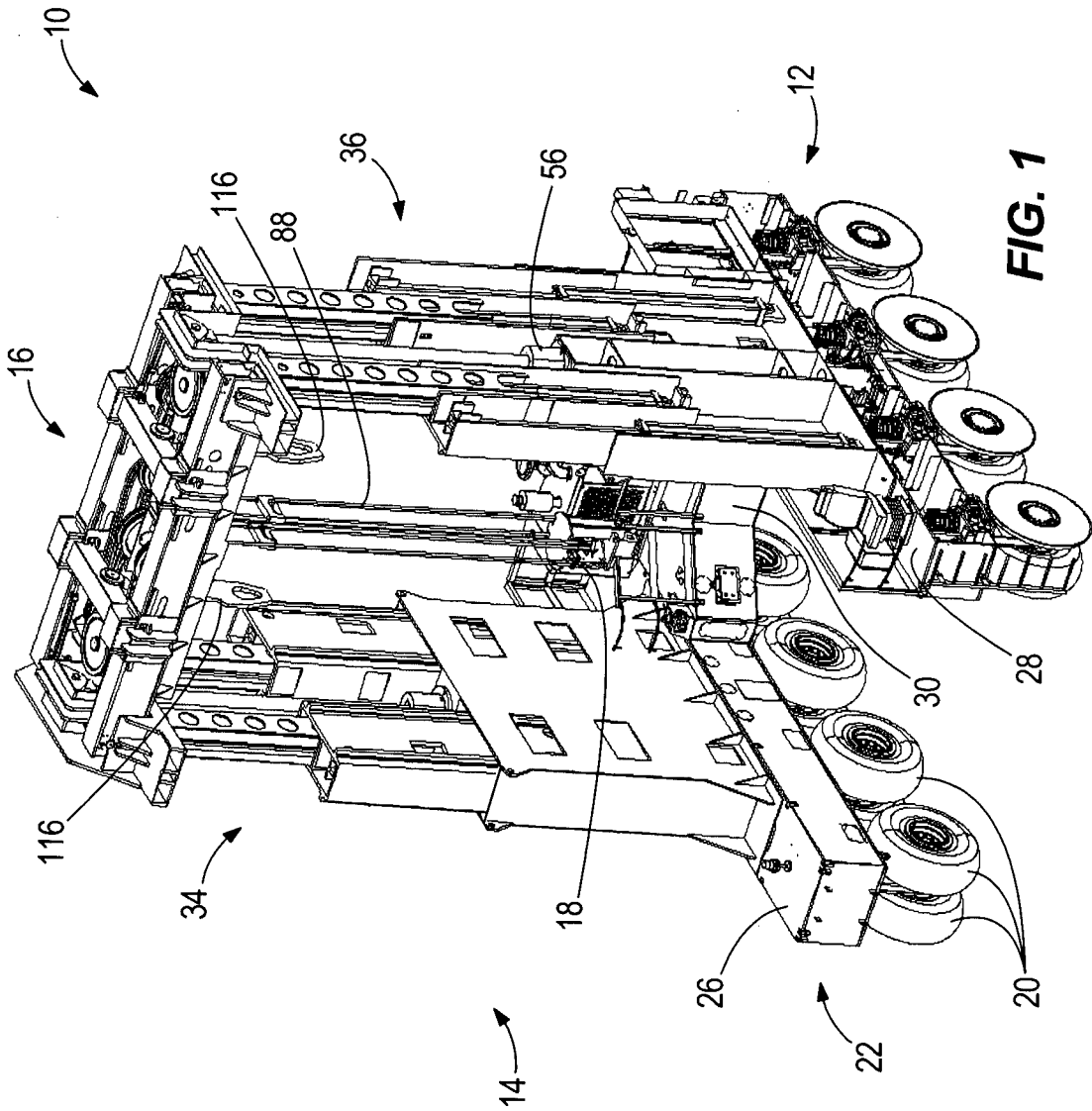
a support assembly including a plurality of wheels and a support frame coupled to and supported by the wheels;

a tower disposed above the support assembly, wherein the tower includes a base portion coupled to the support frame and a moving frame coupled to the base portion, wherein the moving frame is telescopingly received in and out of an opening in the base portion;

an upper beam assembly coupled to the moving frame, the upper beam assembly including a housing and a winch drum coupled to the housing; and

a bottom block assembly coupled to the upper beam assembly, the bottom block assembly movable from a first vertical position relative to the upper beam assembly to a second vertical position relative to the upper beam assembly, wherein the bottom block assembly includes a bottom block housing, a bottom sheave disposed at least partially in the bottom block housing, and a bottom block coupled to and disposed below the bottom block housing, the bottom block including a first opening and a second opening, wherein the first opening is disposed above the second opening.

20. The cask transport system of claim 19, wherein the winch drum includes a plurality of grooved portions to receive wires.
21. The cask transport system of claim 19, wherein the upper beam assembly includes an upper sheave and a weighted limit switch coupled to the upper sheave.
22. The cask transport system of claim 19, wherein the tower includes a plurality of moving frames coupled to the base portion, wherein the moving frames are telescopingly received in and out of openings in the base portion, and wherein the upper beam assembly is coupled to the moving frames.



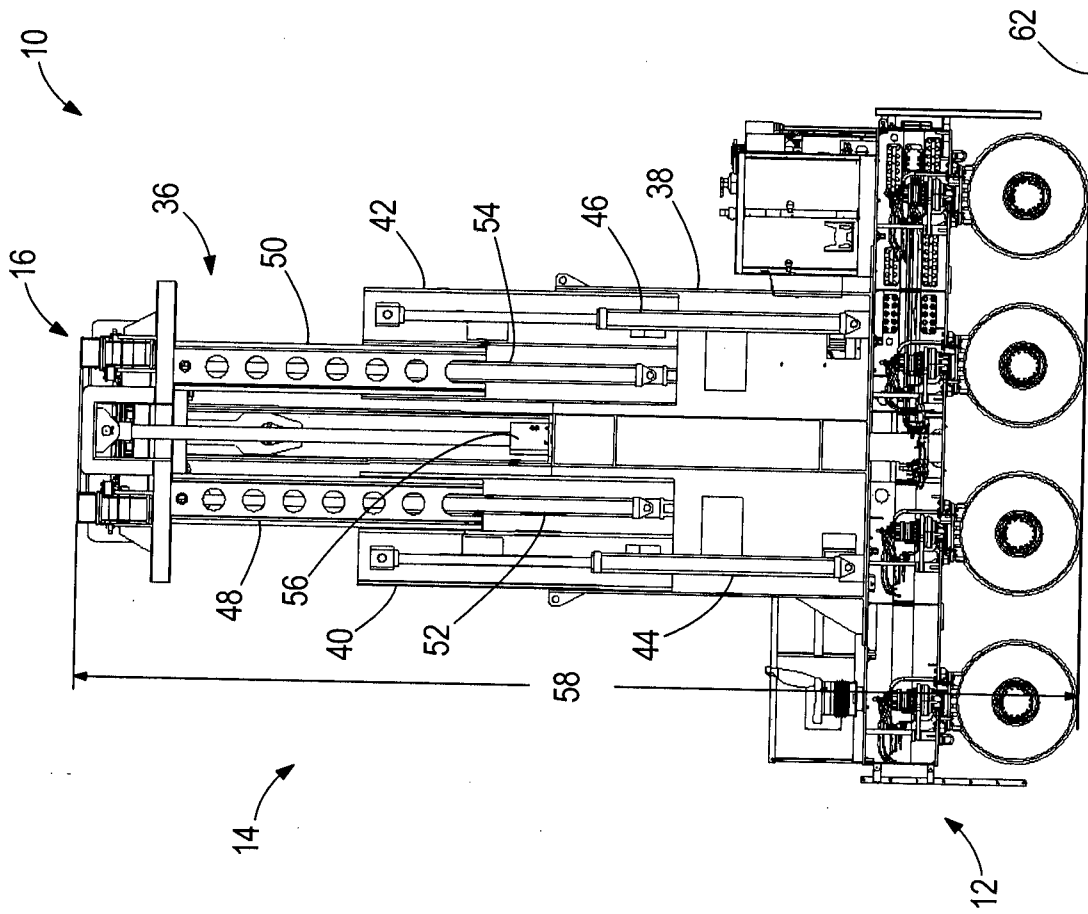


FIG. 2

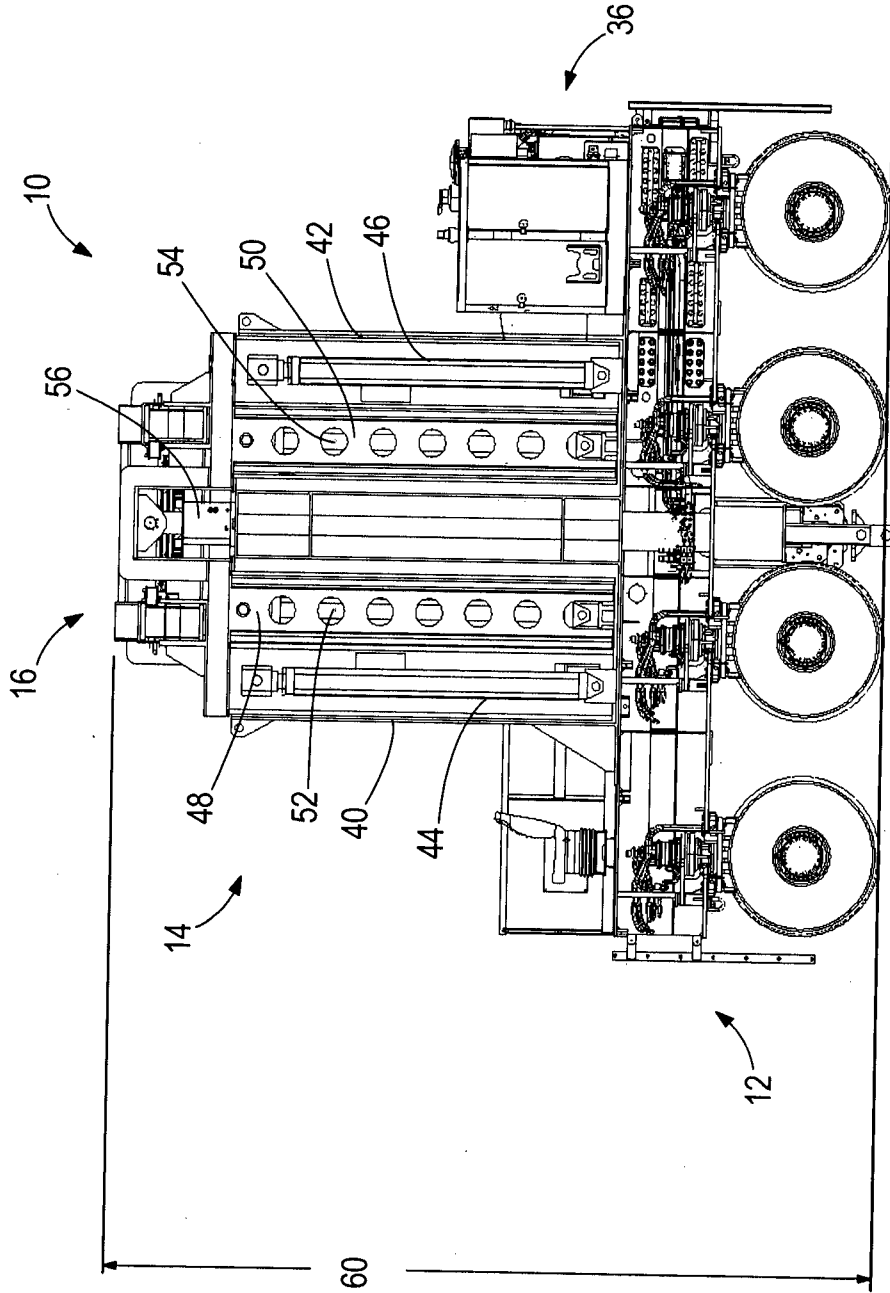


FIG. 3

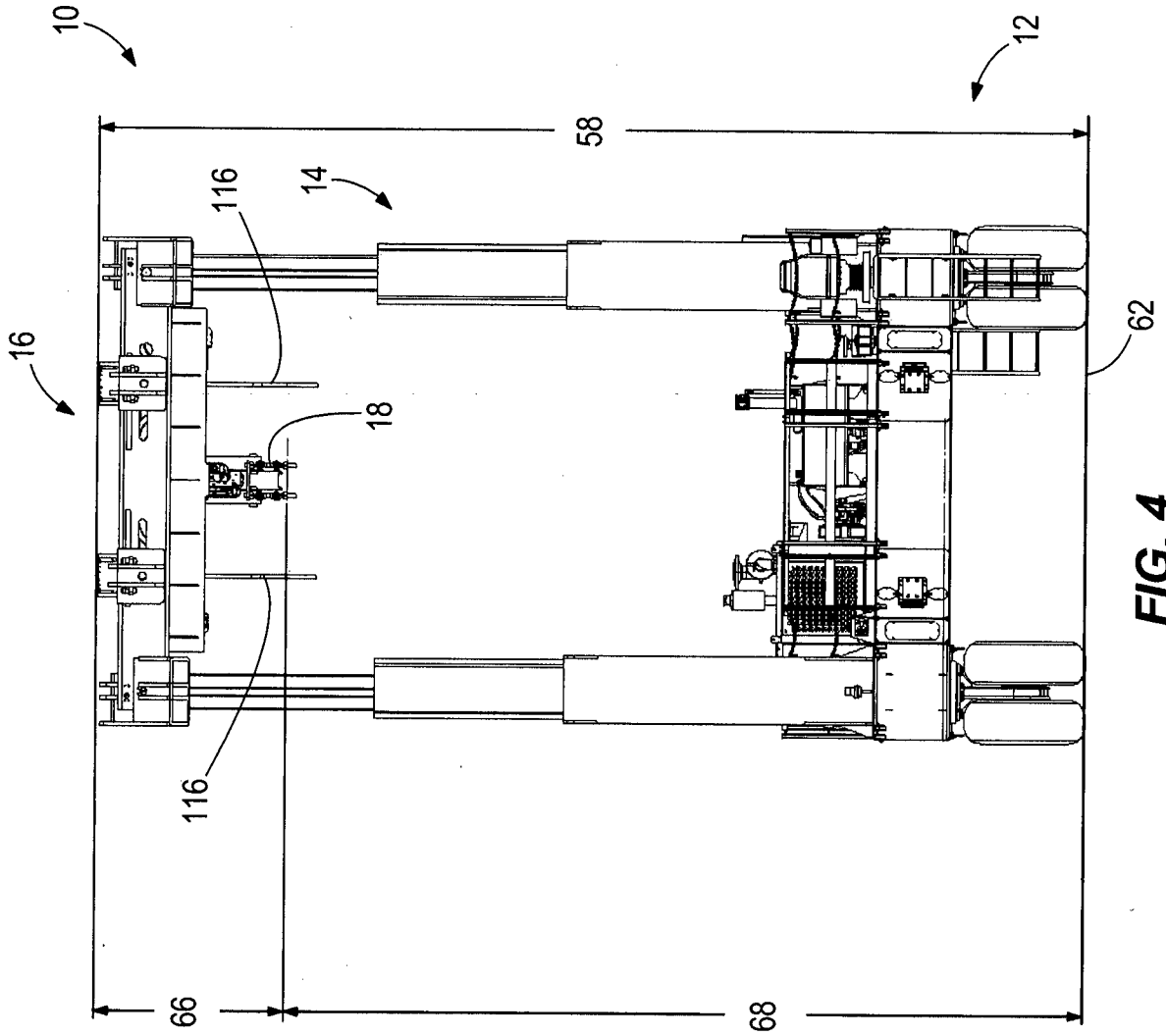


FIG. 4

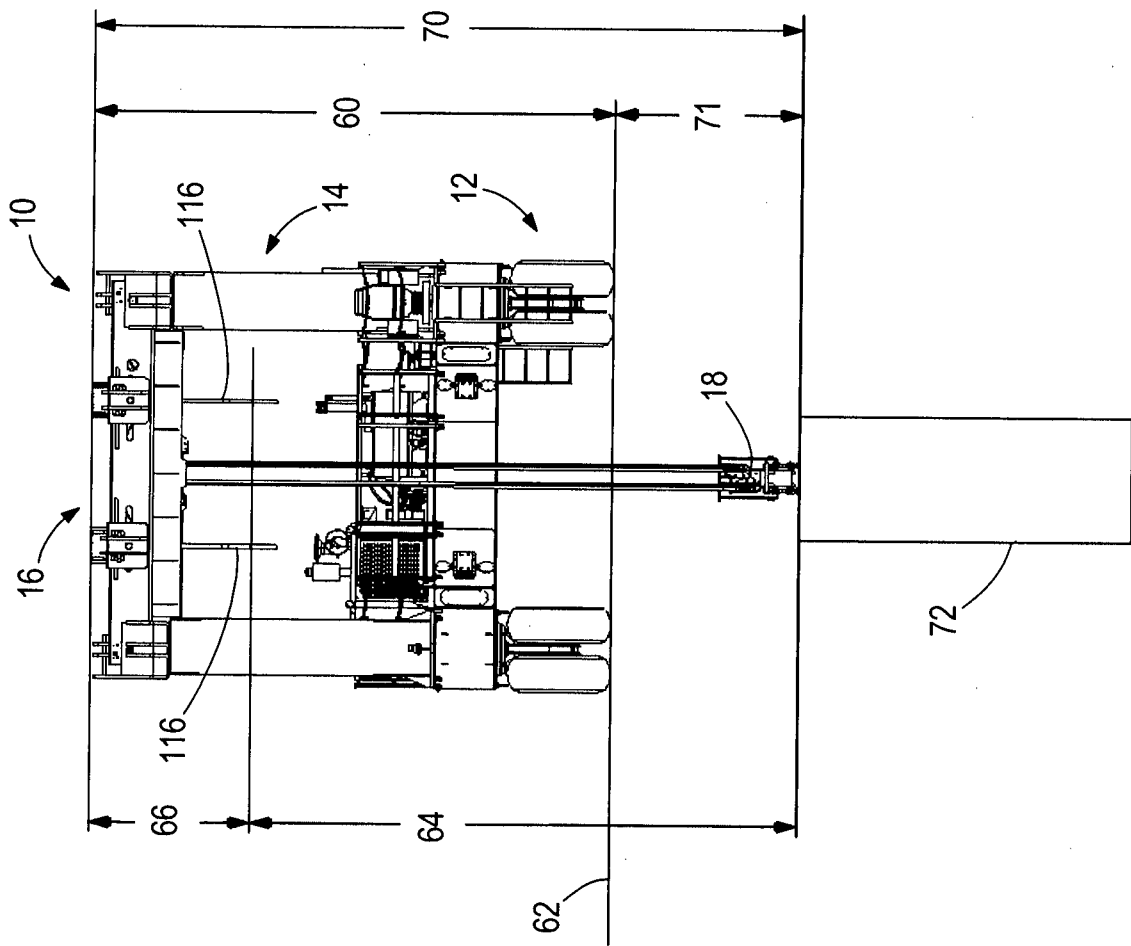


FIG. 5

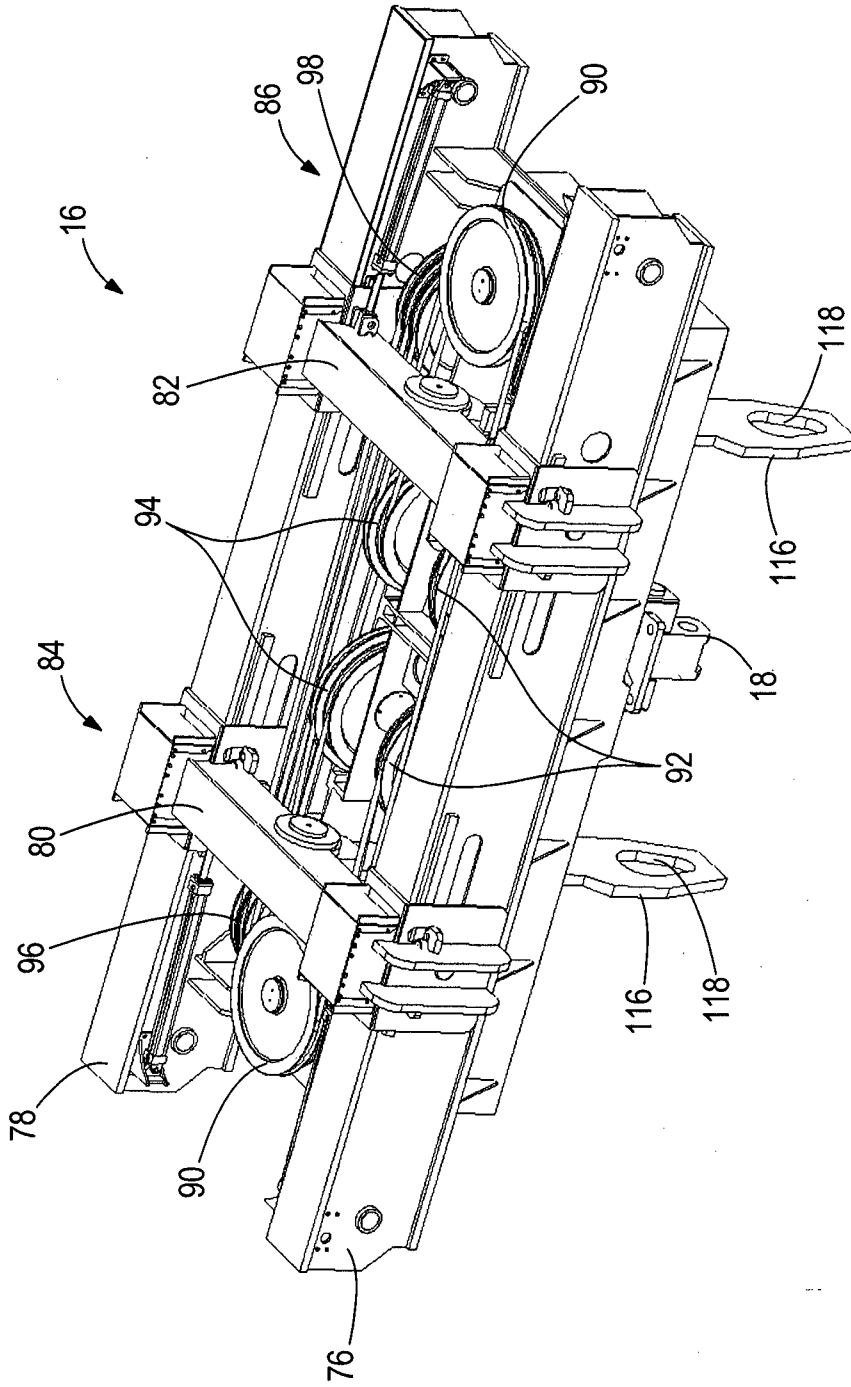


FIG. 6

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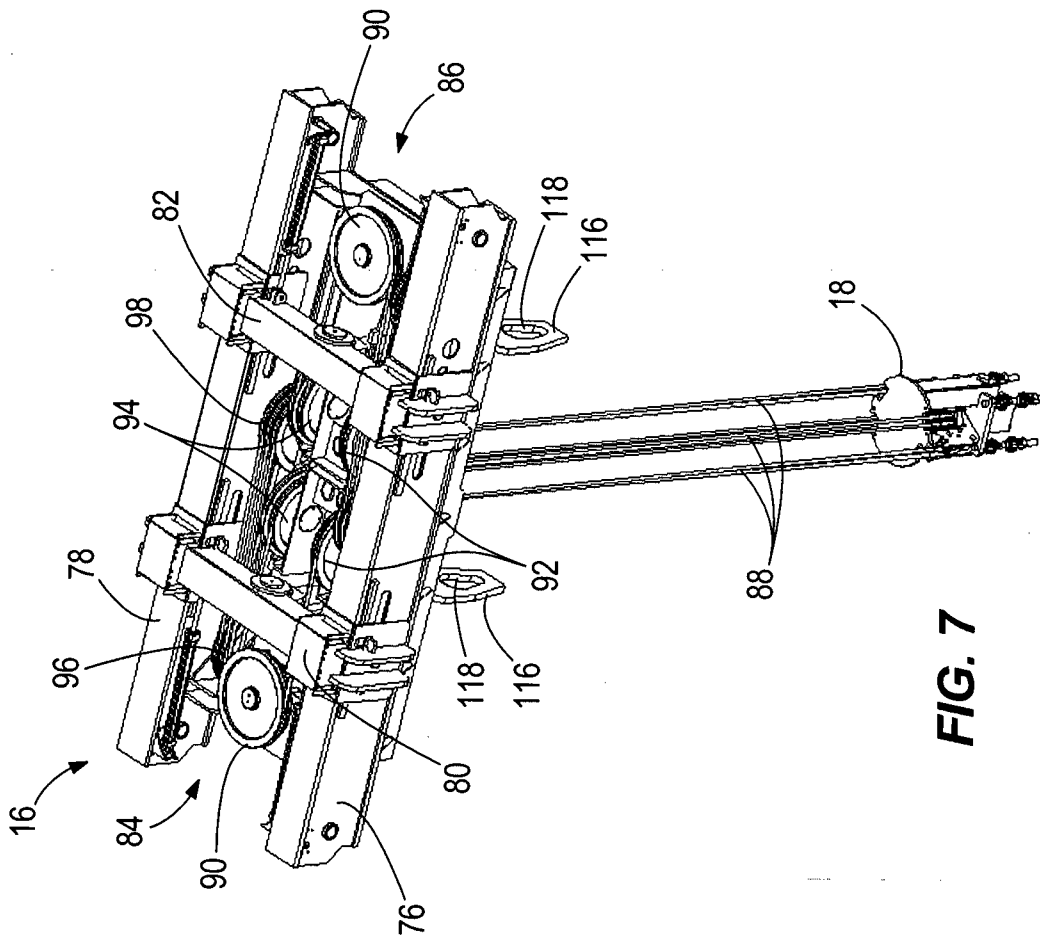


FIG. 7

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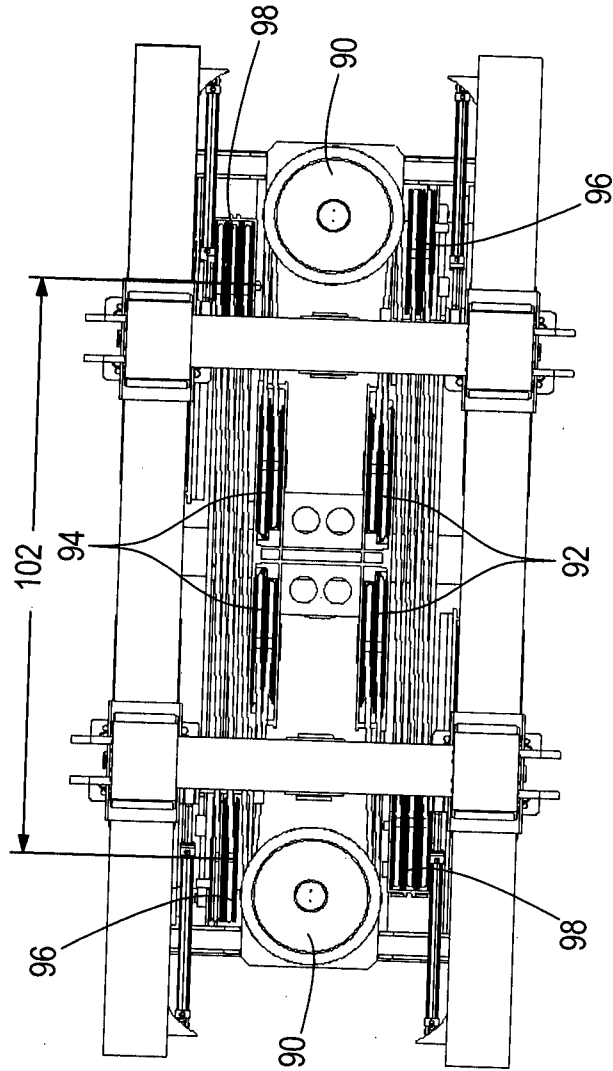


FIG. 8

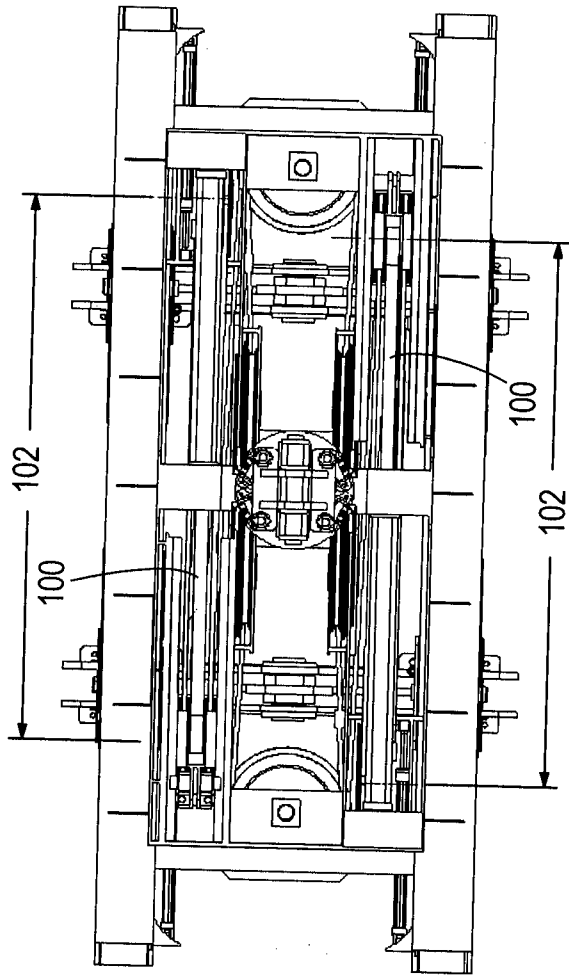


FIG. 9

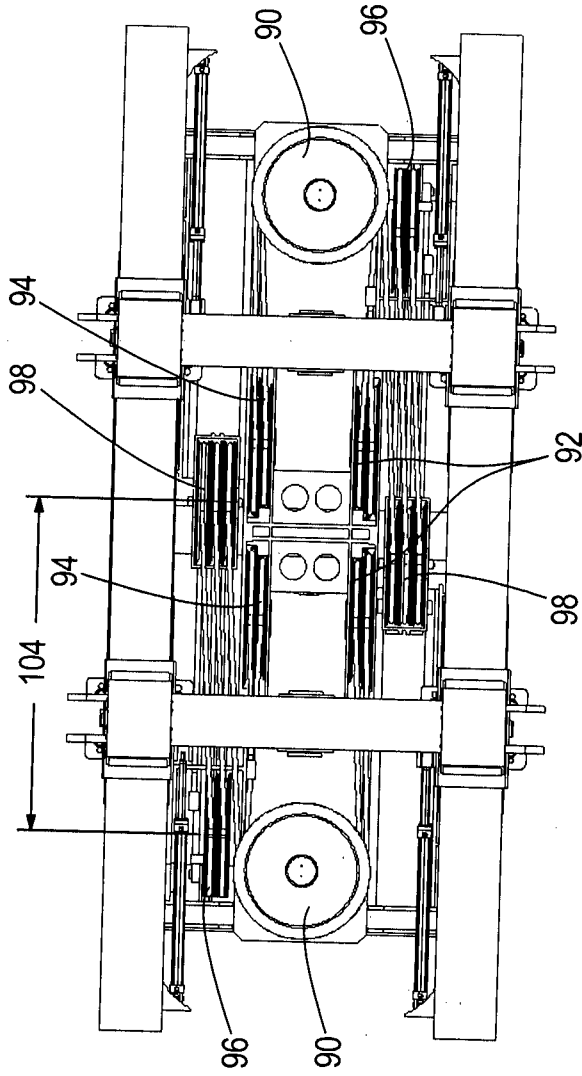


FIG. 10

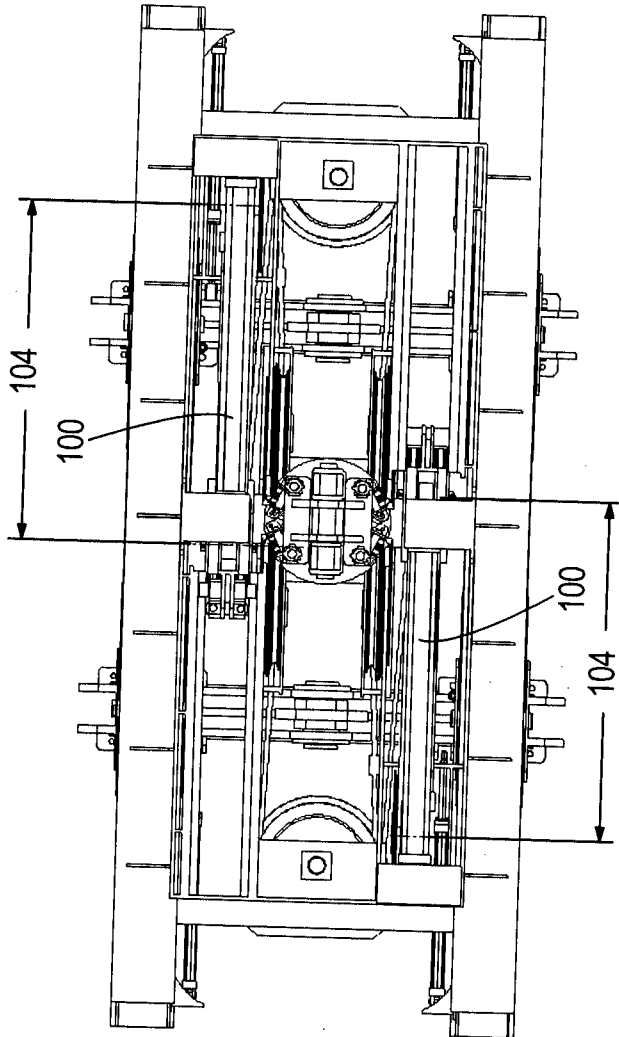


FIG. 11

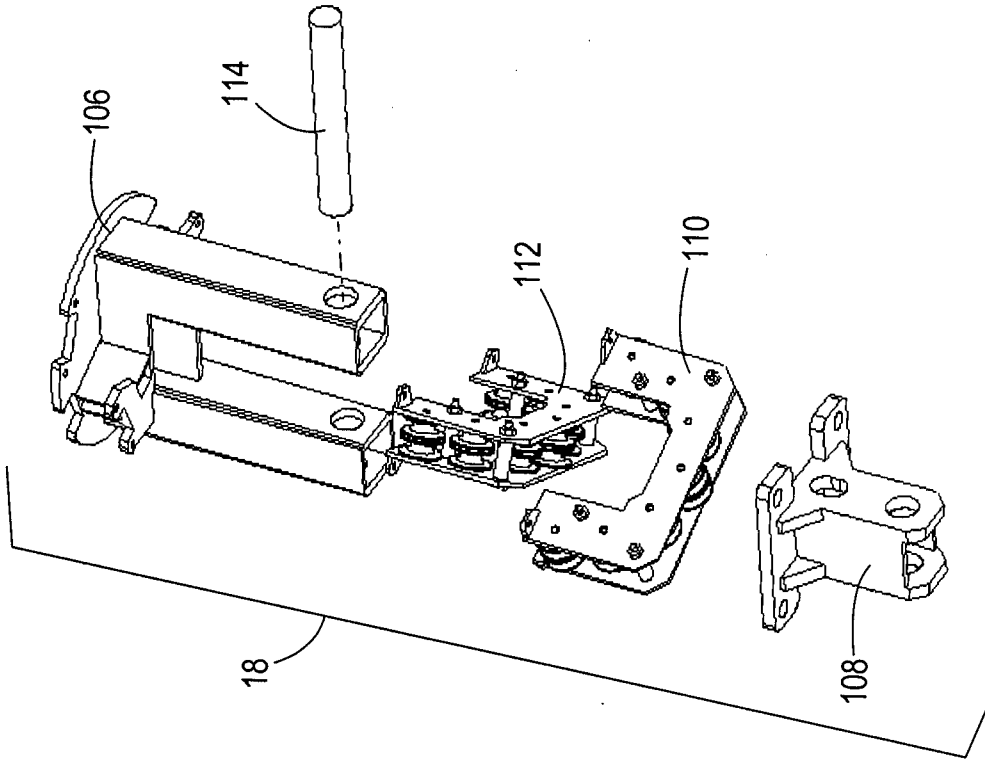


FIG. 13

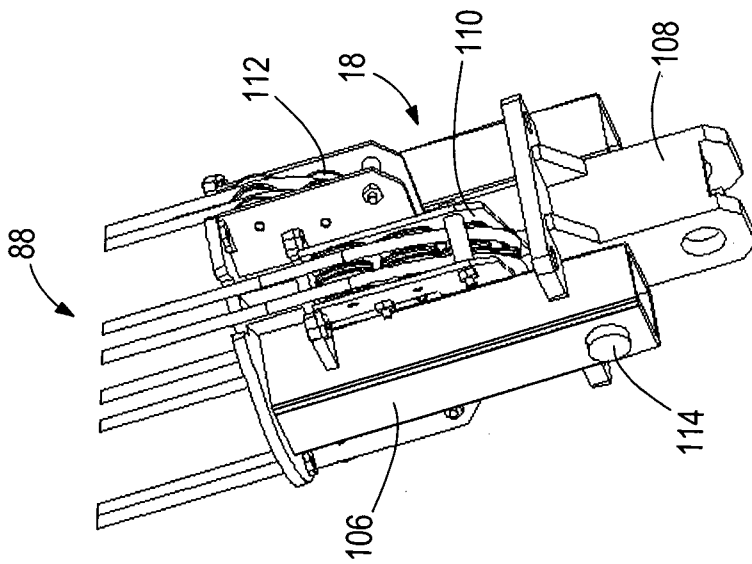


FIG. 12

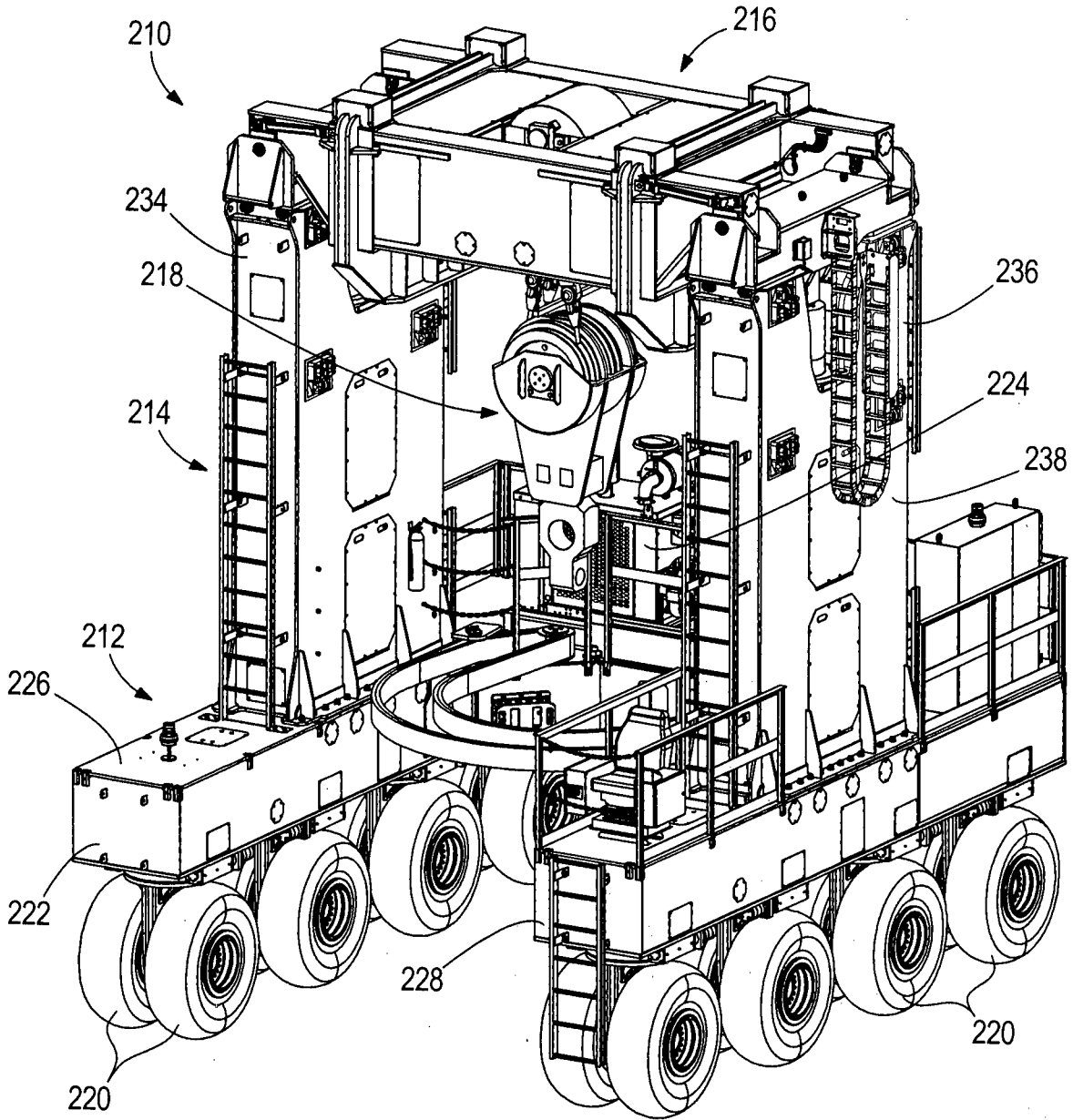


FIG. 15

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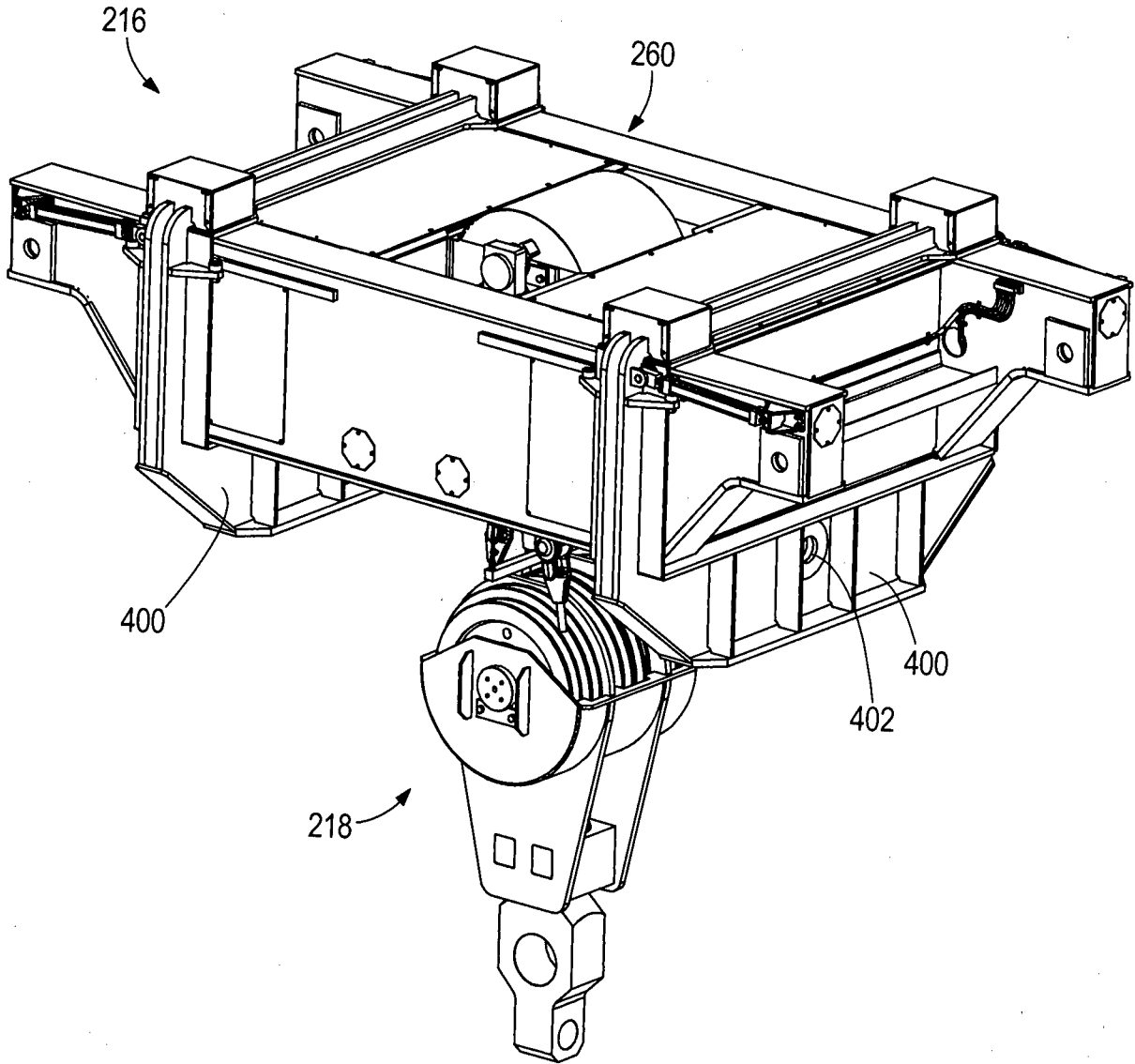


FIG. 16

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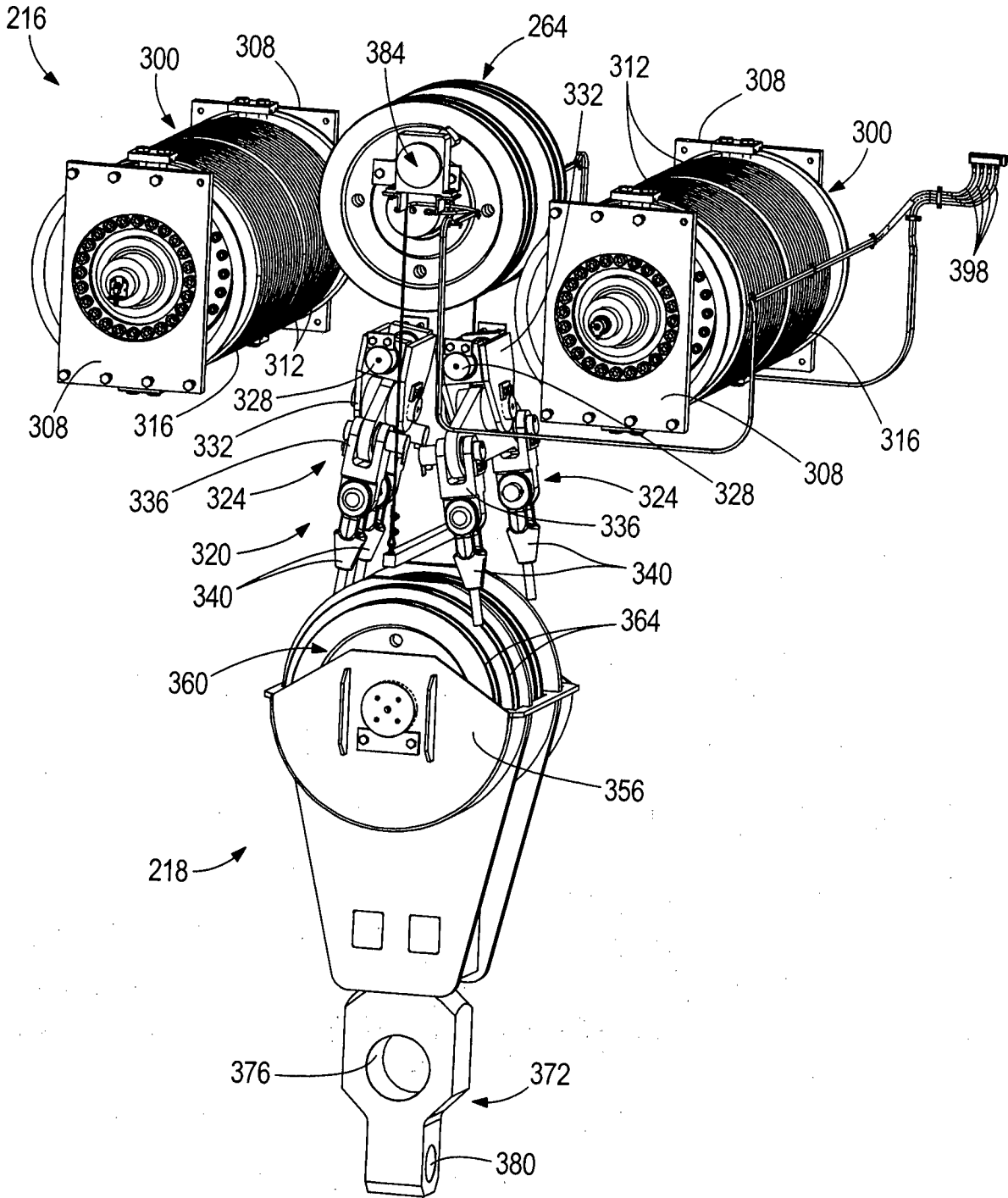


FIG. 17

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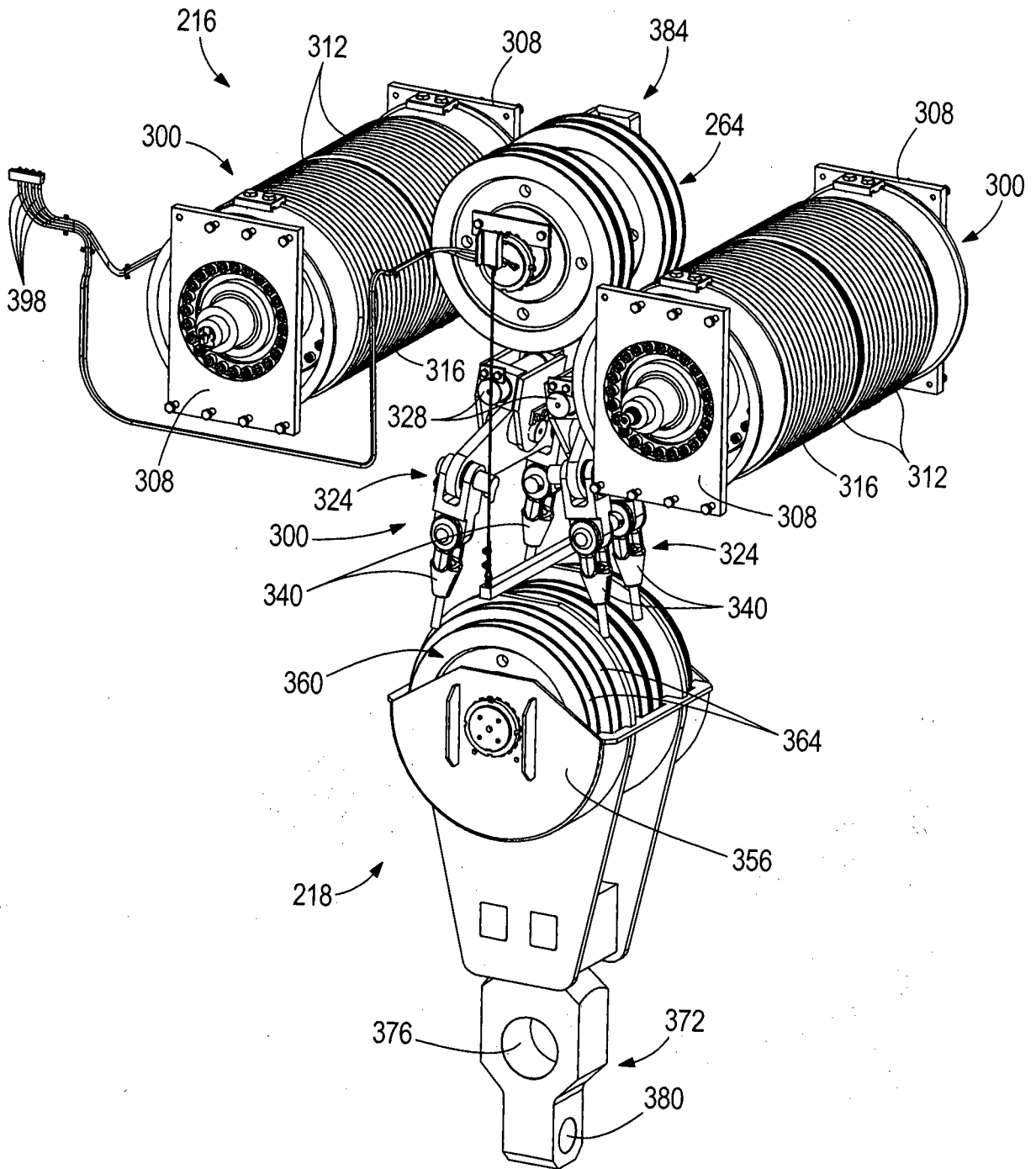


FIG. 18

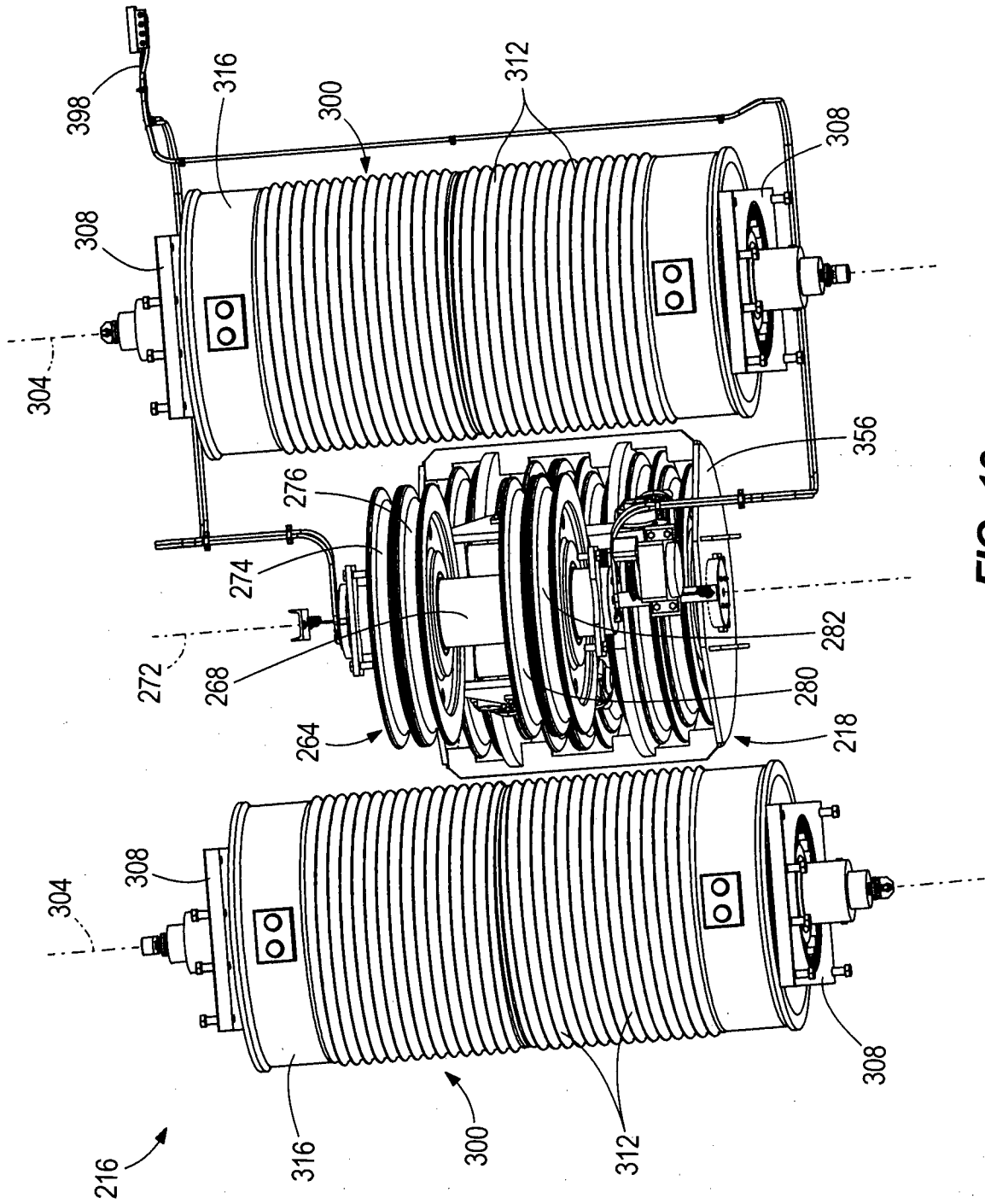


FIG. 19

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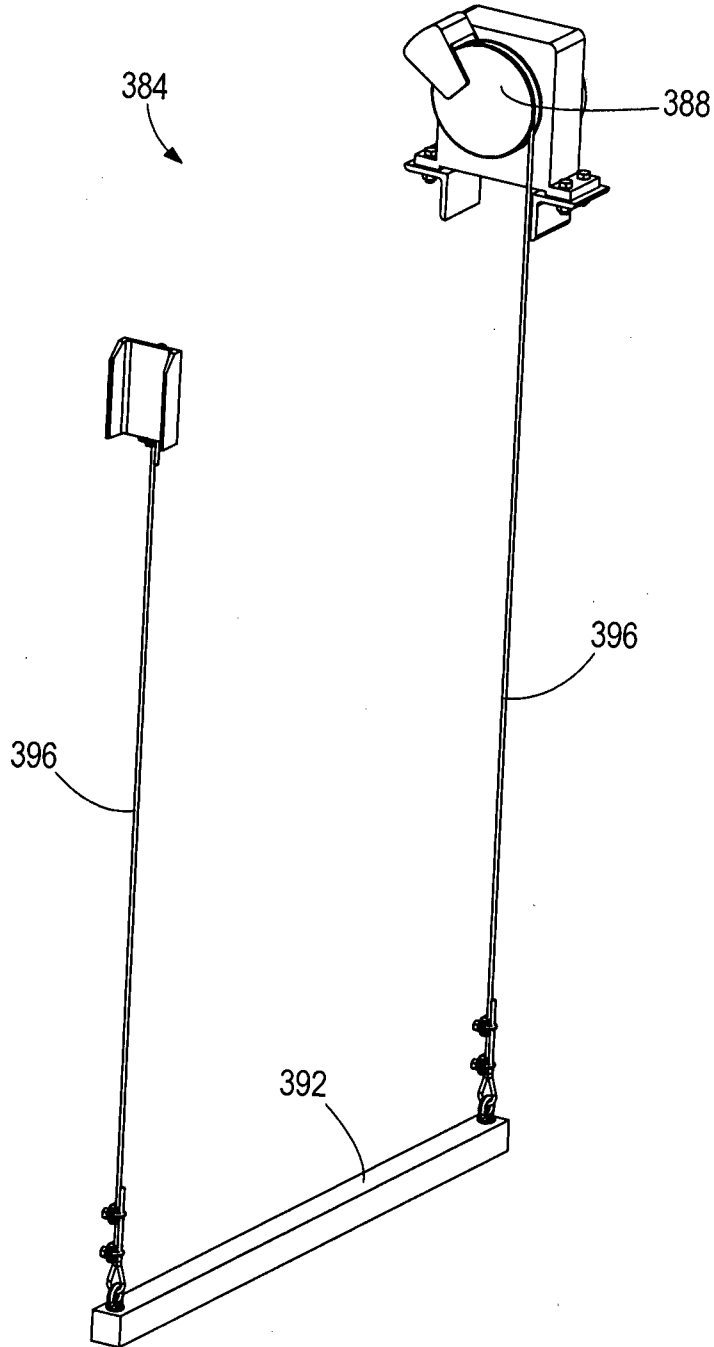


FIG. 20

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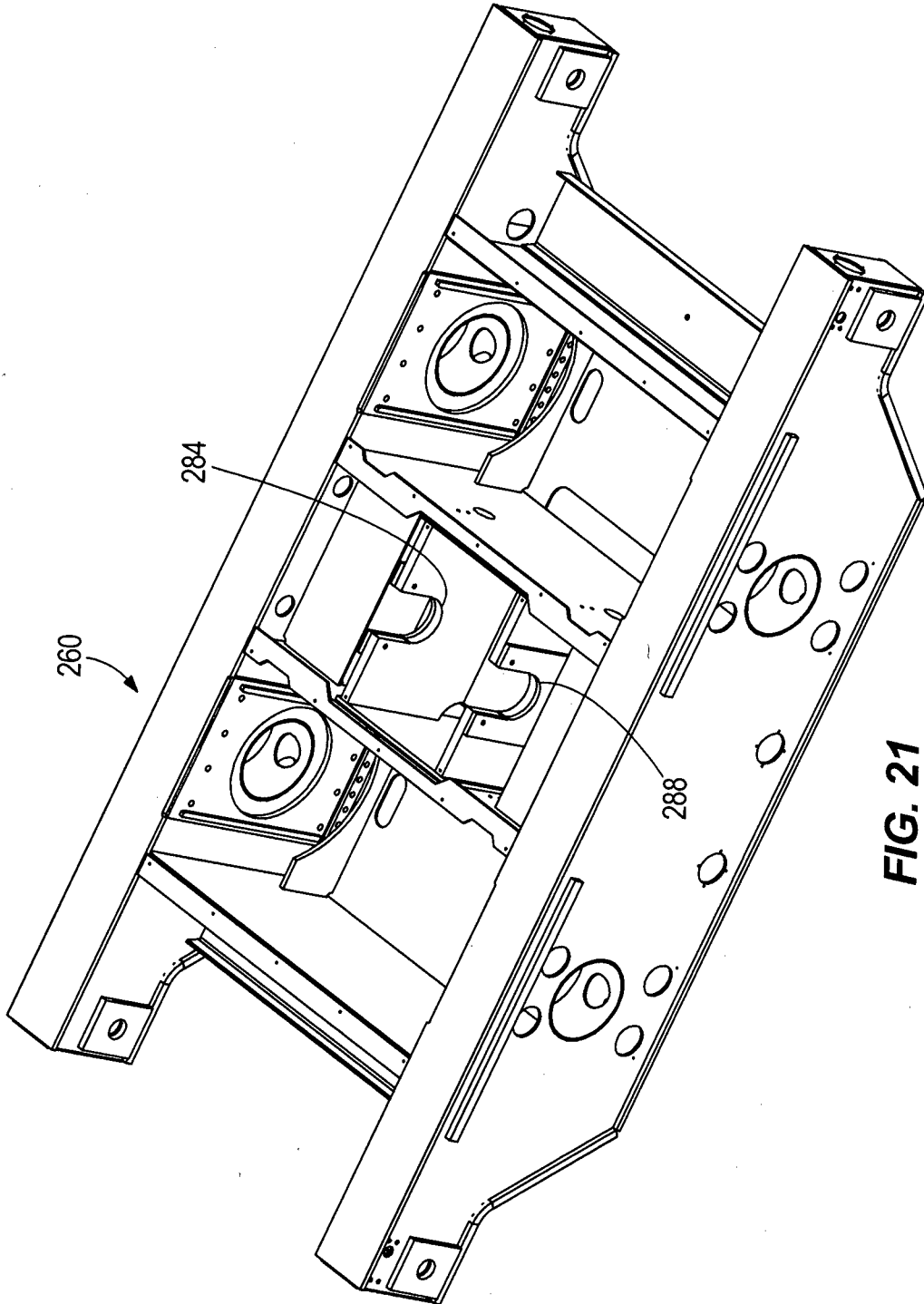


FIG. 21

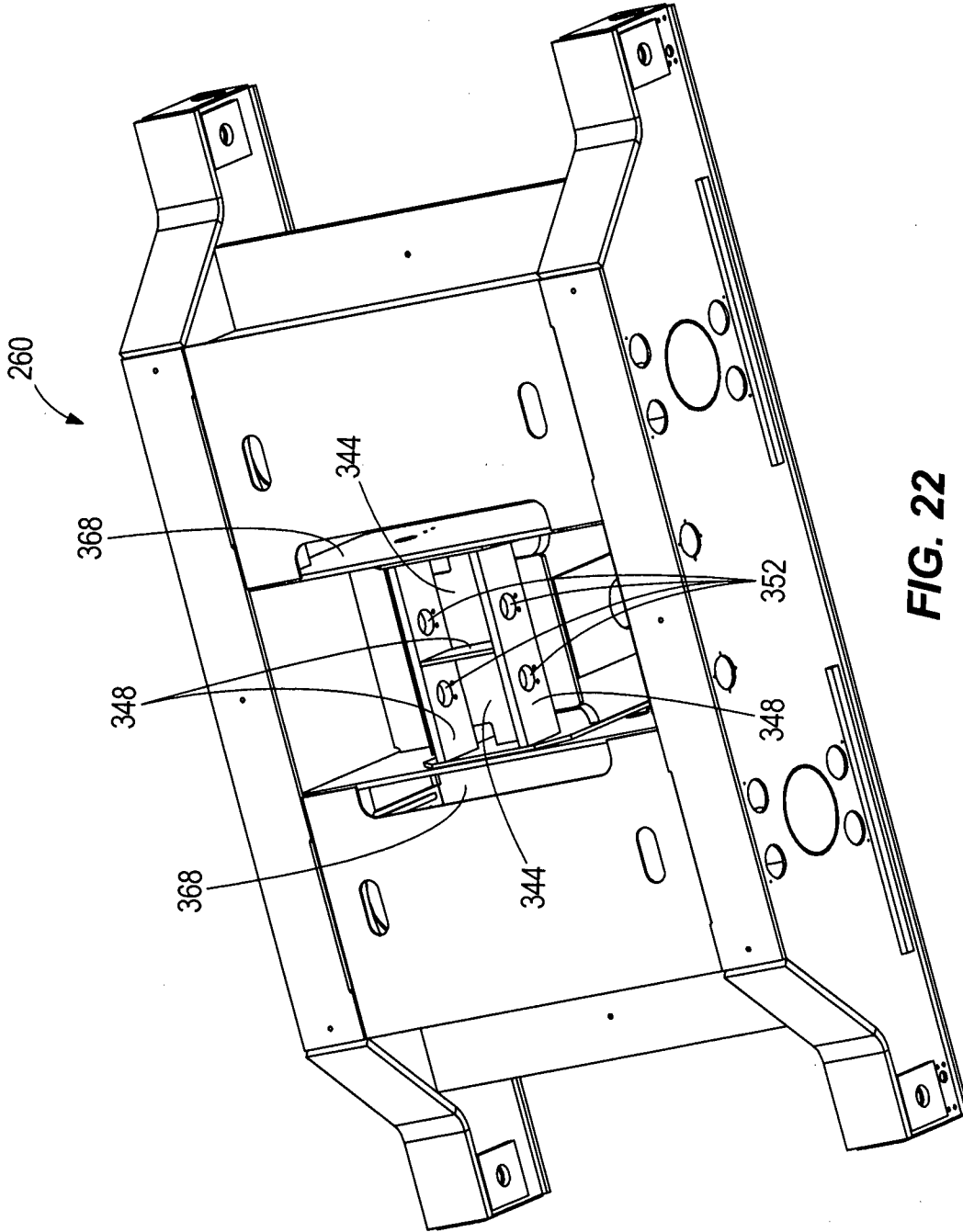


FIG. 22

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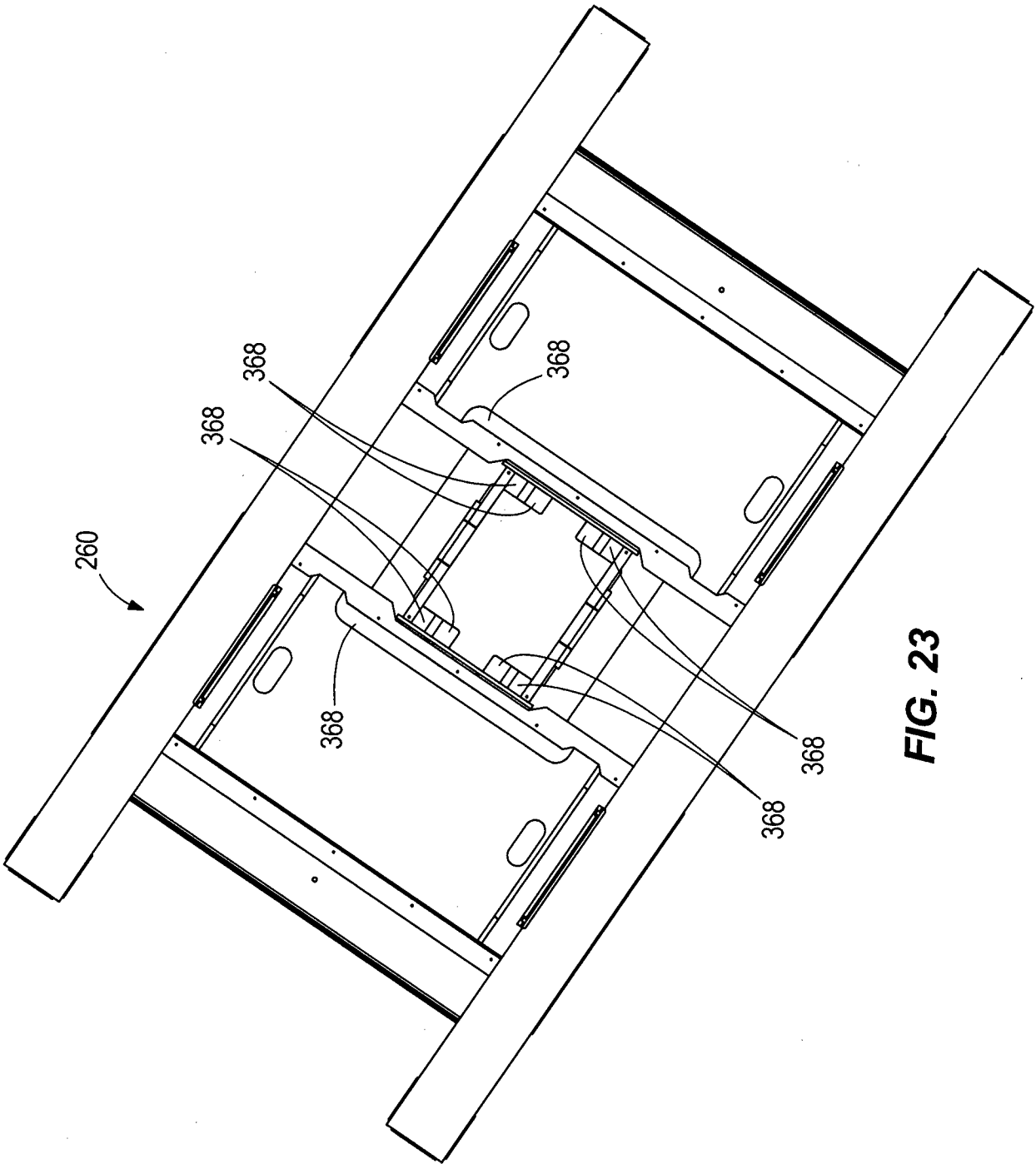


FIG. 23

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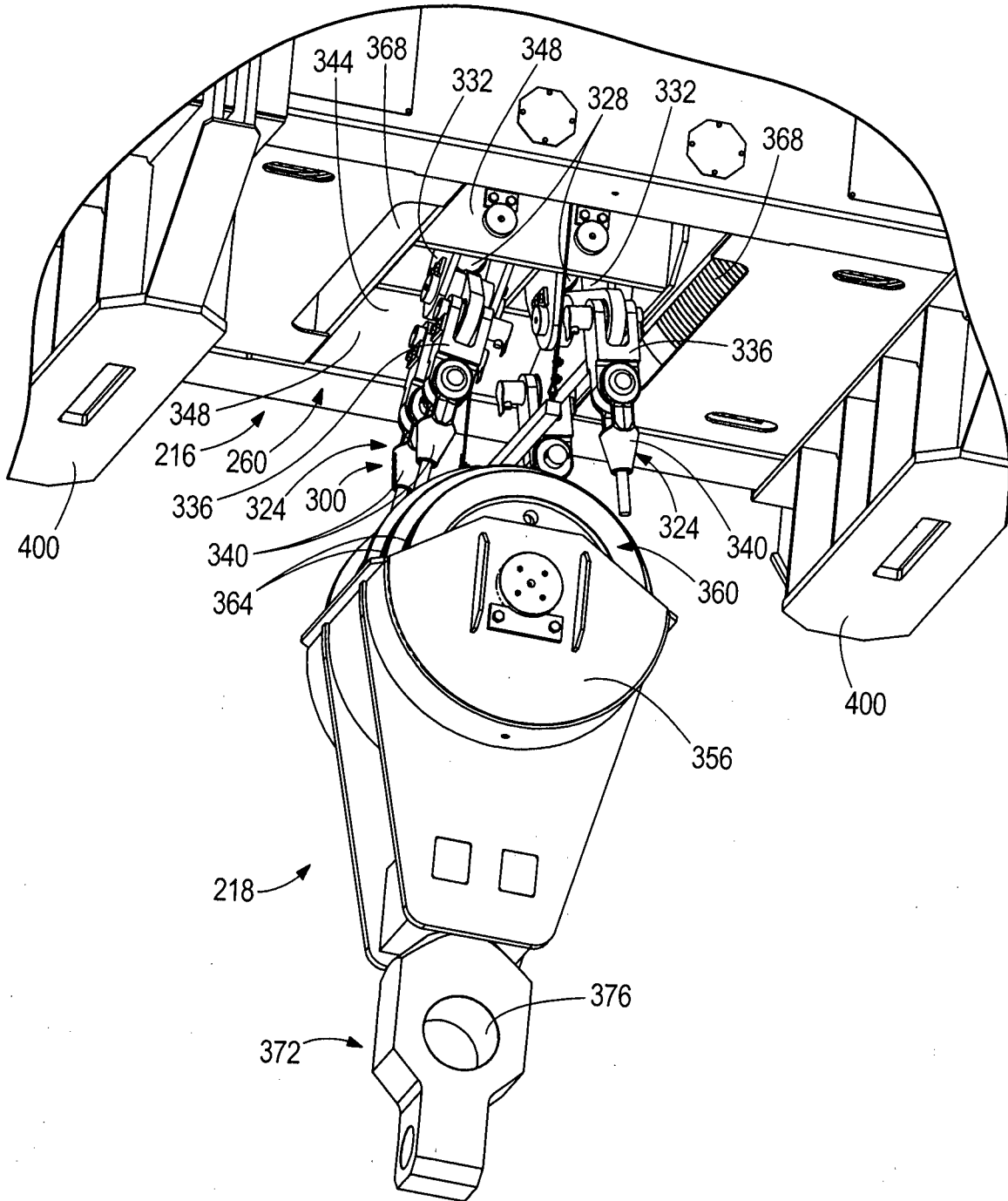


FIG. 24

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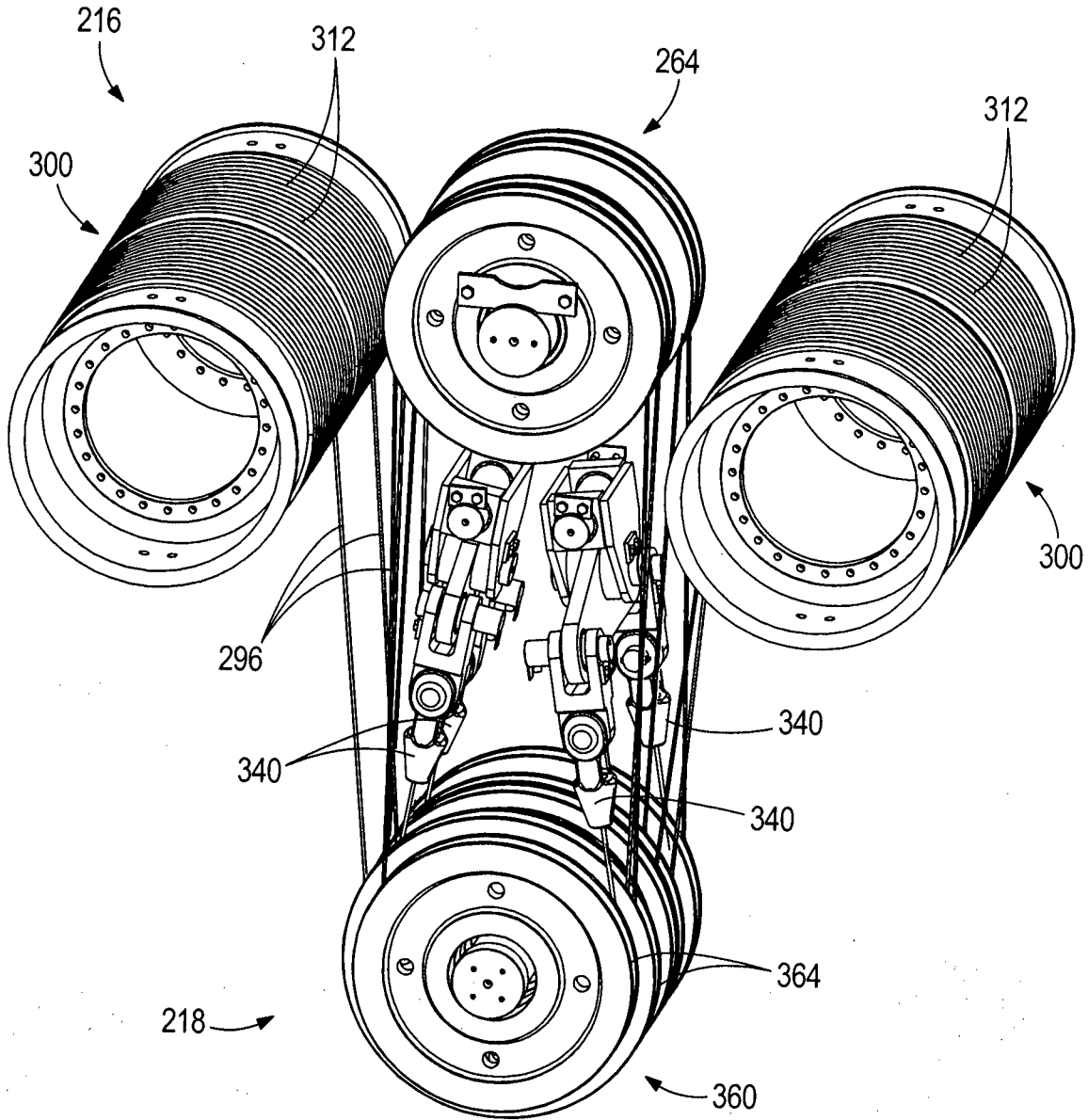


FIG. 25

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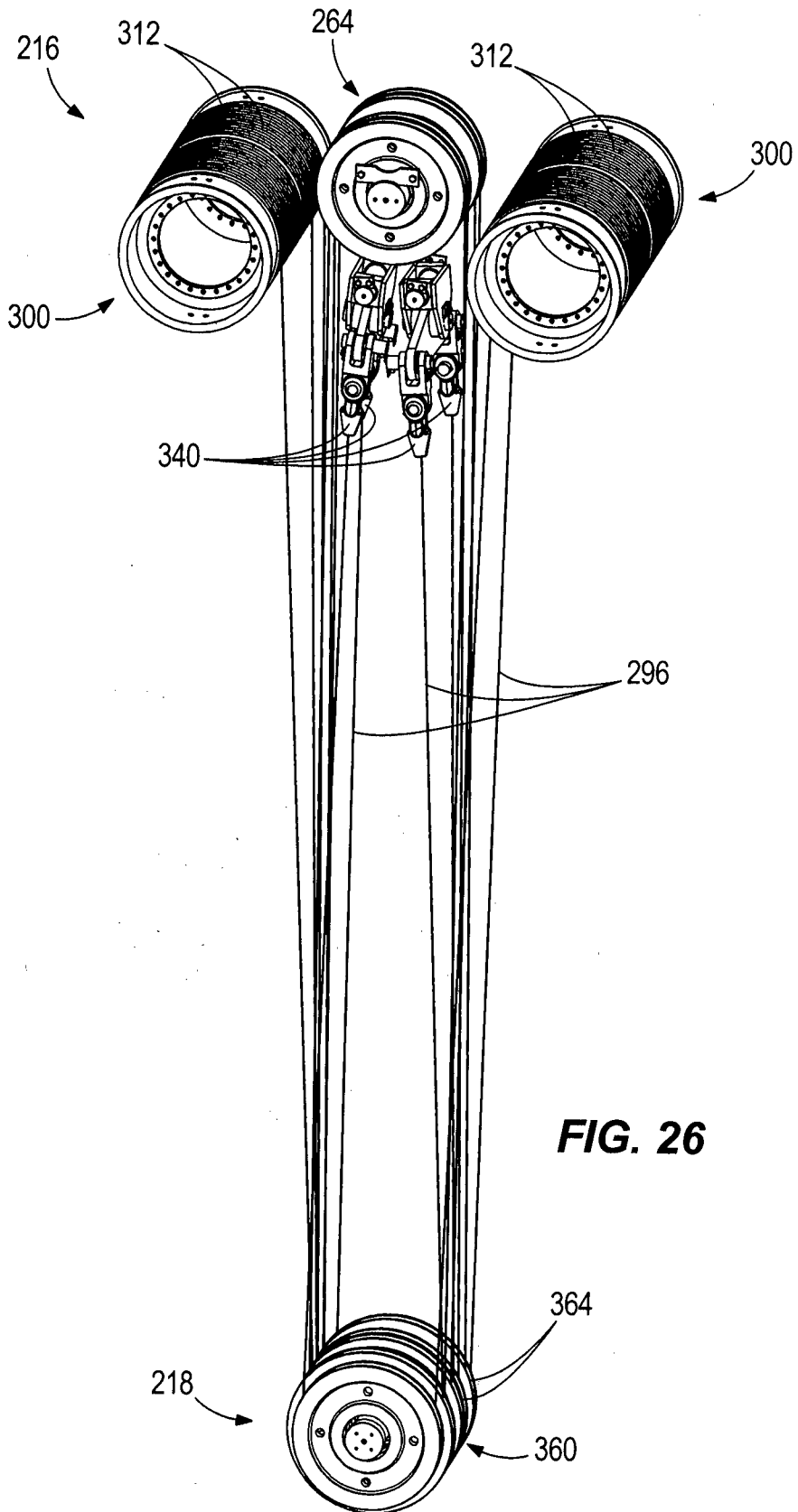


FIG. 26

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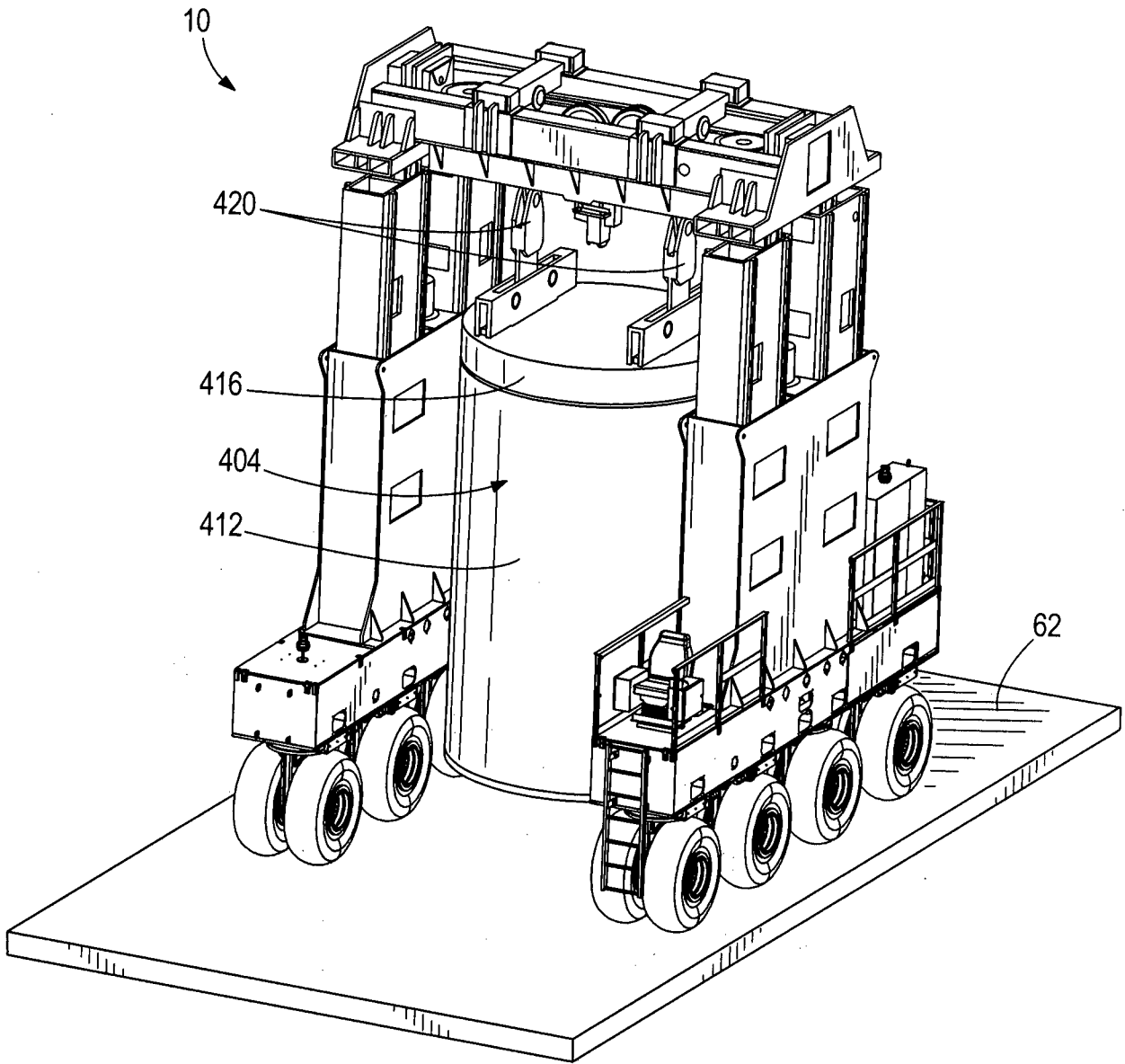


FIG. 27

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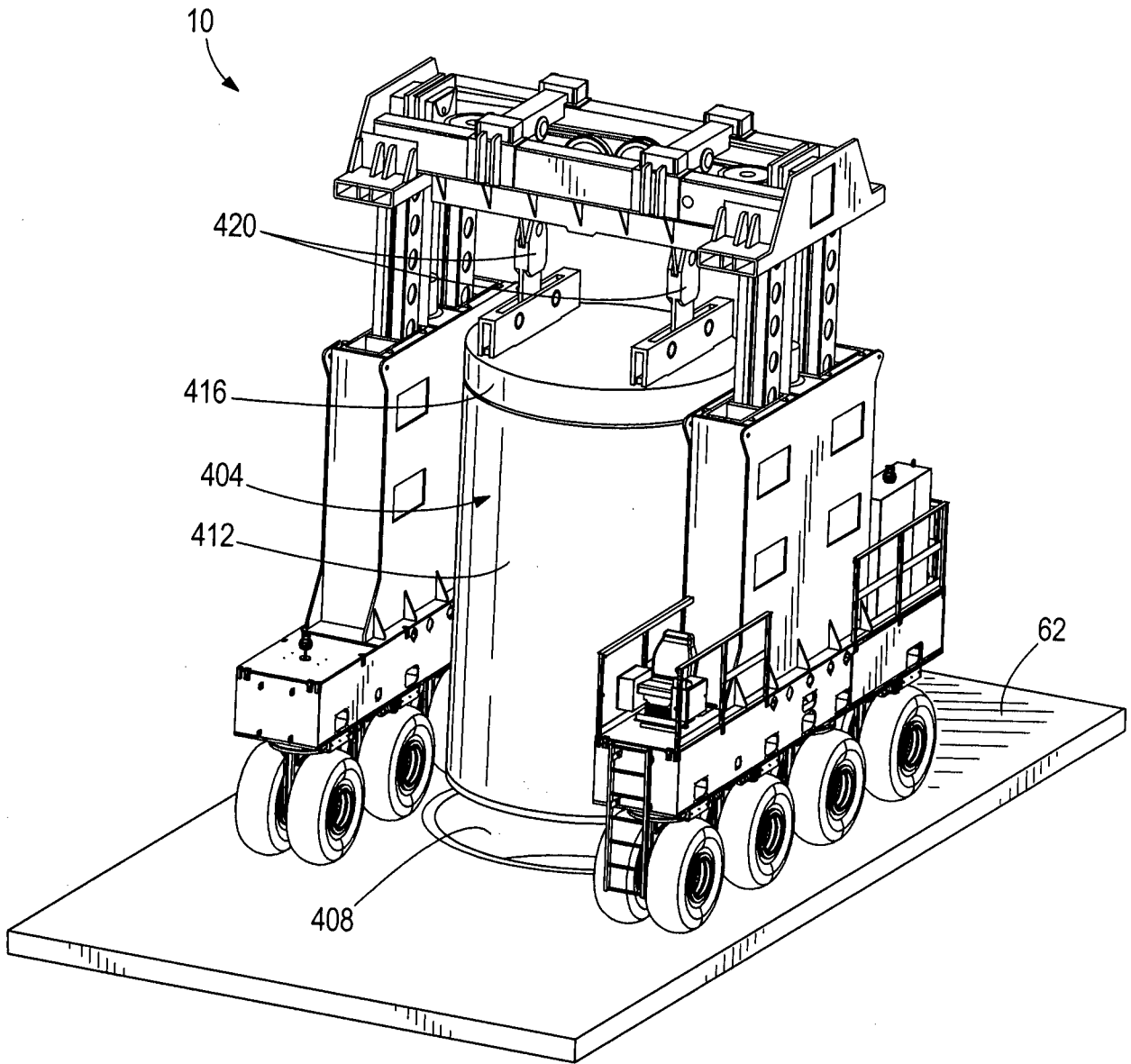


FIG. 28

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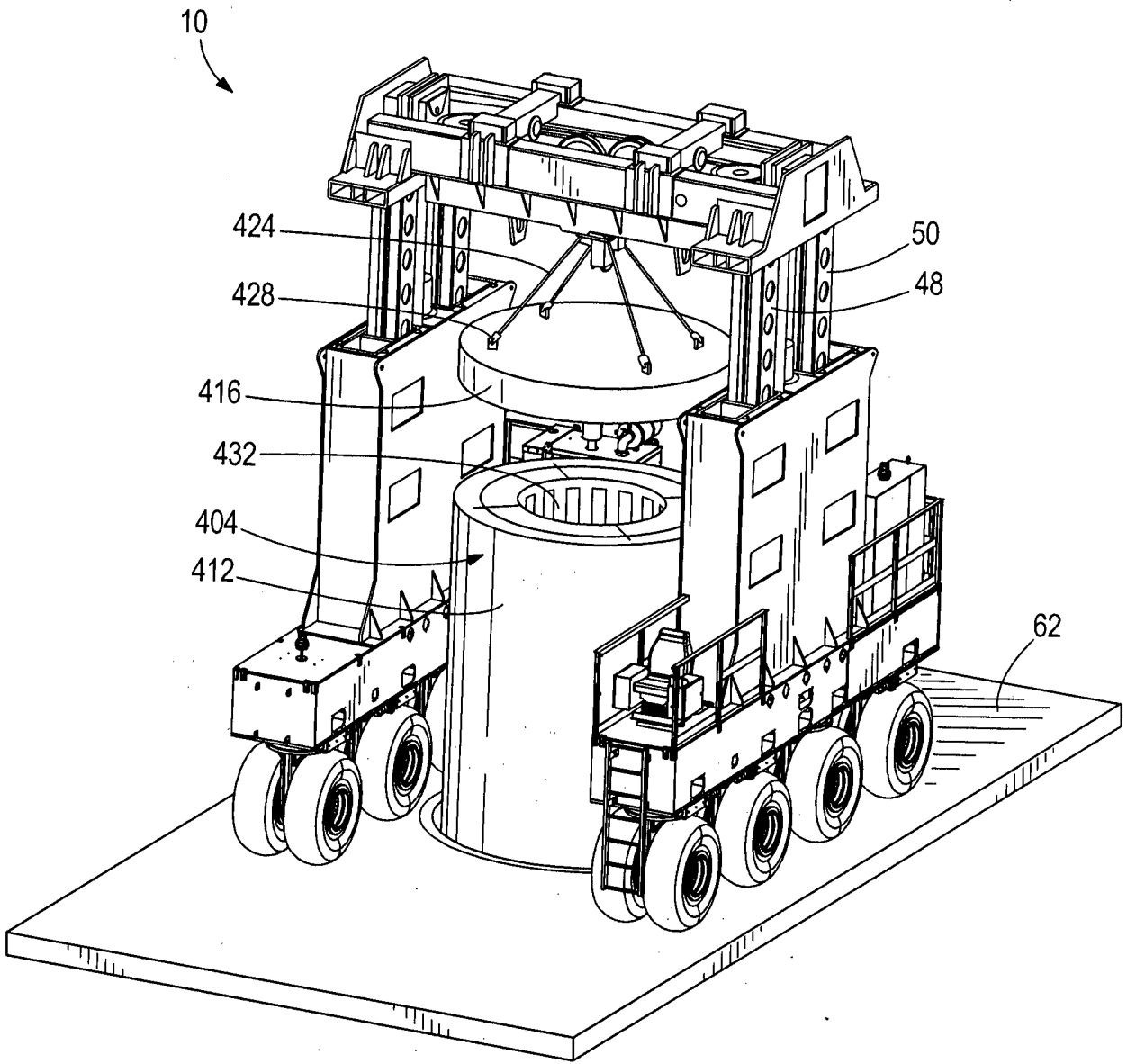


FIG. 29

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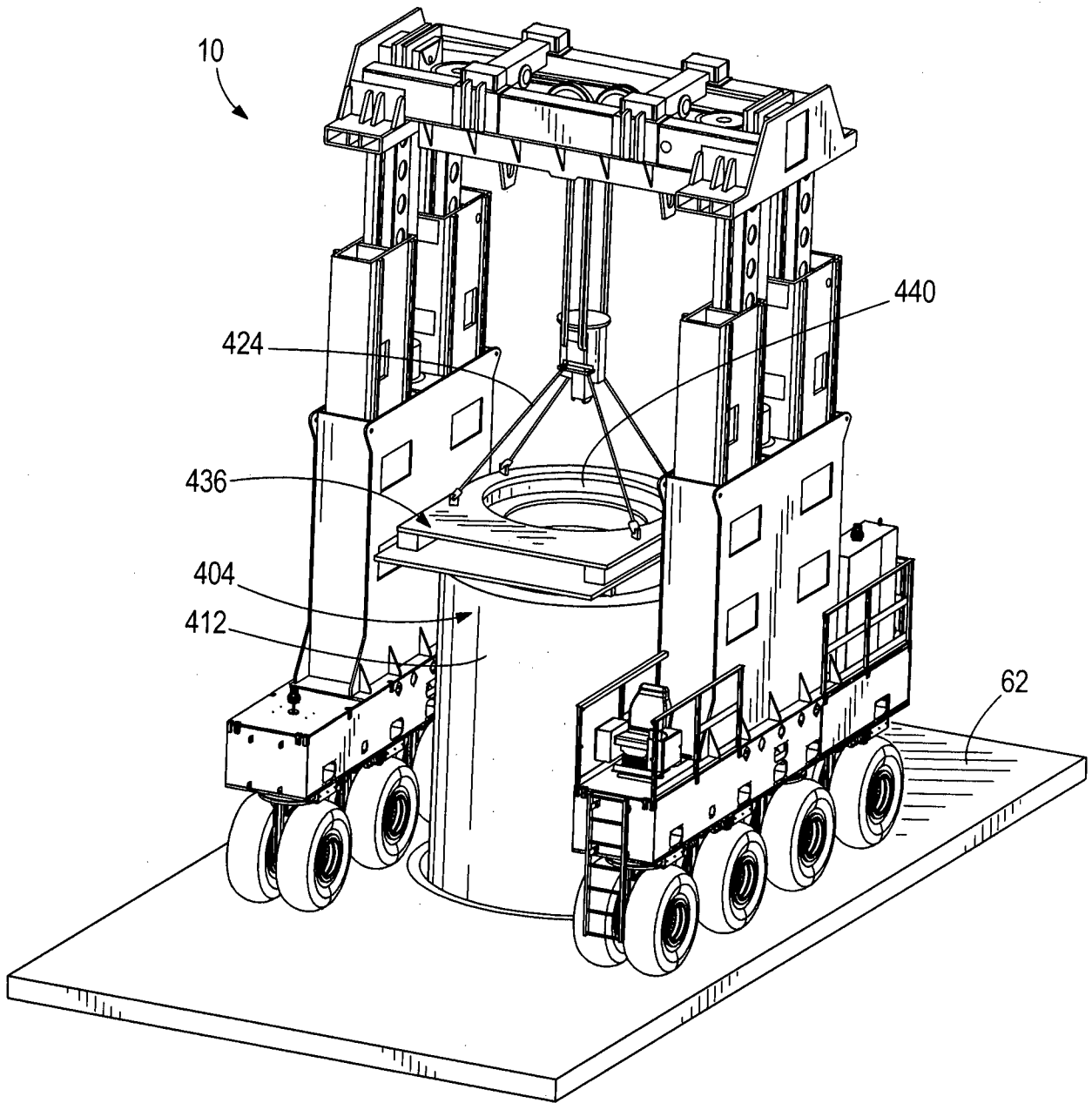


FIG. 30

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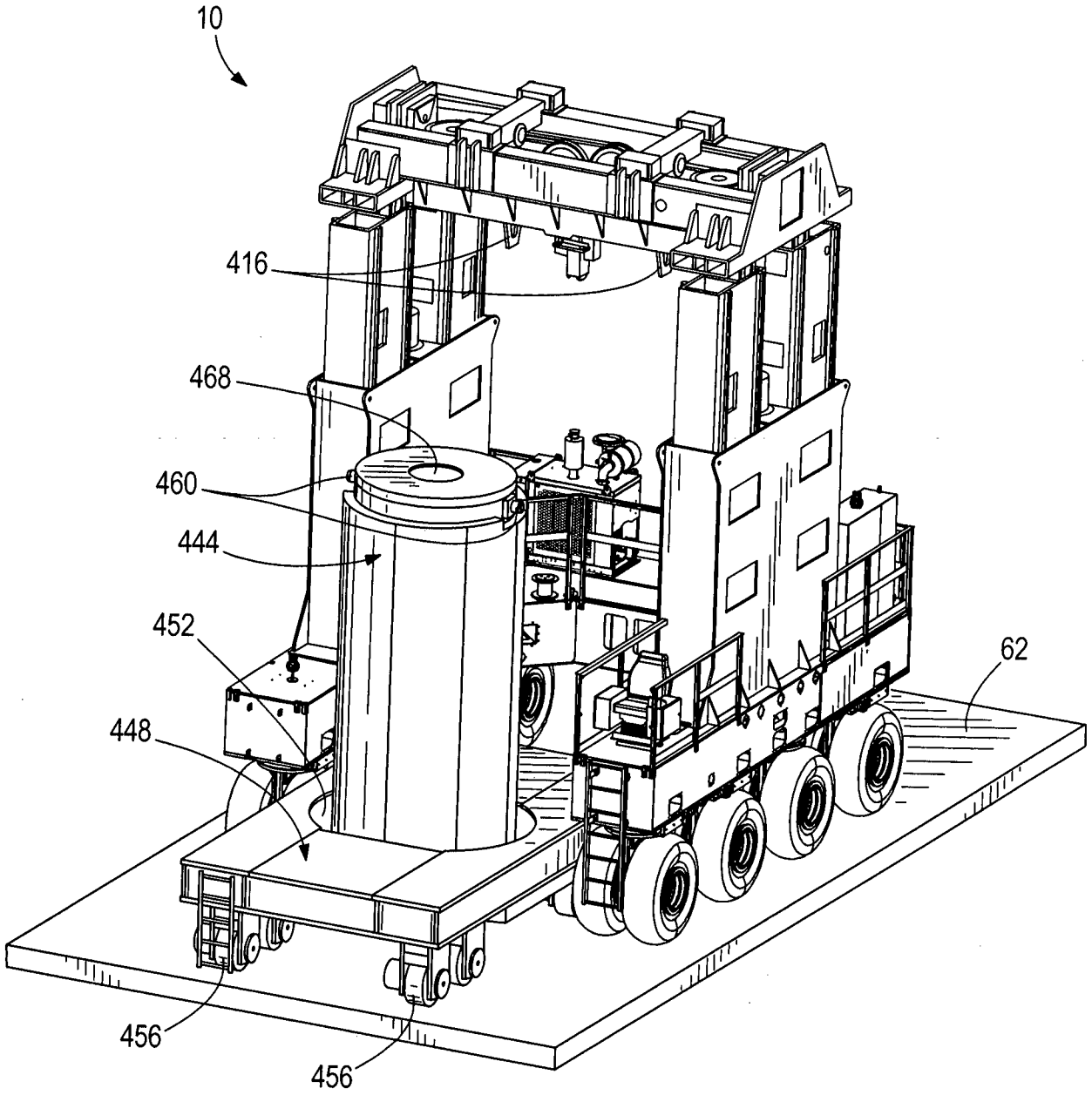


FIG. 31

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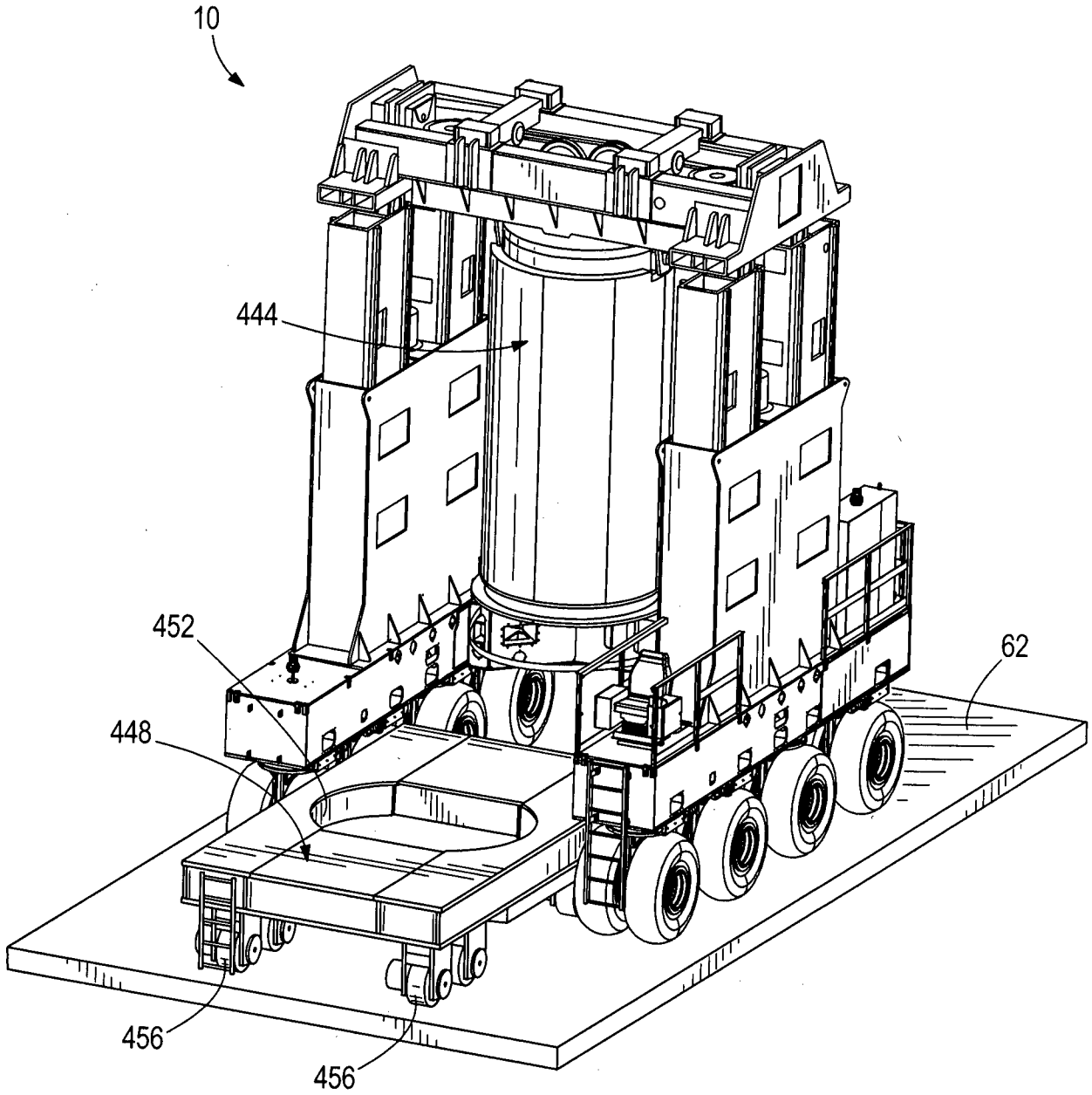


FIG. 32

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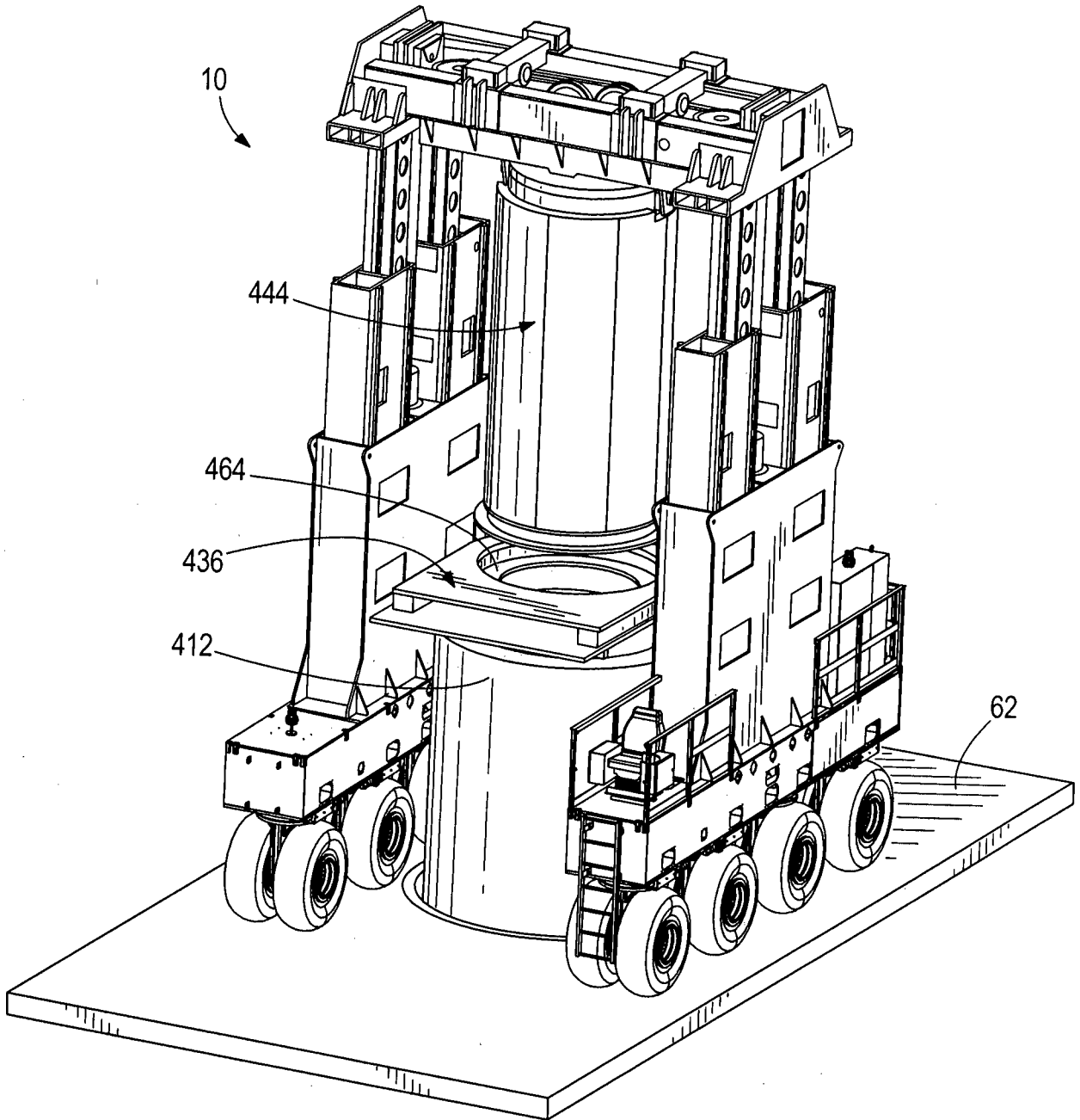


FIG. 33

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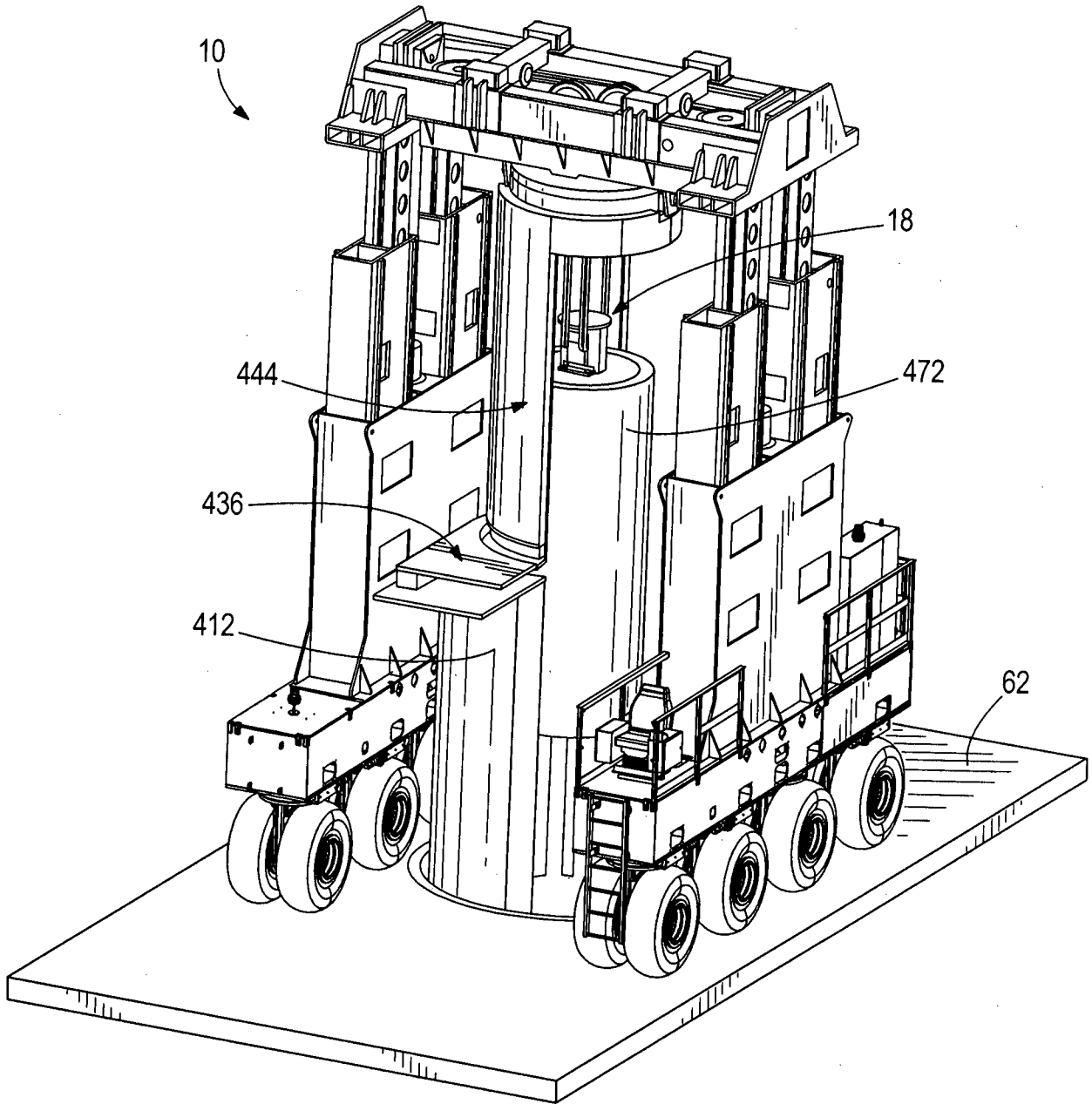


FIG. 34

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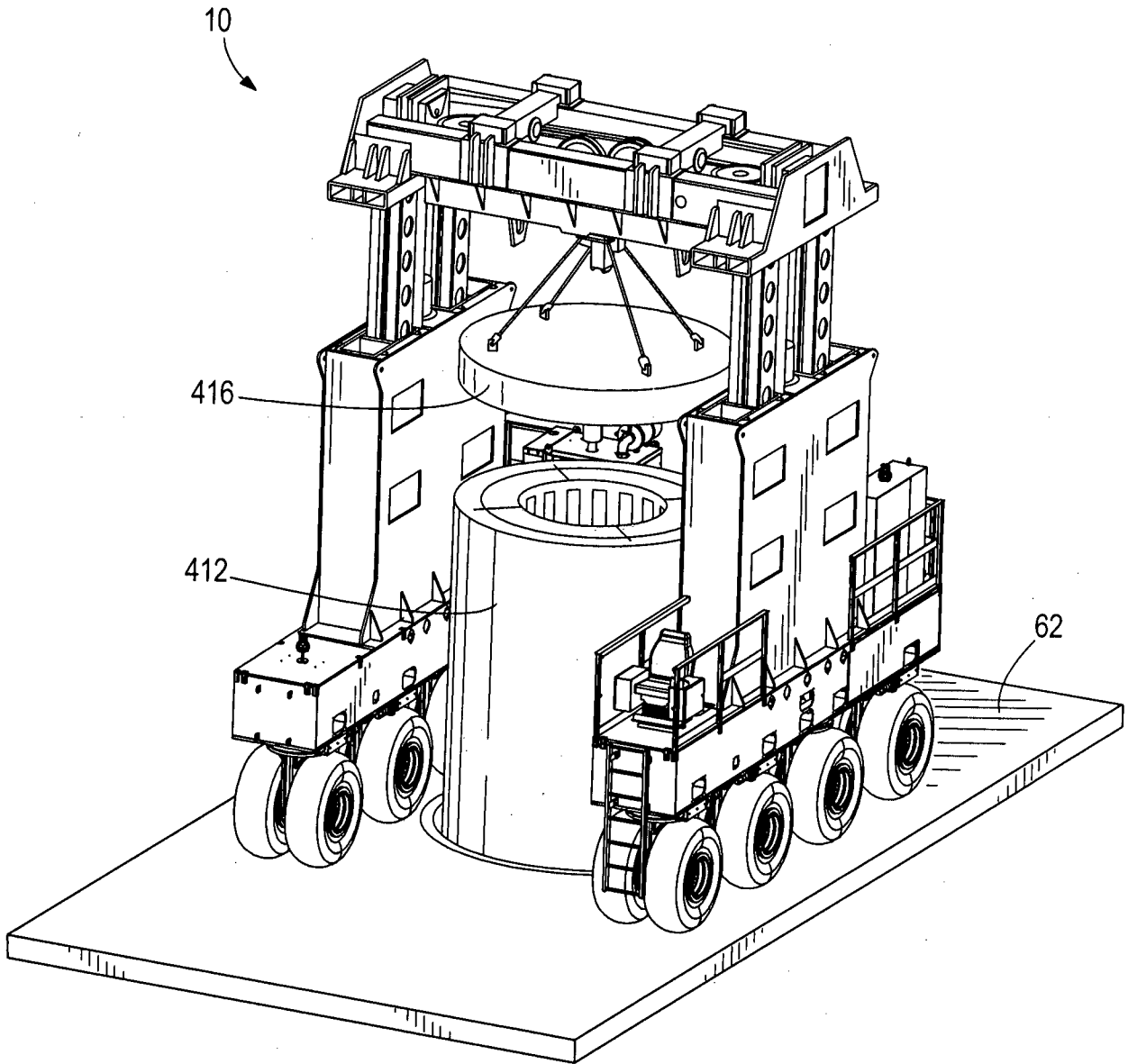


FIG. 35

