



- (51) International Patent Classification:
F16K 17/04 (2006.01) *F16K 1/30* (2006.01)
- (21) International Application Number:
PCT/US2018/042632
- (22) International Filing Date:
18 July 2018 (18.07.2018)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data:
62/534,933 20 July 2017 (20.07.2017) US
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- (81) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DJ, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JO, JP, KE, KG, KH, KN, KP, KR, KW, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SA, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.
- (84) Designated States (*unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available*): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, ST, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM,

(54) Title: EXCESS FLOW VALVE ASSEMBLIES

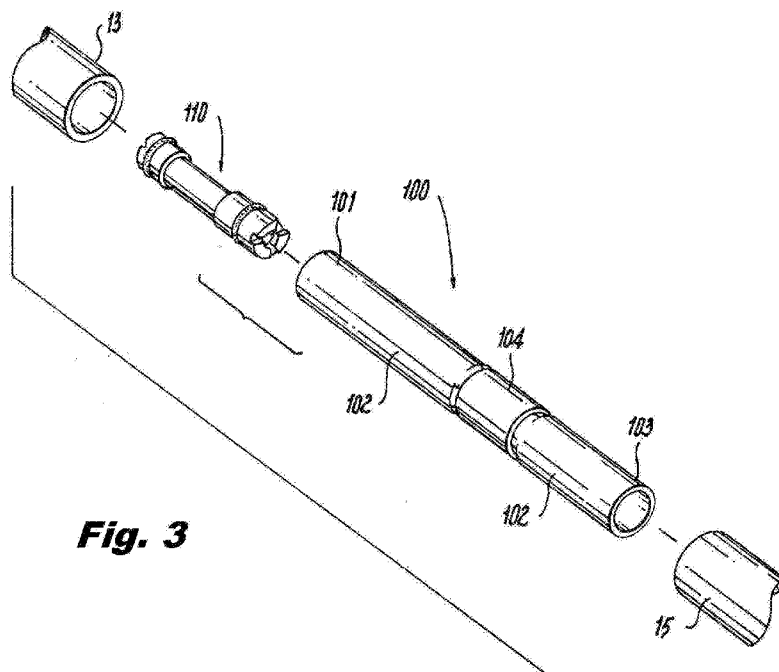


Fig. 3

(57) Abstract: An excess flow valve assembly includes a gas pipe, an excess flow valve and a collar crimped to an outside of a portion of the gas pipe, the crimped collar compressing the portion of the gas pipe creating a positive stop for the excess flow valve when the excess flow valve is inserted in the gas pipe.



TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW,
KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

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

Patent Application for

EXCESS FLOW VALVE ASSEMBLIES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present disclosure is based on and claims benefit from co-pending U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 62/534,933, filed July 20, 2017 entitled “Excess Flow Valve Assemblies” the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

Field

[0002] The present disclosure relates to excess flow valves and, more particularly, to excess flow valve assemblies.

Description of the Related Art

[0003] For convenience and safety, a gas main supplying natural gas may run under a paved roadway where it can be tapped to provide natural gas to one or more businesses or residences along the roadway. As shown in Fig. 1, a gas main 10 is buried in the ground 11 and may be tapped with a tee 12. A run of gas pipe 14 extends from the tee 12 to a gas meter/regulator 18 mounted to a commercial building or residence 16. For cost and convenience purposes, plastic (e.g., polyethylene) pipe may be used for the gas pipe 14 extending from the tee 12 to the gas meter/regulator 18. Although plastic pipe 14 is rather durable, there may be instances where the integrity of the pipe 14 may be compromised. Accordingly, provisions are generally made to maintain the integrity of the gas pipe 14. For example, in areas where underground gas lines exist, utilities and home or business owners performing work requiring digging in the ground are urged to obtain information from the gas utility indicating exactly where the gas pipe 14 runs, in

order to avoid damaging the pipe 14. Unfortunately, accidents and/or natural events may still occur which can compromise the integrity of the gas pipe 14. For example, if for some reason the gas utility is not contacted to obtain the location of a gas pipe 14, excavation 20, directional drilling and/or post hole digging 22 may cause damage to the gas pipe 14. In addition, earthquakes and/or settling 24 of the ground 11 can damage the gas pipe 14. The integrity of the gas pipe 14 and/or gas meter/regulator 18 may also be compromised above ground by accidental regulator 18 and/or service line failure or damage caused by an impact from a vehicle 26.

[0004] An excess flow valve is a safety device installed in plastic pipe to limit the amount of natural gas leaked to atmosphere if the integrity of the gas pipe 14 is compromised downstream of the excess flow valve. The excess flow valve is a self-actuating valve that automatically closes when gas flow exceeds a predetermined rate. Depending on its configuration, the excess flow valve may automatically reset or may require manual reset once the source of the gas leak is repaired. To be effective, it is important to maintain the excess flow valve at a desired position within the pipe 14 to prevent the excess flow valve from moving downstream and reducing the protected pipe length. Generally, the excess flow valve is provided as close to the tee 12 as possible, so that substantially the entire length of the gas pipe 14 is protected. Since the excess flow valve is provided within the pressurized gas pipe, the excess flow valve should be prevented from moving downstream within the gas pipe 14.

[0005] One method of preventing the excess flow valve from moving within the gas pipe 14 is to provide a butt fusion joint between two pieces of plastic (e.g., polyethylene) pipe. Such a butt fusion joint provides a positive stop within the pipe 14 at the joint, preventing the excess flow valve from moving downstream. Another method of preventing movement of the excess flow valve is to rely on an interference fit between the plastic pipe 14 and the excess flow valve. Such an interference fit can be achieved by making the excess flow valve larger in diameter than the free state inner diameter of the plastic pipe 14 and press fitting the excess flow valve into the plastic pipe 14 causing the pipe 14 to expand. In addition, ridges may be provided on the excess

flow valve and the pipe 14 containing the excess flow valve may be passed through a reducer during production to limit movement of the excess flow valve.

[0006] The excess flow valve assemblies according to the present disclosure have a positive stop retention system that does not rely on a butt fusion joint or an interference fit.

SUMMARY

[0007] An excess flow valve assembly includes a gas pipe, an excess flow valve and a collar crimped to an outside of a portion of the gas pipe, the crimped collar compressing the portion of the gas pipe creating a positive stop for the excess flow valve when the excess flow valve is inserted in the gas pipe.

[0008] A gas pipe for an excess flow valve includes a section of deformable gas pipe having an inner diameter and a deformable collar having an inner diameter dimensioned to fit over the deformable gas pipe, wherein when the deformable collar is deformed inwardly, the inner diameter of the deformable gas pipe is reduced to provide a positive stop for the excess flow valve.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] A more complete appreciation of the present disclosure and many of the attendant advantages thereof will be readily obtained as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0010] Fig. 1 depicts an environment of a gas line service for describing illustrative embodiments of the present disclosure;

[0011] Fig. 2 depicts an enlarged view of a portion 2 of Fig. 1 for describing illustrative embodiments of the present disclosure;

[0012] Fig. 3 depicts an exploded view of an excess flow valve assembly according to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure;

[0013] Fig. 4 depicts a cross-sectional view of a portion of an excess flow valve assembly according to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure;

[0014] Fig. 5 depicts an enlarged view of a portion of an excess flow valve assembly according to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure;

[0015] Figs. 6A-6D depict various views of an excess flow valve assembly during an assembly process according to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure; and

[0016] Figs. 7A-7I depict various configurations of collars for use with excess flow valve assemblies according to illustrative embodiments of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] Illustrative embodiments of the present disclosure may be provided as improvements to excess flow valve assemblies. For example, an excess flow valve assembly according to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure includes a collar that is crimped to a gas pipe for reducing an inner diameter of a portion of the gas pipe creating a positive stop for the excess flow valve.

[0018] Illustrative embodiments of the present disclosure provide an excess flow valve assembly including a deformable gas pipe with a positive stop for an excess flow valve without creating hoop stress on the gas pipe.

[0019] Illustrative embodiments of the present disclosure provide a deformable collar for an excess flow valve assembly, the deformable collar capable of deforming an inner diameter of a gas pipe creating a positive stop for an excess flow valve.

[0020] An excess flow valve (EFV) assembly according to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure is shown in Figs. 2-5 and is referred to generally as EFV assembly 100. As shown in Fig. 1, EFV assembly 100 is provided between gas main 10 and gas meter/regulator 18. Preferably, EFV assembly 100 is provided as close to gas main 10 as possible in order to protect as much of gas pipe 14 as possible. Of course, it will be appreciated that EFV assembly 100 may be provided anywhere along gas pipe 14 as desired and/or as suitable for a particular purpose. As shown in more detail in Fig. 2, an end 101 of a gas pipe 102 forming part of EFV assembly 100 is fitted into sleeve 13 extending from tee 12. The other end 103 of pipe 102 is fitted into end 15 of pipe 14. Although pipe 102 is depicted as having a smaller diameter than sleeve 13 and gas pipe 14, it will be appreciated that pipe 102 may have the same or larger diameter than sleeve 13 and/or gas pipe 14. EFV assembly 100 may be affixed to pipe 14 and sleeve 13 utilizing any of various suitable types of mechanisms. For example, collar connectors, butt fusion unions and compression fittings, etc. may be utilized for connecting EFV assembly 100.

[0021] As shown in Fig. 3, EFV assembly 100 includes a section of pipe 102, a collar 104 and an excess flow valve 110. Collar 104 is crimped around the outside of the pipe 102. Excess flow valve 110 has an outer diameter slightly smaller than a free state inner diameter of pipe 102. Excess flow valve 110 is inserted into pipe 102 until it abuts the section of pipe 108 below crimped collar 104 as shown in Fig. 4. Excess flow valve 110 includes one or more O-rings 122 extending around the periphery for providing a gas seal between pipe 102 and excess flow valve 110 for preventing gas from bypassing excess flow valve 110. The internal components and workings of excess flow valve 110 are well known in the art and will therefore not be described in detail herein.

[0022] As shown in more detail in the enlarged view depicted in Fig. 5, when collar 104 is crimped around pipe 102, the portion of pipe 108 immediately below collar 104 is compressed slightly, such that the inner diameter of the portion of pipe 108 is slightly smaller than an outer diameter of excess flow valve 110. Excess flow valve 110 is thus prevented from moving further downstream in the direction of arrow A. The compressed portion 108 of pipe 102 formed by crimped collar 104 has a reduced inner diameter and creates a positive stop for the excess flow valve 110. Since a compressive force is being placed on pipe 102 by crimped collar 104, no hoop stress is placed on pipe 102.

[0023] An excess flow valve assembly according to an embodiment of the present disclosure is shown in Figs. 6A-6D and is referred to herein generally as EFV assembly 200. EFV assemblies 200 are sometimes referred to as EFV Sticks. EFV assembly 200 includes an excess flow valve 202, a pipe section 204 and a collar 206. Excess flow valve 202 includes one or more portions 210 having an outer diameter slightly smaller than a free state diameter of inner portion 212 of pipe section 204. For example, according to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure, portions 210 of excess flow valve 202 include O-rings dimensioned to provide a gas-tight seal around excess flow valve 202 when excess flow valve 202 is inserted in pipe section 204. This gas-tight seal prevents gas from by-passing excess flow valve 202. According to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure, collar 206 is substantially cylindrical and has an inner diameter 214 slightly larger than an outer diameter of pipe section 204. Collar 206 is thus capable of being slid onto pipe section 204 and positioned as desired on pipe section 204 (e.g., see Fig. 6C). Collar 206 is crimped in place as shown in Fig. 6D. Crimped collar 206 causes the portion 208 of pipe section 204 below the crimped collar 206 to have a reduced inner diameter compared to the remaining portions of pipe section 204. During assembly, excess flow valve 202 may be inserted into pipe section 204 prior to or after crimping of collar 206. The reduced diameter portion 208 of pipe section 204 prevents excess flow valve 202 from moving downstream (see arrow A in Fig. 6D). Any suitable crimping tool or machine may be utilized to

crimp collar 206. Such crimping tools and machines are well known in the art and will not be described in further detail.

[0024] Although the collars described in the above illustrative embodiments of the present disclosure are described as generally cylindrical, it will be appreciated the collars may take forms other than that shown and may be provided in various shapes and configurations. For example, a collar may be provided that can be crimped on only a portion of its circumference so that only a portion of the inner diameter of the gas pipe below the collar is inwardly displaced. The inwardly displaced portion of the gas pipe will provide a positive stop for preventing movement of the excess flow valve in the downstream direction. Non-limiting illustrative embodiments of various shapes and configurations of collars are described below by reference to Figs. 7A-7H.

[0025] Fig. 7A depicts a collar 300 according to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure. Collar 300 includes a slit 301 extending along its length. By spreading collar 300 at the slit 301, the inside diameter 302 of collar 300 may be adjusted for use on various diameter gas pipes. Fig. 7B depicts another illustrative embodiment of a collar 300 that is similar to the collar of Fig. 7A except that the collar 300 does not include a slit extending along its length. When crimped, collar 300 provides substantially even compression along the circumference of the gas pipe. According to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure as shown in Fig. 7C, collar 304 has eight surfaces including four substantially flat surface sections 308 and four curved surface sections 306. A crimping tool may be utilized to crimp one or more of the surfaces 306 and 308. According to another illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure as shown in Fig. 7D, collar 310 has eight substantially flat surfaces 312. A crimping tool may be provided to crimp one or more of the surfaces 312. According to an illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure as shown in Fig. 7E, collar 314 has four substantially flat surfaces 316. A crimping tool may be provided to crimp one or more of the surfaces 316. According to another illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure as shown in Fig. 7F, collar 318 has two substantially flat surfaces 322 and two substantially curved surfaces 320. A crimping tool may be arranged to crimp one or more of the surfaces 320 and 322. A collar 324 according to another

illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure is shown in Fig. 7H. Collar 324 has two substantially flat elongated opposing surfaces 328 and two substantially curved opposing surfaces 326. According to this illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure, a crimping tool may be provided to crimp one or both of opposing surfaces 328. A collar 330 according to another illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure is shown in Fig. 7G. Collar 330 includes opposing concave surfaces 336, 338 and opposing convex surfaces 334. A crimping tool may be provided to crimp one or more of the surfaces 334, 336 and/or 338. According to another illustrative embodiment of the present disclosure as shown in Fig. 7I, a collar 340 includes three evenly dimensioned curved surfaces 342. The inner area 344 of collar 340 is dimensioned to receive a gas pipe of suitable diameter. A crimping tool may be provided to crimp one or more of surfaces 342. The collars described herein may be formed from any suitable type of material including steel, stainless steel, copper, brass, aluminum, etc.

[0026] The gas pipes and sections of gas pipe described herein are generally plastic and more particularly, polyethylene. However, it will be appreciated that the gas pipe may be made of any suitable material or materials capable of being inwardly deformed when a collar is crimped thereon, while maintaining the integrity of the gas pipe.

[0027] As shown throughout the drawings, like reference numerals designate like or corresponding parts. While illustrative embodiments of the present disclosure have been described and illustrated above, it should be understood that these are exemplary of the disclosure and are not to be considered as limiting. Additions, deletions, substitutions, and other modifications can be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the present disclosure. Accordingly, the present disclosure is not to be considered as limited by the foregoing description.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An excess flow valve assembly comprising:
a gas pipe;
an excess flow valve; and
a collar crimped to an outside of a portion of the gas pipe, the crimped collar compressing the portion of the gas pipe creating a positive stop for the excess flow valve when the excess flow valve is inserted in the gas pipe.
2. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 1, wherein the gas pipe has a free state inner diameter slightly larger than an outside diameter of the excess flow valve.
3. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 1, wherein the gas pipe comprises a plastic.
4. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 3, wherein the plastic comprises polyethylene.
5. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 1, wherein the collar comprises metal.
6. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 5, wherein the metal comprises steel.
7. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 6, wherein the steel comprises stainless steel.
8. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 5, wherein the metal comprises at least one of copper, brass and aluminum.

9. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 1, wherein the crimped collar is provided downstream of the excess flow valve.
10. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 9, wherein the crimped collar prevents the excess flow valve from moving in a downstream direction.
11. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 1, wherein the crimped collar compresses a circumference of the portion of the gas pipe creating a positive stop for the excess flow valve when the excess flow valve is inserted in the gas pipe.
12. The excess flow valve assembly as recited in claim 11, wherein the crimped collar compresses only a portion of the circumference of the portion of the gas pipe.
13. A gas pipe for an excess flow valve comprising:
 - a section of deformable gas pipe having an inner diameter; and
 - a deformable collar having an inner diameter dimensioned to fit over the deformable gas pipe, wherein when the deformable collar is deformed inwardly, the inner diameter of the deformable gas pipe is reduced to provide a positive stop for the excess flow valve.
14. The gas pipe as recited in claim 13, wherein the gas pipe comprises a plastic.
15. The gas pipe as recited in claim 14, wherein the plastic comprises polyethylene.
16. The gas pipe as recited in claim 13, wherein the deformable collar comprises metal.
17. The gas pipe as recited in claim 16, wherein the metal comprises steel.
18. The gas pipe as recited in claim 17, wherein the steel comprises stainless steel.

19. The gas pipe as recited in claim 17, wherein the metal comprises at least one of copper, brass and aluminum.

20. The gas pipe as recited in claim 13, further comprising an excess flow valve.

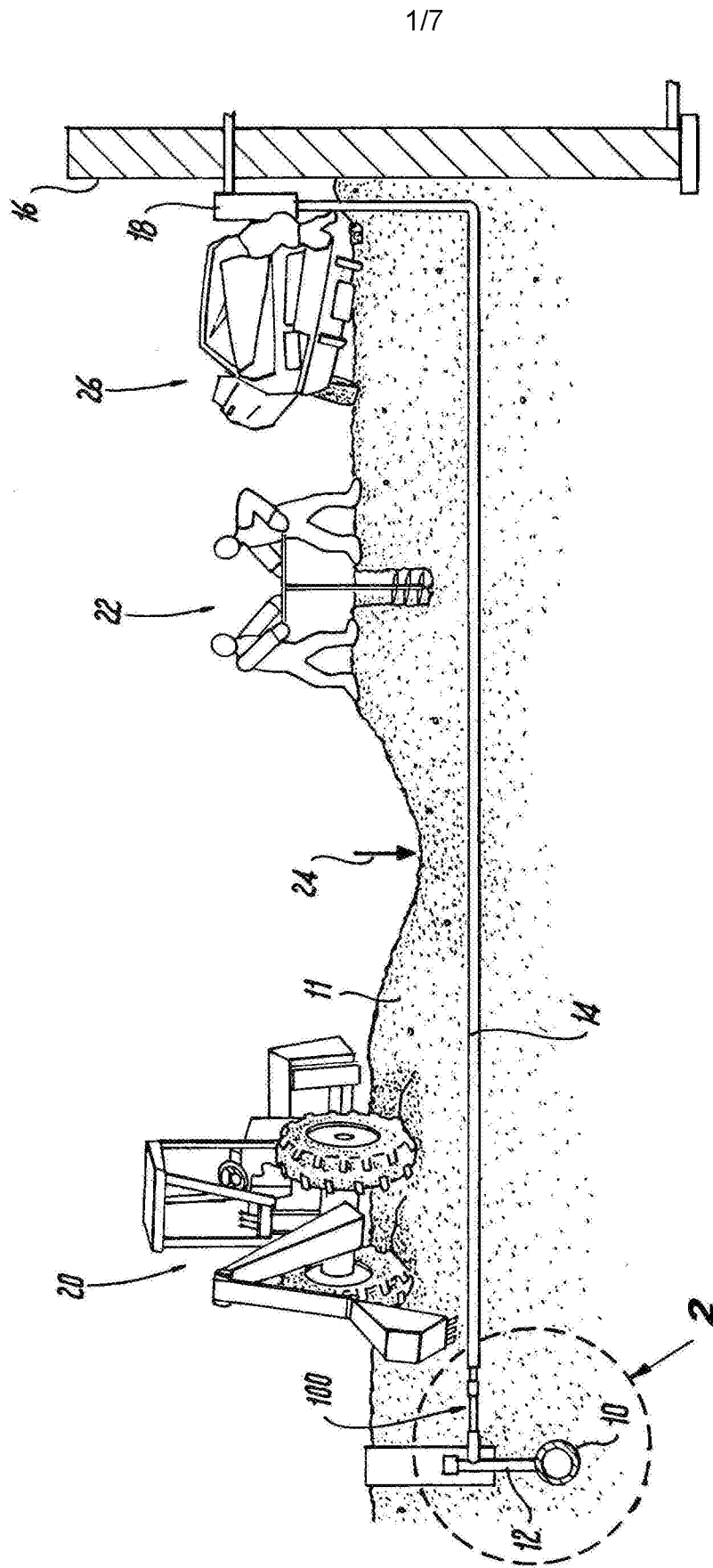


Fig. 1

Fig. 2

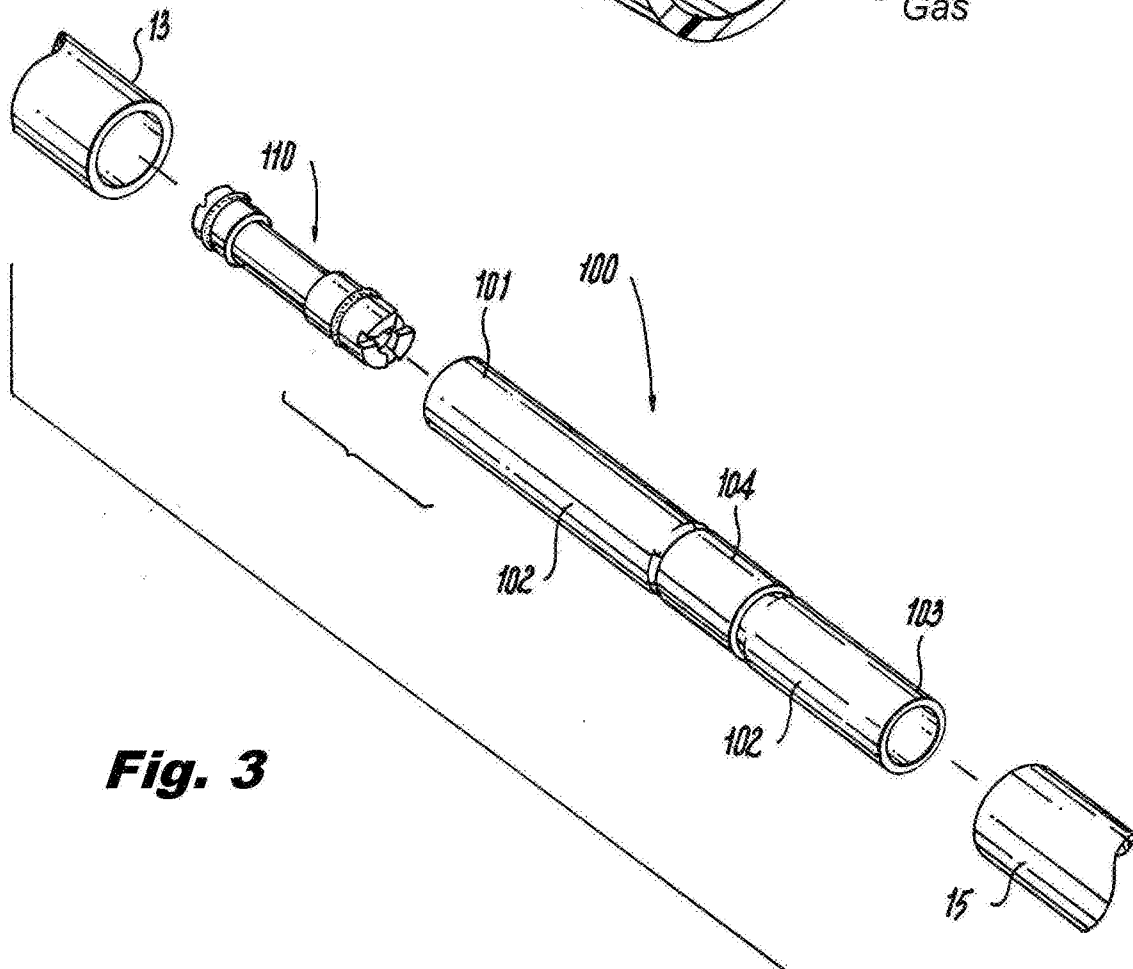
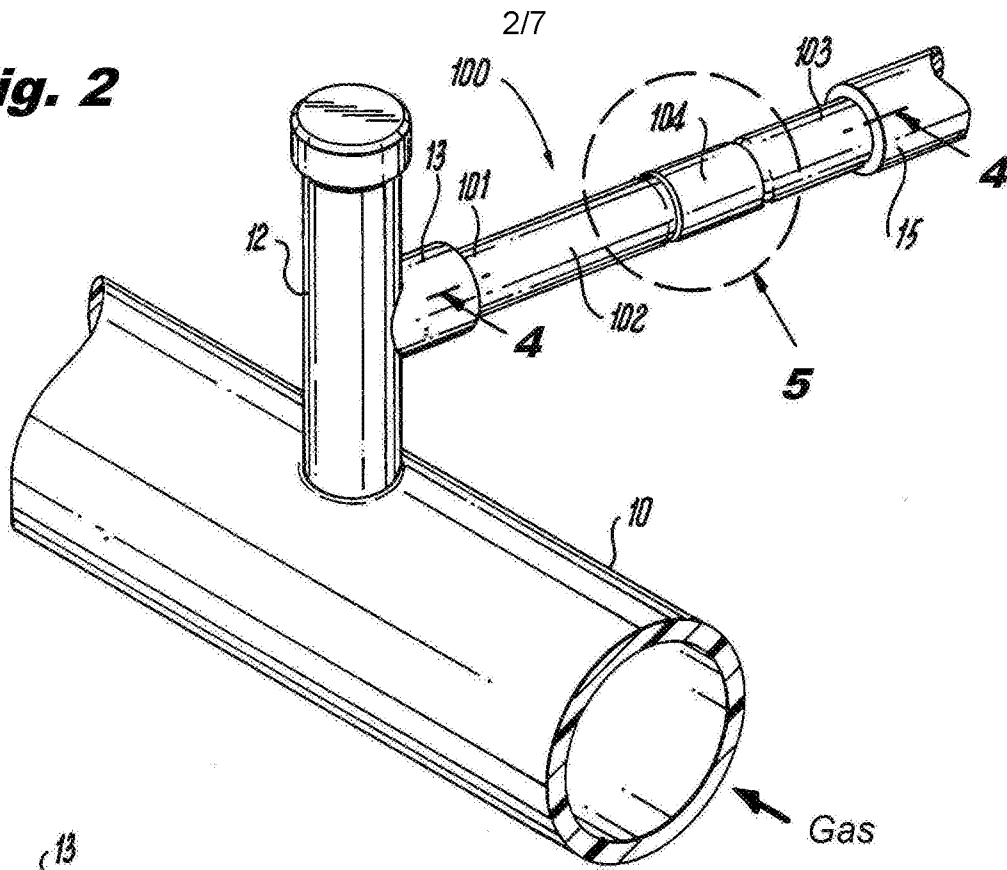
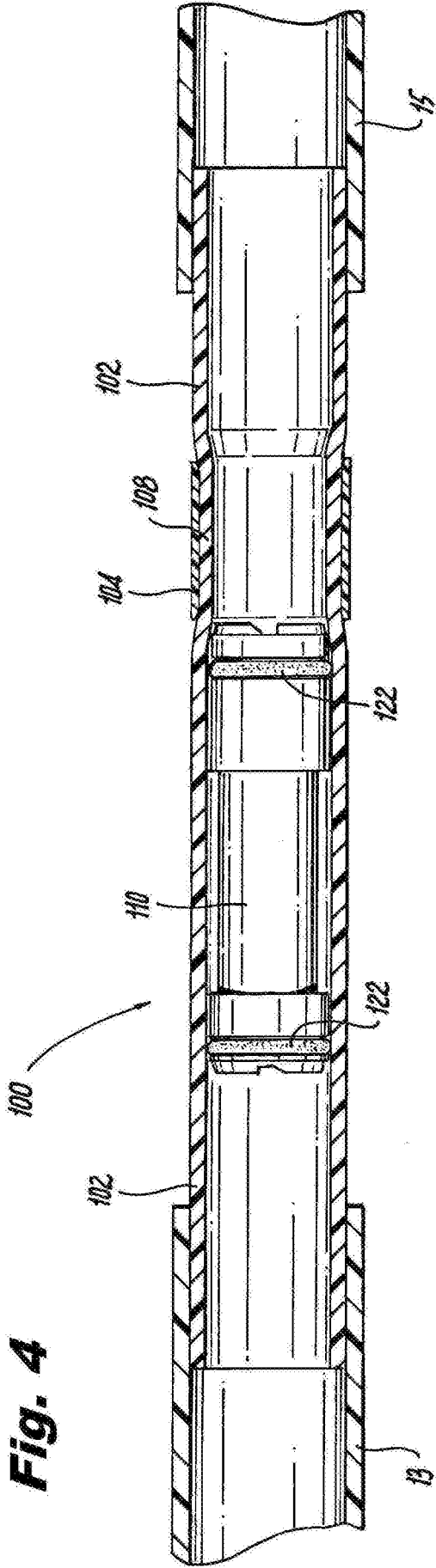


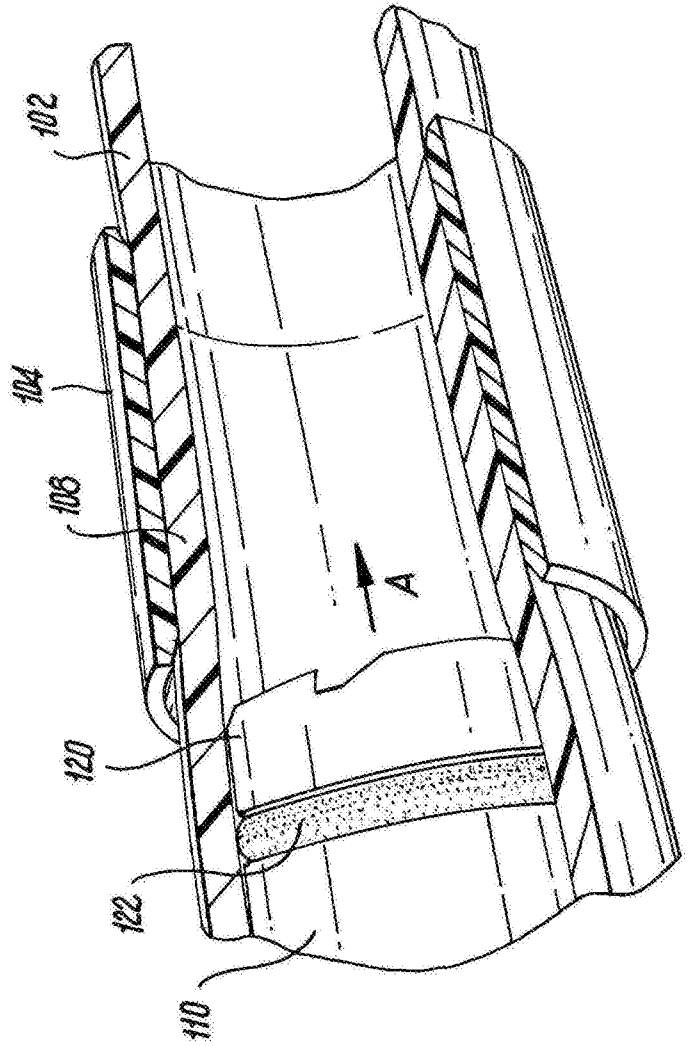
Fig. 3

Fig. 4



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Fig. 5



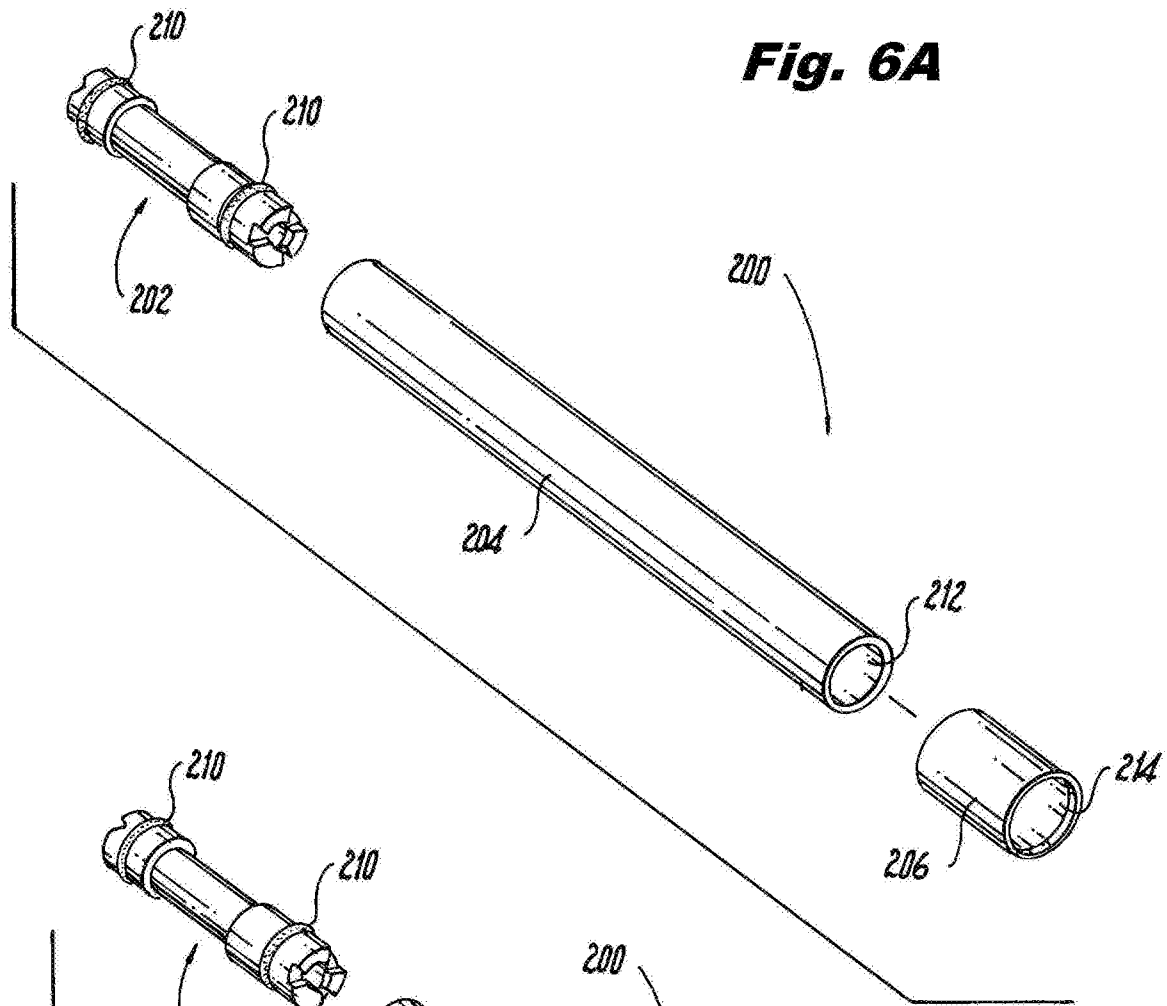


Fig. 6A

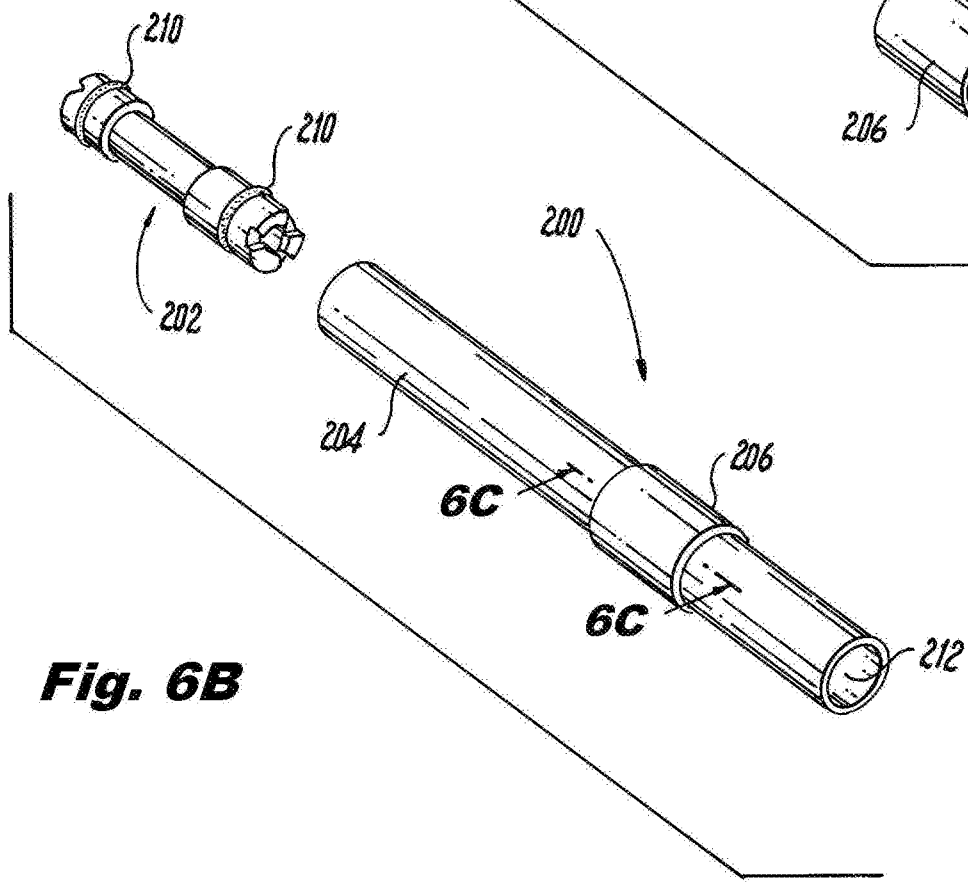


Fig. 6B

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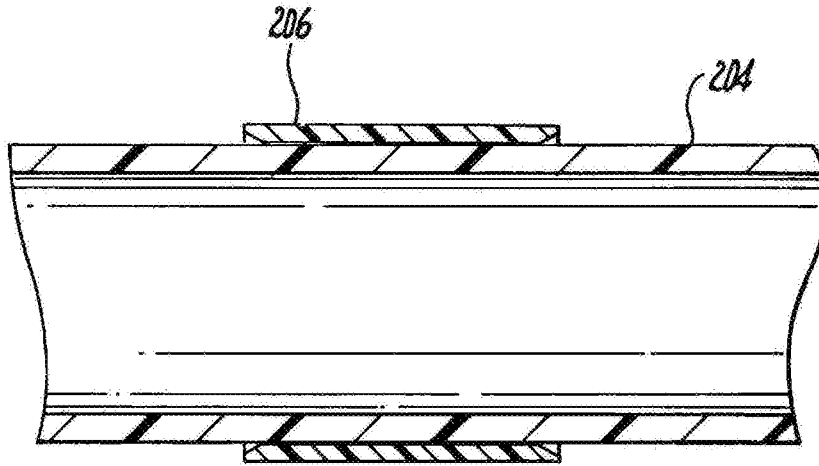


Fig. 6C

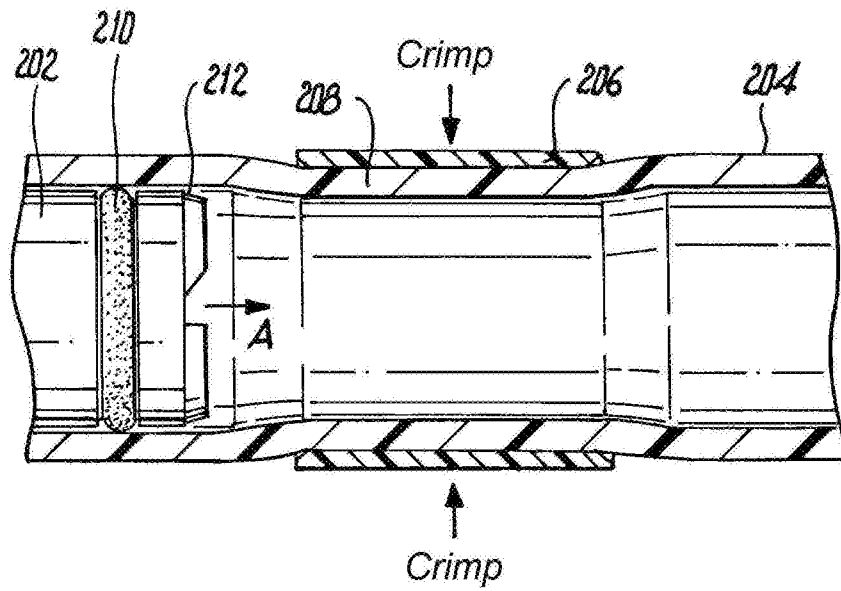


Fig. 6D

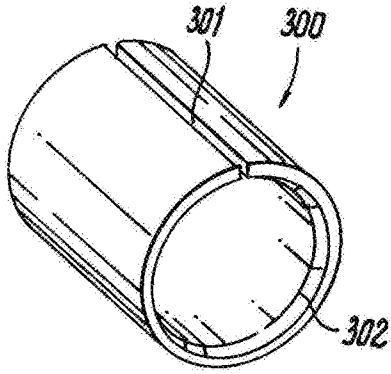


Fig. 7A

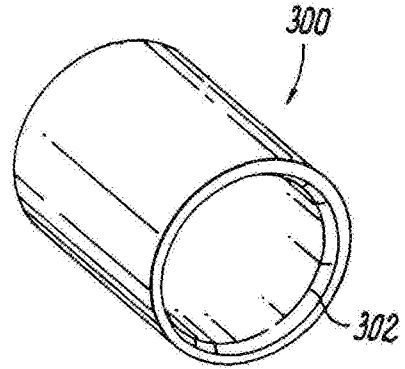


Fig. 7B

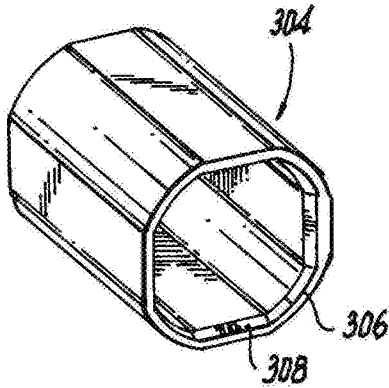


Fig. 7C

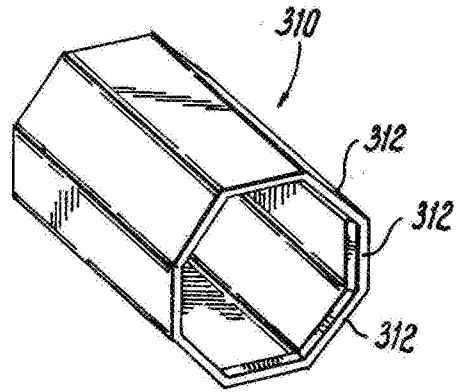


Fig. 7D

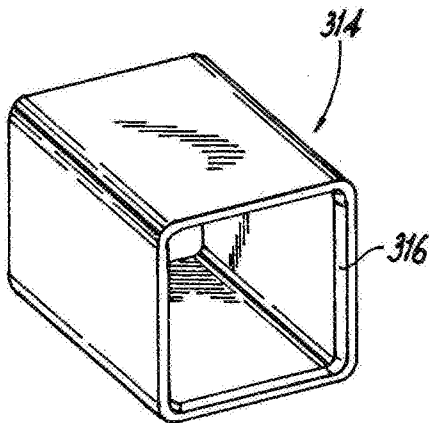


Fig. 7E

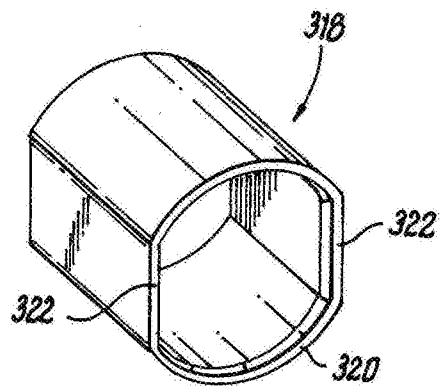


Fig. 7F

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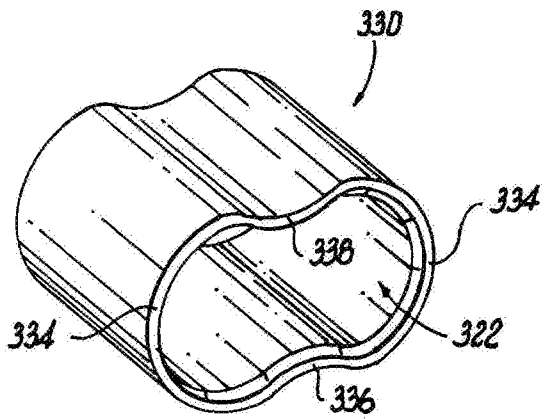


Fig. 7G

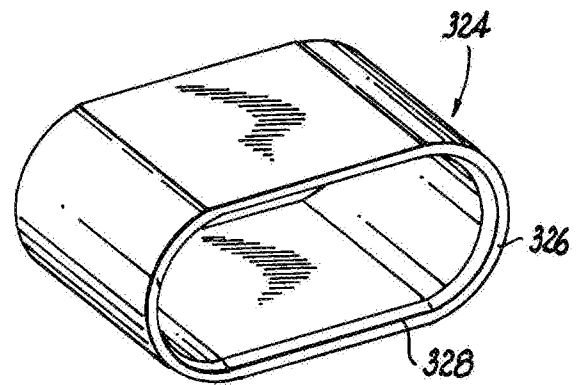


Fig. 7H

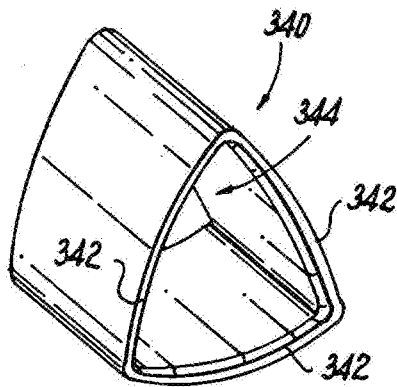


Fig. 7I

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US 18/42632

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(8) - F16K 17/04, F16K 1/30 (2018.01)
CPC - F16K 17/30, F16K 17/0413, F16K1/303

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)
See Search History Document

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

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

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 4,958,657 A (Hagan et al.) 25 September 1990 (25.09.1990) entire document, especially Fig. 6.	1-20
A	US 5,704,391 A (McGowan, Jr. et al.) 06 January 1998 (06.01.1998) entire document, especially Fig. 2.	1-20
A	US 8,123,257 B1 (Baer et. al.) 28 February 2012 (28.02.2012) entire document, especially title, abstract, and col 1, ln 20-25.	1-20
A	US 5,357,998 A (Abrams) 25 October 1994 (25.10.1994) entire document, especially title, abstract, and 26 ferrule, Fig. 2)	1-20
A	US 2007/0277885 A1 (Goble) 06 December 2007 (06.12.2007) entire document.	1-20

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

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search 05 September 2018	Date of mailing of the international search report 01 OCT 2018
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Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 Facsimile No. 571-273-8300	Authorized officer: Lee W. Young PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300 PCT OSP: 571-272-7774
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