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APPARATUS FOR GENERATING OZONE AND/OR O₁ USING A HIGH ENERGY PLASMA DISCHARGE

SCOPE OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an apparatus for use in generating ozone, and more preferably an apparatus having an electrochemical conversion chamber for receiving a suitable O₂-containing gas. The apparatus operates ozone by supplying an alternating current voltage to one or more mesh electrodes disposed in the electrochemical conversion chamber to effect conversion of O₂ to ozone, and more preferably ozone and at least some monovalent oxygen.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The use of ozone gas in water purification is well known. Typically, the ozone acts as an oxidant to treat both organic and inorganic substances to provide disinfection of potable water.

Various ozone generation systems are known for treating oxygen containing gases to break down the oxygen and generate ozone. Typically with conventional systems, a suitable oxygen containing gas, such as air, is exposed to an electrode which is positioned within a reactor. The electrode is then subjected to a high voltage alternating or pulsed direct current discharge. As a result, the current applied to the electrode produces a plasma or corona discharge which breaks down the molecular bonds O₂ and provides the desired ozone gas production. United States Patent No. 6,488,819 B2 to Conrad et al discloses a conventional apparatus for use in ozone production. In Conrad et al, a high voltage spiral electrode is provided in a reaction chamber into which an O₂-containing gas or vapour is passed. Circuitry consisting of high and low voltage transformers, rectifiers and transistors is then used to provide an alternating direct current to the electrode, to effect the required coronal discharge.

Although prior art systems have proven operable in producing limited quantities of ozone from introduced gases, prior art systems have proven electrically inefficient. As a result of high volume demands, the industry is looking for smaller and increasingly efficient ozone generator constructions which maximize ozone gas and O₁ output while minimizing energy requirements.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention seeks to overcome at least some of the disadvantages of prior art ozone generation systems by providing a comparatively electrically efficient ozone generator for producing ozone and/or O₁ from a supplied volume of a suitable O₂-containing gas. The generator is preferably provided with at least one metal mesh electrode within a generator reaction chamber, and a power supply which is adapted to supply a high alternating electric current voltage to at least partially break-down O₂ in the input gas to yield ozone.

Another object of the invention is to provide a comparably compact ozone and/or O₁ generator which exhibits improved energy efficiency as compared to conventional ozone generation apparatus, providing enhanced effectiveness at either lower or conventional power levels.

A further object of the invention is to provide an apparatus for generating ozone which is adapted to produce ozone gas from a volume of input gas to be treated, either as part of a continuous input gas flow, or as part of a batch process, and which more preferably is also adapted to produce as an advantageous bi-product of ozone gas production.

Another object of the invention is to provide a simplified and easily assembled ozone generator apparatus which may be used in air and/or water purification systems, medical equipment sterilization systems, waste treatment systems, or other systems where ozone gas production is desired.

To at least partially achieve some of the foregoing objects, the present invention provides an ozone generating apparatus which includes a housing having a gas reaction chamber or cavity therein. A fluid flow passage extends through the reaction chamber, and

along which is introduced a gas or vapour to be treated, and most preferably an O₂-containing gas. One or more electrodes which are electrically connected to a power source are provided within the fluid flow passage. The electrodes may, for example, be of a conventional design, however, for increased efficiency are formed from a metal mesh or other multipoint source, and more preferably a metal mesh sheet, such as stainless steel mesh, platinum mesh or other inert metal mesh which has been folded in an overlapping or accordion-like manner. The power source is adapted to supply either pulsed direct current voltage or an alternating current (AC) voltage to the electrodes, to produce a corona discharge in the fluid flow passage which is used to convert the oxygen to ozone. Preferably the voltage is supplied to effect a corona discharge which produces not only ozone, but also at least a quantity of some monovalent oxygen.

In an optimum construction, the fluid flow passage is formed as a generally elongated passage through the reaction cavity. The fluid flow passage extends from an upstream end, where the O₂-containing gas is initially supplied into the housing, to a downstream end where treated gas either flows outwardly therefrom under pressure or is evacuated from the housing. To minimize space, the fluid flow passage may be provided as a generally serpentine extending passage which includes two or more non-linearly extending passage segments. In a simplified construction, the fluid flow passage and passage segments are delineated by a series of electrically insulating plates and/or spacers which are used to partition the reaction cavity. Although not essential, one or more mesh electrodes and/or multipoint electrodes are disposed in each passage segment for reacting with the introduced gas as it moves therethrough.

A cooling apparatus may further be used to assist in maintaining the reaction chamber at an optimum reaction temperature. Suitable cooling apparatus could, for example, include the mounting of thermally conductive heat sinks or fins on part of the housing exterior surface, external cooling fans, a cooling bath, and/or a refrigerated cooling fluid system for providing a cooling fluid such as water or Freon gas in thermal contact with the housing.

In a preferred construction, the electrodes and/or multipoint sources are provided with a longitudinal length which is less than the length of each flow passage segment, thus providing the fluid flow passage with sections where either reduced or no plasma or coronal

discharge occurs. Where thermally conductive insulating plates and spacers are used to delineate the fluid flow passage, such as those made of ceramics, the areas where no corona is generated advantageously permit partial cooling of the oxygen containing gas during the operation of the apparatus. This has been found to achieve increased operating efficiency for the reaction process, and the output of greater concentrations of ozone and/or monovalent oxygen may be achieved.

Most preferably, power is supplied to the electrodes in either a generally square sinuous waveform at a frequency of about 4 kHz, and a wattage of between about 50 and 250 watts. In an alternate embodiment, it is envisioned that power may be supplied to the electrodes in a square sinuous waveform which includes a comparatively short high positive square wave pulse, followed by a pause and then a comparatively short negative square wave pulse as a mode of increasing the peak power that produces ozone and/or O₁ and reducing overall energy demands. Other power supply waveforms may, however, also be used.

Accordingly, in one aspect the present invention resides in an apparatus for generating ozone and/or monovalent oxygen by the chemical conversion of an input gas comprising

a housing defining a cavity therein,

a fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing,

at least one electrode disposed in said fluid flow passage, said electrode comprising a sheet of metal mesh or a multipoint electrode source,

a power source for supplying an AC voltage, said power source including a contact lead electrically coupled to each said at least one electrode, and a ground lead in electrical contact with ground,

a gas inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a first portion of said flow passage upstream from said electrode,

a gas outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a second portion of said flow passage spaced downstream from said electrode.

In another aspect the present invention resides in an apparatus for producing ozone and monovalent oxygen

a metal housing defining a cavity therein,

a fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing,

a plurality of electrodes disposed in said fluid flow passage and being spaced in a direction of said flow passage from each other, said electrodes comprising a sheet of metal mesh or multipoint source,

a generator element for producing a pulsed AC voltage including an electrical contact electrically coupled to each of said electrodes, and a ground electrode physically separated from said electrodes to form a gap therebetween,

a fluid inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with an upstream end portion of said flow passage,

a fluid outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a downstream end portion of said flow passage spaced flow,

a fluid supply for supplying a fluid through said fluid inlet into said fluid passage and outwardly therefrom through said fluid outlet.

In a further aspect the present invention resides in an apparatus for generating ozone comprising

a metal housing defining a cavity therein,

a generally serpentine extending fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing and comprising a plurality of passage segments,

a metal mesh electrode selected from the group consisting of stainless steel mesh and platinum mesh disposed in each of said passage segments,

a power source for supplying a pulsed voltage including a lead wire electrically coupled to each said at least one electrode, and a ground wire in electrical contact with said housing,

a fluid inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a first portion of said flow passage upstream from said electrodes,

a fluid outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a second portion of said flow passage spaced downstream from said electrodes,

a fluid pump for supplying a fluid flow along said fluid flow passage from said fluid inlet to said fluid outlet.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Reference is now made to the following detailed description taken together with the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 illustrates schematically a perspective view of an ozone generator in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention;

Figure 2 illustrates a sectional view of the ozone generator housing shown in Figure 1 taken along lines 2-2 with the upper cover member removed;

Figure 3 illustrates a cross-sectional view of the ozone generator housing shown in Figure 1 taken along line 3-3;

Figure 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of Section IV shown in Figure 3 illustrating an electrode;

Figure 5 illustrates a partial exploded side view of the housing illustrating the placement of the cover panel thereon;

Figures 6a and 6b illustrate schematically preferred electrical waveforms used in the ozone generator of Figure 1; and

Figure 7 represents a preferred circuit diagram for use in a power supply to generate the electrical waveforms shown in Figures 6a and 6b.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Reference is first made to Figure 1 which illustrates an ozone generator 10 in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention, and in which a suitable oxygen containing gas, such as air, is introduced and subjected to a coronal discharge to convert the O_2 to ozone, and most preferably ozone and at least some monovalent oxygen. The generator 10 includes an alternating current power supply 12, a housing 14 and a liquid cooling system 16.

As shown best in Figures 2 to 5, the housing 14 consists of a square upper aluminum cover member 18a and square aluminum bottom cover member 18b which in an assembled construction have a length and width selected at between about 12 and 25 cm. The bottom cover member 18b further has integrally formed therewith a peripherally extending sidewall 19 which extends upwardly from a remainder of the cover member 18b a distance selected at between about 0.5 and 2 cm. As shown best in Figure 4, the upper cover member 18a is adapted for mated engagement against the upper edge of the sidewall 19 so as to define an interior electrochemical conversion or reaction cavity 20 (Figures 2 and 3) when coupled thereto.

As shown in Figure 1, a series of grooves 22 are formed at parallel spaced locations across the exterior of each of the cover members 18a, 18b. The grooves 22 are sized to receive at least partially recessed therein a copper tube 24 which is provided as part of the cooling system 16. The cooling system 16 further includes a refrigerant pump 26 which is in fluid communication with each end of the cooling tube 24. The tube 24 is wound about at

least part of the housing 14 such that the operation of the pump 26 circulates a suitable cooling fluid, such as water, through the tube 24. Because the tube 24 is formed from a thermally conductive material, it is effective in conducting heat away from the housing 14. In a most preferred construction, the cooling apparatus 16 is adapted to cool the exterior surface of the housing 14 at locations where contacted by the tube 24 to a temperature less than 15°C, preferably between about 0 and 12°C, and more preferably between about 5 and 10°C. It is to be appreciated, however, that depending on the specific operating conditions, temperature is specifically adjustable to provide the greatest efficiency balancing power required for coding against the power necessary for ozone and/or O₁ generation.

Figures 2 and 3 show best the interior reaction cavity 20 which acts as a reaction vessel for the decomposition of oxygen into ozone and monovalent oxygen. A serpentine extending gas flow passage 28 extends through the cavity 20 from an upstream gas inlet end portion 30 to a downstream gas outlet end portion 32. The gas flow passage 28 is defined at its upper and lower sides by a pair of identical, generally square ceramic plates 36,38. The plates 36,38 are sized marginally smaller than the inner diameter of the sidewall 19, so as to fit snugly with the cavity 20. Preferably, the ceramic plates 36,38 are secured to a respective cover member 18a,18b by a magnesium dioxide coating 40 (Figure 3) so as to directly align with one another when the upper cover 18a is secured in position to the sidewall 19, however, other coatings which provide high thermal conductive and electrical resistivity may also be used.

Figure 2 shows best the lateral most edges of the flow passage 28 similarly formed by [either three, or optionally four] elongated rectangular ceramic spacer plates 42a,42b,42c,42d. The spacer plates 42a,42b,42c,42d extend longitudinally a marginal distance less than the length of the ceramic plates 36,38, and each have a lateral width selected to extend snugly vertically between the plates 36,38 when the cover member 18a is bolted to cover member 18b in the sealed manner shown in Figure 3.

The interior of the fluid flow passage 38 is divided into four separate passage segments 44a,44b,44c,44d (Figure 2) by positioning three ceramic interior plates 46a,46b,46c in a generally parallel equally spaced arrangement between spacer plates 42a and 42c. Each

of the ceramic interior plates 46a,46b,46c has a longitudinal length selected less than the length of the ceramic plates 36,38, and more preferably selected at between about 2/3 to 3/4 the length of the ceramic plates 36,38.

During testing optimum, performance was found with the spacer plates 42a,42b,42c,42d having a lateral width selected at between about .5 cm and 2 cm, however, depending on the size of the generations unit, spacing may vary. The spacer plates 42a,42b,42c,42d thus assist in maintaining the square plates 36,38 in the desired spaced relationship and define the upper and lower outer extent of the flow passage 28. A layer of silicone 44 is provided between the sidewall 19 each respective spacer plates 42a,42b,42c,42d to better electrically insulate the fluid flow passage 28 from the housing 14. In a further embodiment, the spacer plates 42a,42b,42c can be manufactured into one or both of the ceramic plates 36,38.

Figure 2 shows best the interior plates 46a,46c as being positioned with one respective adjacent end 48a,48c in substantially sealing contact with the spacer plate 42b. The interior plate 46b is positioned in a longitudinally offset orientation relative to the spacer plates 46a,46c with its adjacent end 48b located a distance from the spacer plate 42b and in abutting contact with spacer plate 42d, so as to permit substantially unhindered gas flow therebetween. The peripherally extending ceramic spacer plates 42a,42b,42c,42d most preferably have substantially the identical lateral width as the interior spacers 46a,46b,46c, so as to locate in substantially gas sealing contact with each of the square plates 36,38 in assembly of the housing 14.

Figure 2 shows best a gas inlet tube 50 extending through the housing sidewall 19 and permitting gas flow into the upstream gas inlet end portion 30 of the fluid flow passage 28. A gas outlet tube 52 is provided through the sidewall 19 in fluid communication with the other downstream end portion 32 of the fluid flow passage 28 and which permits the flow and/or evacuation of ozone, any monovalent oxygen and other reacted gases outwardly from the reaction cavity 20.

Figure 2 shows best four stainless steel wire mesh/multipoint electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d as being positioned along the fluid flow passage 28. The applicant has

appreciated that the mesh construction of the electrodes 60 advantageously provides increased contact area with the gas as it flows along the passage 28 and further facilitates turbulence in the gas flow, facilitating its mixing. Each electrode 60a,60b,60c,60d is positioned in a centrally disposed region of a respective flow passage segment 44a,44b,44c,44d. The mesh electrodes 60 are each formed in a substantially identical manner from a single piece of stainless steel mesh. As shown best in Figure 4, preferably, the mesh is selected as a number 7 per mm size mesh and is folded in an accordion-like manner, with the result that each electrode 60 includes at least three and more, and preferably between five and nine juxtaposed metal layers. The electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d are provided with a thickness of between about 0.4 and 0.6 mm, and more preferably a thickness selected to substantially span between the ceramic plates 36,38. As shown best in Figure 3, the electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d have a lateral width selected so as to extend laterally substantially across each associated flow passage segment 44a,44b,44c,44d, ensuring that gas flowing from the inlet tube 50 to the outlet tube 52 along the fluid flow passage 28 fully passes through each electrode 60.

Figure 2 shows best the electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d as extending in a longitudinal direction approximately half the longitudinal length of each associated flow passage segment 44a,44b,44c,44d. The electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d are positioned in a central portion of each respective flow passage 44a,44b,44c,44d so as to define at each end thereof coronal discharge free areas 70. The inclusion of various discharge free areas 70 in the fluid flow passage 28 permits partial cooling of the treated gas during the reaction process. With the present construction, the use of ceramic plates 36,38 and ceramic spacers 42,46 further provide enhanced thermal conductivity from the flow passage 28 and housing 14. The partial cooling of the gas has been found to enhance the breakdown of O₂, yielding increased quantities of ozone as well as monovalent oxygen.

Figures 1 and 2 shows best the power supply 12 as including an electric lead wire 62 and an electric ground wire 64. As will be described, the lead wire 62 is coupled to an output power source 69 of the power supply 12, and extends into an interior of the housing 14 to supply electrical current to the electrodes 60 during operation. The ground wire 64 is most preferably electrically connected to the exterior of the housing 14 and/or another suitable ground, with the electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d each connected in series along one end portion

by the electric lead wire 62. The electric lead wire 62 is inserted through an opening formed in the housing sidewall 19, and is maintained electrically insulated therefrom by means of a hollow tubular ceramic insert 72. Although not essential, for increased operating efficiency, the lead wire 62 is made as short as possible and is fed through a bore hole 74 drilled in the ceramic plate 46b. The bore hole 74 is sealed about the wire 62 with Silicon™, or other suitable sealant that has a high insulation factor and resistance to oxidation to prevent substantial volumes of gas from flowing therethrough.

The power source 69 could, for example, be constructed with circuitry in a similar manner to that described in United States Patent No. 6,488,819 B2 to Conrad et al. While a suitable voltage waveform may be achieved by the circuitry disclosed in United States Patent No. 6,488,819 to Conrad et al, more preferably, the power source circuitry is modified to provide power to the electrodes 60 in a high voltage square waveform as shown in Figures 6a and 6b.

Figure 7 illustrates schematically a circuit diagram for a more preferred power source 69 in accordance with the present invention. The power source circuitry preferably includes the following components or their equivalent:

1	Heat sink for T1& T2. This will normally be the case of the water cooled generator
1	8 pin DIP socket. (For TR1 Transformer)
D1 (4 off)	10 Amp 600 Volt bridge rectifier (single bridge or 4 separate rectifiers)
D2	32 Volt Diac – NTE 6408 (or equivalent)
D4,D5	11DF4 International Rectifier. High Speed Diode.
T1,T2	Transistor. MJE 1305, BUL 146
R1	0.47 Ohm 5 Watt resistor
R2	22ik 0.5 Watt resistor
R3	68 Ohm 0.25 Watt resistor
R4,R5	1.6 Ohm 0.5 Watt resistor
C1	0.1 MFD 250 V AC or 1000 VDC working
C3	0.01 MFD Ceramic capacitor

C2	220 MFD 400 VW High Ripple current electrolytic capacitor. OR: 0.1 MFD Ceramic with very low <2 Gm (Oxygen) Ozone units.
C4,C5	0.33 MFD 400 VW Metalized Mylar/Poly capacitor. High ripple current rating
VR1	120 Voltage transient suppressor

Transformer cores and Toroid.

2 Ferrite cores

1 Ferrite Toroid Core.

The HV transformer is preferably mounted about 3 cm above any metal plate using insulating bolts or straps. The radiated field from the transformer can cause the plate to get hot and any energy lost can reduce the generator output.

Figure 7 illustrates schematically a simple circuit using two transistors with transformer feedback used to obtain the waveform of Figure 6a. The design in development is one using a computer/microprocessor ("embedded system).

The output of the circuit drives the ozone generator. While the input power supply is shown as 110 Volt AC, it can operate off other voltages by changing the number of turns on the primary of the output transformer, and ensuring that certain components have a suitable voltage rating.

The 110 Volt AC is rectified by the diode bridge rectifier D1 and charges capacitor C1 to about 160 Volts DC. Resistor R1, and Capacitor C1 and Varactor VR1 work together to give some protection against voltage transients from the AC mains and limit RF interference.

When the circuit is first switched on, capacitor C2 charges to about 160 Volts. Transistors T1 and T2 are "turned off" as there is no positive voltage on the bases to turn them on. Components R2, C3, D2 and D3 form a circuit that will start the circuit operating.

D2 is a Diac trigger diode and is operable to open the circuit until the voltage across it reaches a certain level. In a preferred constructions, diode D2 is selected to trigger at about 32 Volts.

As the DC voltage across C2 increases, the voltage at the junction of D2 and C3 also increases, as initially C3 has no charge. The other end of D1 is connected to the base of transistor T2 via resistor R3. As this voltage rises, voltage across D2 increases, until it reaches about 32 Volts, when it “turns on” and the voltage across it drops to a very low level. As this happens, Capacitor C3 charges up taking current through D2, R3 and the base emitter of Transistor T2, turning this transistor on. During normal operating conditions, Diode D3 keeps Capacitor C3 charged, and the voltage across the Trigger diode D2 below its trigger voltage. When the circuit is switched off, Resistor R2 discharges Capacitor C3.

With transistor T2 turned on, DC current passes through the transistor T2, through winding B of TR1, to the primary of the HV transformers. As the current increases through winding B, the phase of the other windings is such that the secondary C drives the base of T2 positive, keeping it turned on. At the same time, the secondary winding A drives the base T1 negative, keeping it turned off. Due to the inductive effect of the HV transformer, the current increases, generating a high voltage in the secondary that is connected to the Ozone generator. As the current keeps increasing, this increasing current also keeps the voltage on T2 positive and the voltage on the base of T1 negative. Eventually, the rate of current increase slows down due to the transformer core reaching saturation, and eventually starts to drop. (The voltage at the junction of C4 and C5 remains fairly constant). As this happens, the voltage on the secondaries of TR1 reverse, turning transistor T2 off and transistor T1 on. The current through transistor T1 now drives current in the reverse direction through the HV transformer with the process repeating itself.

As a result of the circuitry operation, the power supply 12 outputs energy in the generally square waveform shown in Figure 6a, with peak power oscillating sharply between positive and negative polarities. The applicant has appreciated that by providing a power level with a peak power that oscillates between positive and negative polarity, and with substantially instantaneous power, achieves more highly efficient ozone production.

Figure 6b shows an alternate envisioned waveform for energy supplied to the electrodes 60 in the use of the present invention. In Figure 6b, power is again supplied to the lead wire 62 and electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d by the power supply 12 with a comparatively

higher positive and negative polarity. Power is supplied, however, for only part of the cycle, resulting in a lower average power output. In particular, high voltage AC waveform is applied to the wire mesh electrodes 60 so as to create an ionizing plasma between the ceramic plates and wire mesh. Following the initial powering of the electrodes 60, the power source 12 remains in a brief power-off cycle, followed thereafter by a substantially instantaneous negative polarity.

The applicant has appreciated that with the wave form shown in Figure 6b, given average power level, the “peak power” is high, giving corona (U.V.) conditions that give better Ozone/O₁ conversion. Putting it another way, for a given power level, Ozone generation with this waveform will be higher than for a normal square wave; giving greater efficiency together with higher O₁ generation. As O₁ (monovalent Oxygen has approx ten times more Oxidizing capability than Ozone, this “power efficiency” is even higher than accounted for by watt/hours per gram of Ozone.

Thus, in addition to reducing overall power consumption, there is the greater capability of O₁ (monovalent Oxygen) production.

During normal operation of an Ozone generator, the gas enters the inlet end portion 30 a labyrinth flow passage 28 that has an electrode providing an ionized path along the length. As the gas passes along the passage 28, it gets hotter, and to some extent, the amount of Oxygen decreases as Ozone is produced. Ozone generated at the beginning of this labyrinth is also heated and due to this heat, is degrading all the way through, reducing the total output. Also, towards the end of the labyrinthine passage 28 there is less Oxygen to convert to Ozone. In an alternate “batch process”, operation mode where the generator is operating and there is ozone along the labyrinth passage 28, power is switched off. Now there is Oxygen going into the generator and already converted Ozone coming out at the end. This state continues until nearly all the Ozone has come out and the generator almost full of Oxygen. A very high level of power (ionizing energy) is then reapplied for a very short period of time to convert all the Oxygen already inside the generator, after which power off again. Now as the Ozone is passing through the labyrinth, there is now no ionizing energy to degrade the Ozone/O₁. When the Ozone has passed through the labyrinth passage 28 and more oxygen has entered, switch the power back on etc. The length of time that the power is

off, will depend on the gas flow and the “high power level” will be that needed to ionize the gas (Oxygen) to the desired level.

Ionization of the introduced gas starts at the edge of each multipoint electrode 60a,60b,60c,60d, with the electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d substantially achieving ionizing over their entire surface. As the electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d extend across each segment 44a,44b,44c,44d, the gas is forced through the electrodes 60, with the oxygen in the input gas being converted to ozone and monovalent oxygen.

Ultraviolet light produced during operation of the electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d also assists in ionizing O₂ in the input gas, creating ozone and/or monovalent oxygen. It can also be used to ionize and break down other gases, such as CF₃Br

Simultaneously with the introduction of the gas into the reaction cavity 20, the power supply 12 is activated and the electric circuit is initialized to supply the power to the electric lead 62 and electrodes 60a,60b,60c.

Concurrently, the liquid cooling system 16 is activated to circulate refrigerant fluid through the cooling tube 24. The thermal contact between the tube 24 and cover members 18a,18b, and their contact in turn with the ceramic plates 36,38 achieves cooling of the discharge free areas 70, to cool the gas moving therethrough.

Ionization of the introduced gas occurs along the entire length of each multipoint electrode. As the electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d extend across each segment 44a,44b,44c,44d, the gas is forced through the electrodes 60, with the oxygen contained in the input gas being converted to ozone and monovalent oxygen. Ultraviolet light produced during operation of the electrodes 60a,60b,60c,60d also assists in ionizing O₂ in the input gas, creating ozone and/or monovalent oxygen and breaking down other gases such as CF₃Br.

As indicated, the applicant has appreciated that the physical construction of the mesh used in the electrode 60 construction assists in causing turbulence within the flow passage 28 and facilitates the mixing of the gases and more complete ozone and monovalent oxygen production. The power waveform provides comparatively short high level ionizing pulses,

optimally followed by a pause and thereafter a negative square waveform pulse has been found to achieve rapid ionization.

EXAMPLE 1

In prototype testing of the housing 14 and mesh 60 construction output was measured, albeit without water or other cooling fluid cooling, ozone concentration output for the processing of air was calculated on the basis of a continuous flow mode for input gas (litres per minute) as shown on the attached Table I:

TABLE I OZONE GENERATOR						
PSI	FLOW Litres/Min	Lab ref Only VOLTS	WATTS	G/M Concentrations in Grams per Cubic Meter	G/HR	Comments
5	5.5		50	15.7	5.2	
5	5.5	82	100	30.9	10.2	
5	5.5	99	150	42.5	14.0	
5	5.5	116	200	52.0	17.2	
5	5.5	130	250	58.1	19.2	
9	5.5	81	100	33.2	11.0	
9	5.5	99	150	45.0	14.9	
9	5.5	116	200	54.7	18.1	
9	5.5	130	250	61.6	20.3	
9	2.75	116	200	80.4	13.3	
9	2.75	130	250	82.8	13.7	
15	2.75	116	200	84.0	13.9	
15	2.75	130	250	87.8	14.5	
13.5	9	116	200	42.3	22.8	Cool for 20

						MIN
13.5	9	130	250	48.5	26.2	
15	9	116	200	39.5	21.3	
15	9	130	250	48.9	26.4	
10	1	116	200	7.76%/WT	6.61	Low Grams for higher %
10	1	130	250	7.19%/WT	6.18	

Oxygen flow 5.5 Litres per min. Power consumption 250 Watts

Generator Temperature	Grams of Ozone per hour
79	17.66
50	22.0
30	23.3

All readings were taken using a Reliant/Airsep AS15 Oxygen concentrator that gives approx 90% Oxygen.

It is envisioned that the ozone generator 10 may be used in a number of fluid purification apparatus including, without restriction, water purification apparatus and air purification apparatus. The ozone generator 10 is, however, equally suitable for other purification and/or sterilization systems where ozone production is desired including by way of non-limiting example, medical equipment sterilization apparatus.

Although the preferred embodiment of the invention describes the use of a liquid cooling system 16 including a refrigerant pump 26 and copper tube 24 as being used to cool the housing 14 during operation, the invention is not so limited. It is to be appreciated that other mechanisms for dissipating heat from the housing 14 are also possible and will now become readily apparent. Such mechanisms include, without restriction, the provision of metal or other thermally conductive heat sinks along part or all of the housing exterior, the provision of cooling fans, or the emersion of the housing 14 in a suitable cooling bath.

Although the preferred embodiment describes the flow passage 28 as including four passage segments 44a,44b,44c,44d, the invention is not so limited. The flow passage 34

could be provided with a fewer or greater number of passage segments which extend either sinuously, non-linearly or in a labyrinthine fashion.

Although the detailed description describes and illustrates various preferred embodiments, the invention is not lo limited. Many modifications and variations will now occur to persons skilled in the art. For a definition of the invention, reference may be had to the appended claims.

We claim:

1. An apparatus for generating ozone and/or monovalent oxygen by the chemical conversion of an input gas comprising
 - a housing defining a cavity therein,
 - a fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing,
 - at least one electrode disposed in said fluid flow passage, said electrode being selected from a metal mesh and a substrate comprising a plurality of discharge point sources,
 - a power source for supplying an AC voltage, said power source including a contact lead electrically coupled to each said at least one electrode, and a ground lead in electrical contact with ground,
 - a gas inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a first portion of said flow passage upstream from said electrode,
 - a gas outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a second portion of said flow passage spaced downstream from said electrode.
2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said power source supplies said AC voltage as a generally square pulse high voltage waveform.
3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein said apparatus is further operable to produce monovalent oxygen, said power source including a supply high voltage generator and circuitry for said AC voltage at a frequency selected at about a third harmonic of the resonant frequency of said high voltage generator.
4. The apparatus as claimed in claim 2 further including a cooling mechanism for supplying cooling fluid to at least part of said housing during operation of said apparatus, said cooling mechanism being selected to cool said housing to a temperature of between about 5°C and 10°C.

5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said electrode comprises a multipoint stainless steel mesh sheet which has been folded or welded into a plurality of substantially overlapping layers.
6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said housing comprises a metal housing, and said ground lead is provided in electrical contact with said metal housing.
7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said fluid flow passage comprises a generally serpentine extending passage including a plurality of passage segments, each said passage segment having one of said electrodes disposed therein.
8. The apparatus as claimed in claim 7 wherein said passage segments are delineated from each other by a thermally conductive electrically insulating member spanning at least half way across a lateral width of said cavity.
9. The apparatus as claim in claim 7 wherein the electrode in each said segment is spaced in the direction of said fluid flow passage from a next adjacent electrode.
10. The apparatus as claimed in claim 9 including an insulating spacer for electrically insulating said fluid flow passage from said housing.
11. The apparatus as claimed in claim 9 further comprising a fluid pump for supplying fluid into said fluid flow passage through said fluid inlet, said fluid pump selected to supply a predetermined volume of fluid to said fluid flow passage as a continuous batch process.
12. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11 wherein said fluid pump is selected to supply said fluid to said fluid flow passage at a flow rate of between about 1 and 10 litres/minute.
13. An apparatus for producing ozone and monovalent oxygen

a metal housing defining a cavity therein,

a fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing,

a plurality of electrodes disposed in said fluid flow passage and being spaced in a direction of said flow passage from each other, said electrodes comprising a multipoint surface electrode,

a generator element for producing a pulsed AC voltage including an electrical contact electrically coupled to each of said electrodes, and a ground electrode physically separated from said electrodes to form a gap therebetween,

a fluid inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with an upstream end portion of said flow passage,

a fluid outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a downstream end portion of said flow passage spaced flow,

a fluid supply for supplying a fluid through said fluid inlet into said fluid passage and outwardly therefrom through said fluid outlet.

14. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 further including a cooling mechanism for supplying cooling fluid to at least part of said housing during operation.

15. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said fluid flow passage comprises a generally serpentine extending passage comprising a plurality of passage segments, each passage segment having at least one of said electrodes disposed therein, and

wherein said passage segments are delineated from each other by an electrical insulator.

16. The apparatus as claimed in claim 15 wherein each of said electrodes comprises a stainless steel mesh sheet which has been folded into at least three substantially overlapping layers, and

wherein the electrode in each said segment is spaced in the direction of fluid flow from a next adjacent electrode.

17. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said fluid pump is selected to supply a predetermined volume of said fluid to said passage as a continuously process.

18. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said fluid pump is selected to supply said fluid at a continuous flow rate of between about 1 and 10 litres/minute.

19. An apparatus for generating ozone comprising

a metal housing defining a cavity therein,

a generally serpentine extending fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing and comprising a plurality of passage segments,

a metal mesh electrode selected from the group consisting of stainless steel mesh and platinum mesh disposed in each of said passage segments,

a power source for supplying a pulsed voltage including a lead wire electrically coupled to each said at least one electrode, and a ground wire in electrical contact with said housing,

a fluid inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a first portion of said flow passage upstream from said electrodes,

a fluid outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a second portion of said flow passage spaced downstream from said electrodes,

a fluid pump for supplying a fluid flow along said fluid flow passage from said fluid inlet to said fluid outlet.

20. The apparatus as claimed in claim 19 further including a cooling mechanism for cooling said housing during operation and said cooling mechanism is selected to cool a portion of said housing to a temperature of between about 5°C and 12°C.

21. The apparatus as claimed in claim 19 wherein said voltage is a pulsed AC voltage, said electrodes each comprising a mesh sheet which has been folded or spot welded into a plurality of substantially juxtaposed overlapping layers, and each of said passage segments are delineated from each other by an electrical insulator.

22. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said fluid flow passage comprises a straight-line passage.

23. The apparatus as claimed in claim 20 wherein said fluid flow passage is electrically insulated from said housing by at least one pair of thermally conductive electrically insulating plates, each said plate being disposed along an opposite side of at least one flow passage segment on opposing sides of the electrode positioned therein,

said cooling mechanism including a cooling fluid circulation tube in thermal contact with said pair of thermally conductive plates, whereby during operation said cooling mechanism effects cooling of both sides of the electrode positioned in said at least one flow passage segment.

24. The apparatus as claimed in claim 23 wherein said thermally conductive plates comprise ceramic plates.

AMENDED CLAIMS

received by the International Bureau on 05 September 2005 (05.09.2005)
original claims 1-24, replaced by amended claims 1-24(5 pages).

We claim:

1. An apparatus for generating ozone and/or O₁ by the chemical conversion of an input oxygen containing gas comprising

a housing defining a cavity therein,

a fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing,

at least one electrode disposed in said fluid flow passage, said electrode being selected from a metal mesh and a substrate comprising a plurality of discharge point sources, said fluid flow passage comprising a generally serpentine extending passage including a plurality of passage segments, each said passage segment having one of said electrodes disposed therein,

a power source for supplying an AC voltage, said power source including a contact lead electrically coupled to each said at least one electrode, and a ground lead in electrical contact with ground,

a gas inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a first portion of said flow passage upstream from said electrode,

a gas outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a second portion of said flow passage spaced downstream from said electrode.

2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said power source supplies said AC voltage as a generally square pulse high voltage waveform.

3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein said apparatus is further operable to produce O₁, said power source including a high voltage supply generator and circuitry to supply said AC voltage at a frequency selected at about a third harmonic of the resonant frequency of said high voltage generator when electrically coupled to said at least one electrode.

4. The apparatus as claimed in claim 2 further including a cooling mechanism for supplying cooling fluid to at least part of said housing during operation of said apparatus, said cooling mechanism being selected to cool said housing to a temperature of between about 5°C and 10°C.
5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said electrode comprises a folded or welded multipoint stainless steel mesh sheets disposed in a plurality of substantially overlapping layers.
6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said housing comprises a metal housing, and said ground lead is provided in electrical contact with said metal housing.
7. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said passage segments are delineated from each other by a thermally conductive electrically insulating member spanning at least half way across a lateral width of said cavity.
8. The apparatus as claimed in claim 7 wherein said thermally conductive electrically insulating members comprise ceramic insulating members.
9. The apparatus as claim in claim 1 wherein the electrode in each said segment is spaced in the direction of said fluid flow passage from a next adjacent electrode.
10. The apparatus as claimed in claim 9 including an insulating spacer for electrically insulating said fluid flow passage from said housing.
11. The apparatus as claimed in claim 9 further comprising a fluid pump for supplying fluid into said fluid flow passage through said fluid inlet, said fluid pump selected to supply a predetermined volume of fluid to said fluid flow passage as a continuous batch process.
12. The apparatus as claimed in claim 11 wherein said fluid pump is selected to supply said fluid to said fluid flow passage at a flow rate of between about 1 and 10 litres/minute.
13. An apparatus for producing ozone and O₁

a metal housing defining a cavity therein,

a fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing,

a plurality of electrodes disposed in said fluid flow passage and being spaced in a direction of said flow passage from each other, said electrodes comprising a multipoint surface electrode, said fluid flow passage comprising a generally serpentine extending passage comprising a plurality of passage segments, each passage segment having at least one of said electrodes disposed therein, and

wherein said passage segments are delineated from each other by an electrical insulator.

a generator element for producing a pulsed AC voltage including an electrical contact electrically coupled to each of said electrodes, and a ground electrode physically separated from said electrodes to form a gap therebetween,

a fluid inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with an upstream end portion of said flow passage,

a fluid outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a downstream end portion of said flow passage spaced flow,

a fluid supply for supplying a fluid through said fluid inlet into said fluid passage and outwardly therefrom through said fluid outlet.

14. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 further including a cooling mechanism for supplying cooling fluid to at least part of said housing during operation.

15. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein the electric insulator comprises a ceramic insulator.

16. The apparatus as claimed in claim 15 wherein each of said electrodes comprises a stainless steel mesh sheet which has been folded into at least three substantially overlapping layers, and

wherein the electrode in each said segment is spaced in the direction of fluid flow from a next adjacent electrode.

17. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said fluid pump is selected to supply a predetermined volume of said fluid to said passage as a continuously process.

18. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said fluid pump is selected to supply said fluid at a continuous flow rate of between about 1 and 10 litres/minute.

19. An apparatus for generating ozone comprising

a metal housing defining a cavity therein,

a generally serpentine extending fluid flow passage disposed in said cavity, said fluid flow passage being electrically insulated from said housing and comprising a plurality of passage segments,

a metal mesh electrode selected from the group consisting of stainless steel mesh and platinum mesh disposed in each of said passage segments,

a power source for supplying a pulsed voltage including a lead wire electrically coupled to each said at least one electrode, and a ground wire in electrical contact with said housing,

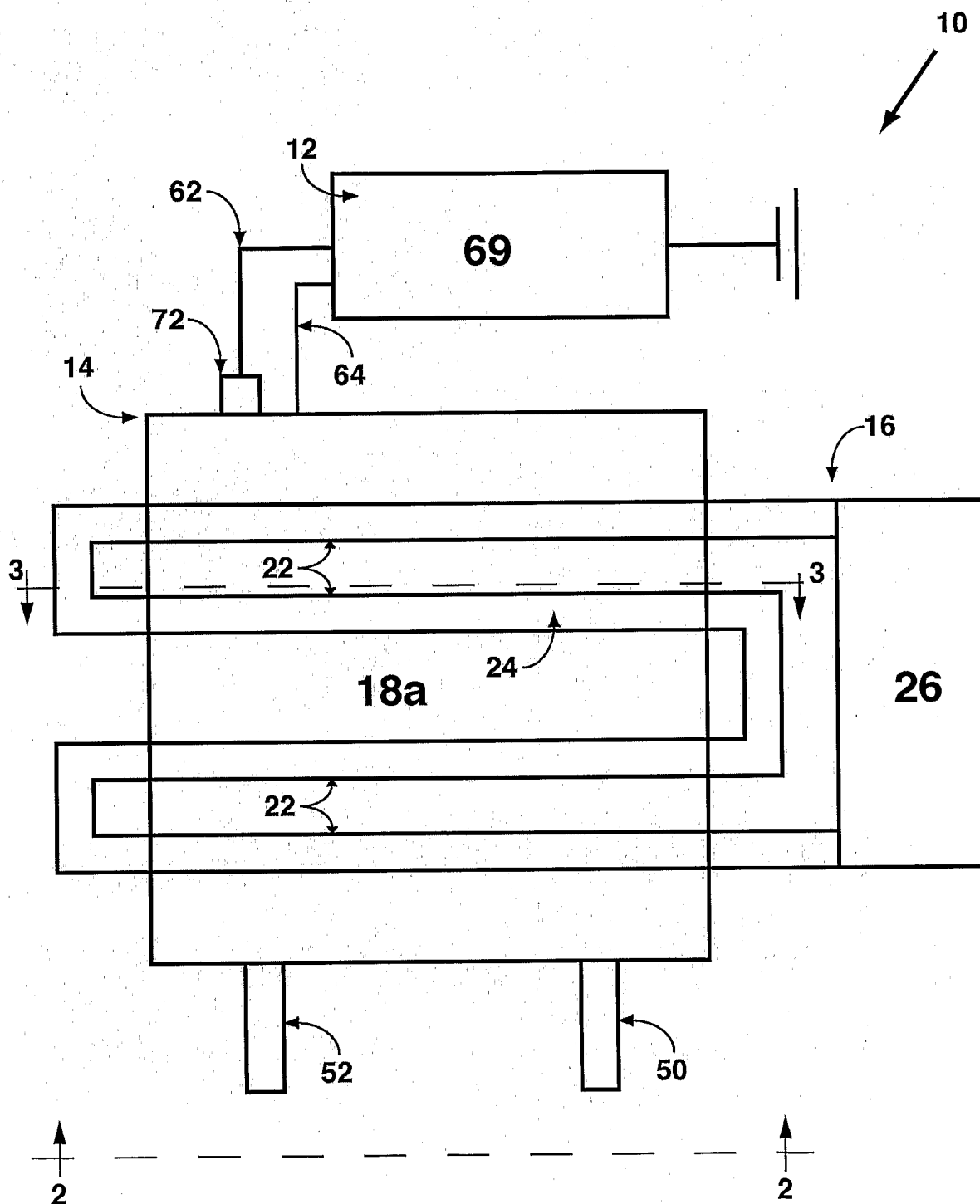
a fluid inlet extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a first portion of said flow passage upstream from said electrodes,

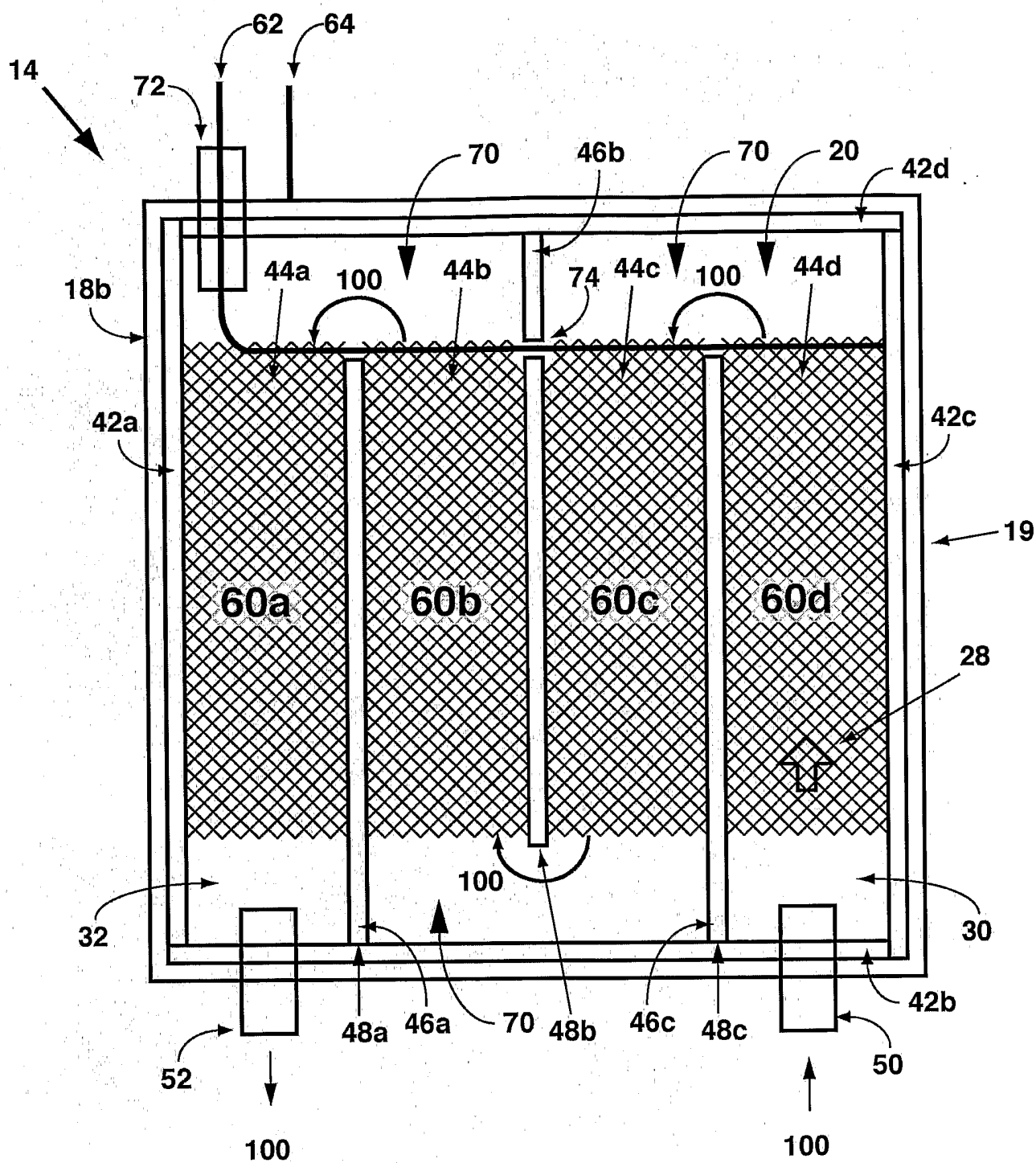
a fluid outlet passage extending through said housing and providing gaseous fluid communication with a second portion of said flow passage spaced downstream from said electrodes,

a fluid pump for supplying a fluid flow along said fluid flow passage from said fluid inlet to said fluid outlet.

20. The apparatus as claimed in claim 19 further including a cooling mechanism for cooling said housing during operation and said cooling mechanism is selected to cool a portion of said housing to a temperature of between about 5°C and 12°C.
21. The apparatus as claimed in claim 19 wherein said voltage is a pulsed AC voltage, said electrodes each comprising a mesh sheet which has been folded or spot welded into a plurality of substantially juxtaposed overlapping layers, and each of said passage segments are delineated from each other by an electrical insulator.
22. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said fluid flow passage comprises a straight-line passage.
23. The apparatus as claimed in claim 20 wherein said fluid flow passage is electrically insulated from said housing by at least one pair of thermally conductive electrically insulating plates, each said plate being disposed along an opposite side of at least one flow passage segment on opposing sides of the electrode positioned therein,
- said cooling mechanism including a cooling fluid circulation tube in thermal contact with said pair of thermally conductive plates, whereby during operation said cooling mechanism effects cooling of both sides of the electrode positioned in said at least one flow passage segment.
24. The apparatus as claimed in claim 23 wherein said thermally conductive plates comprise ceramic plates.

Figure 1





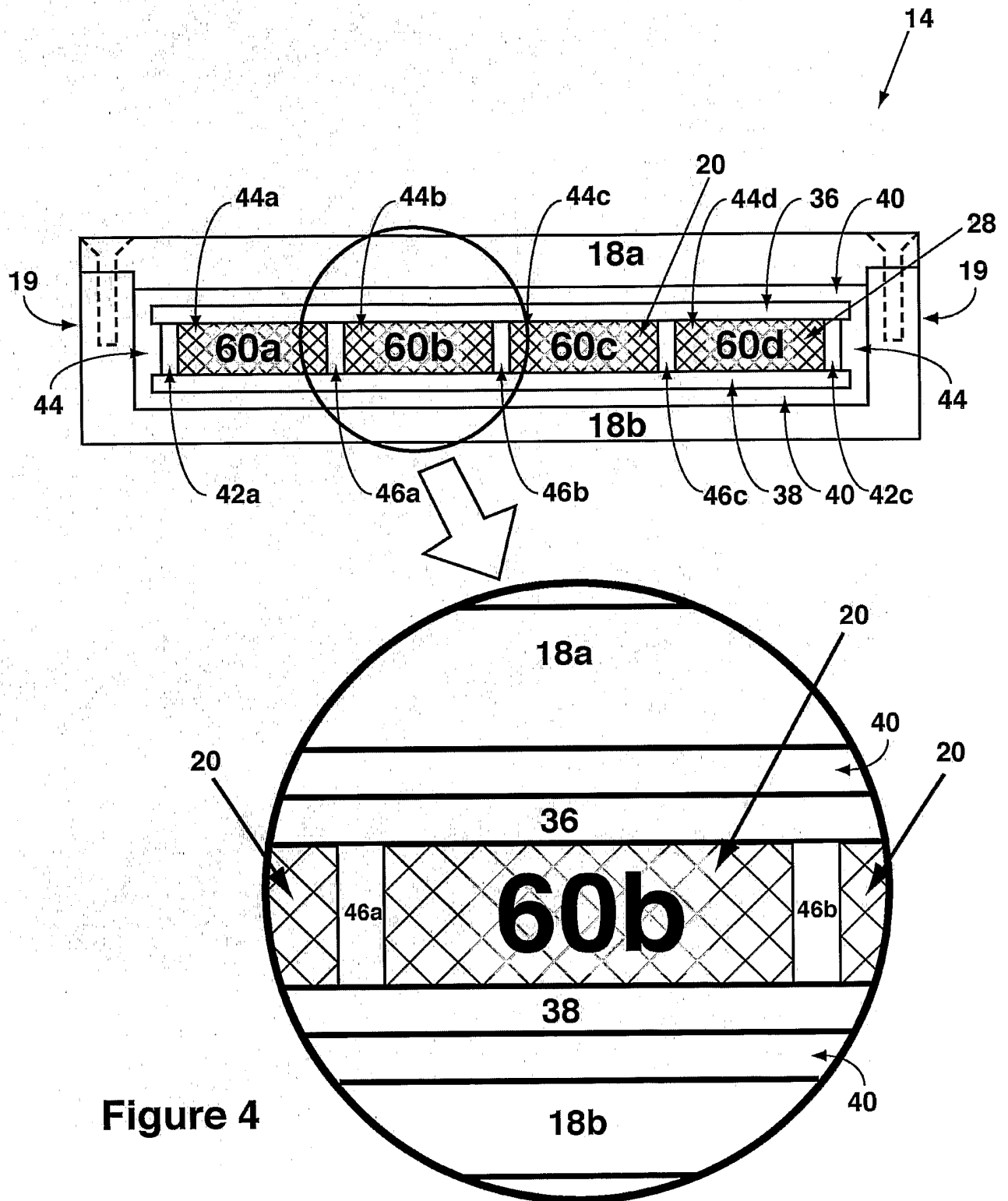


Figure 4

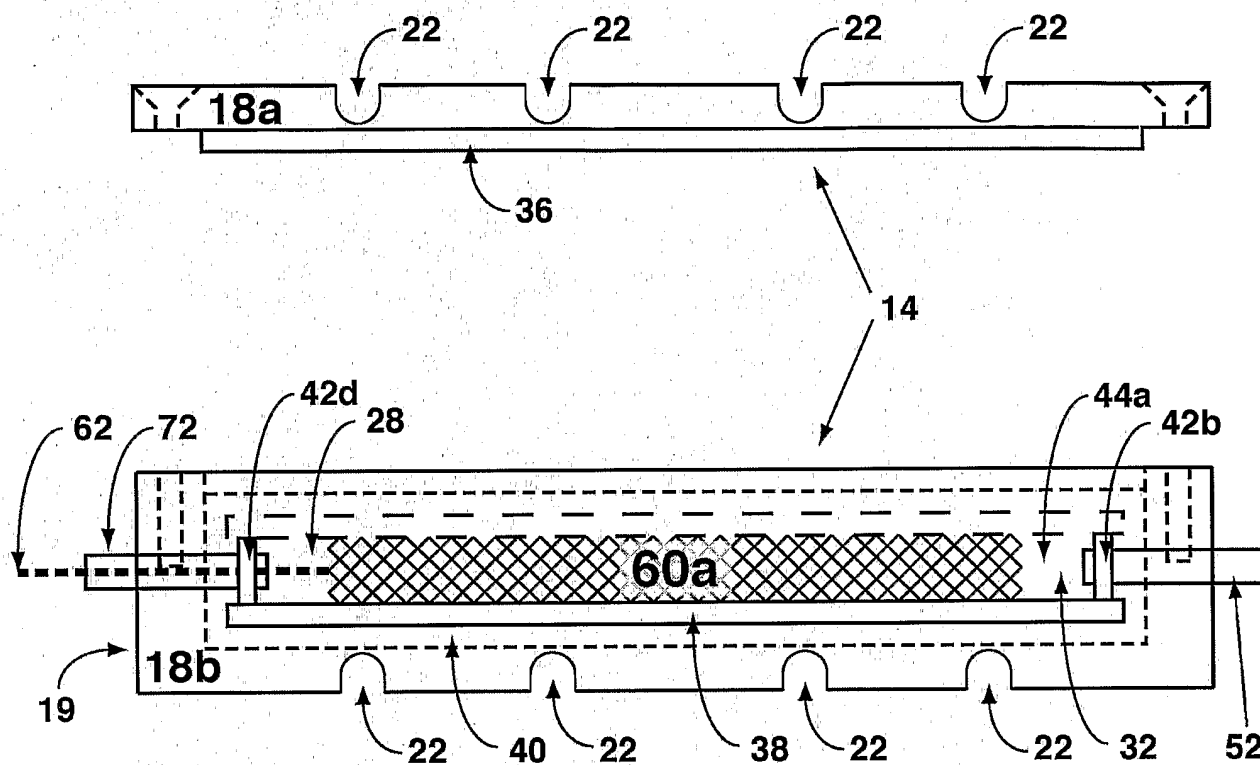




Figure 6b

Figure 6a

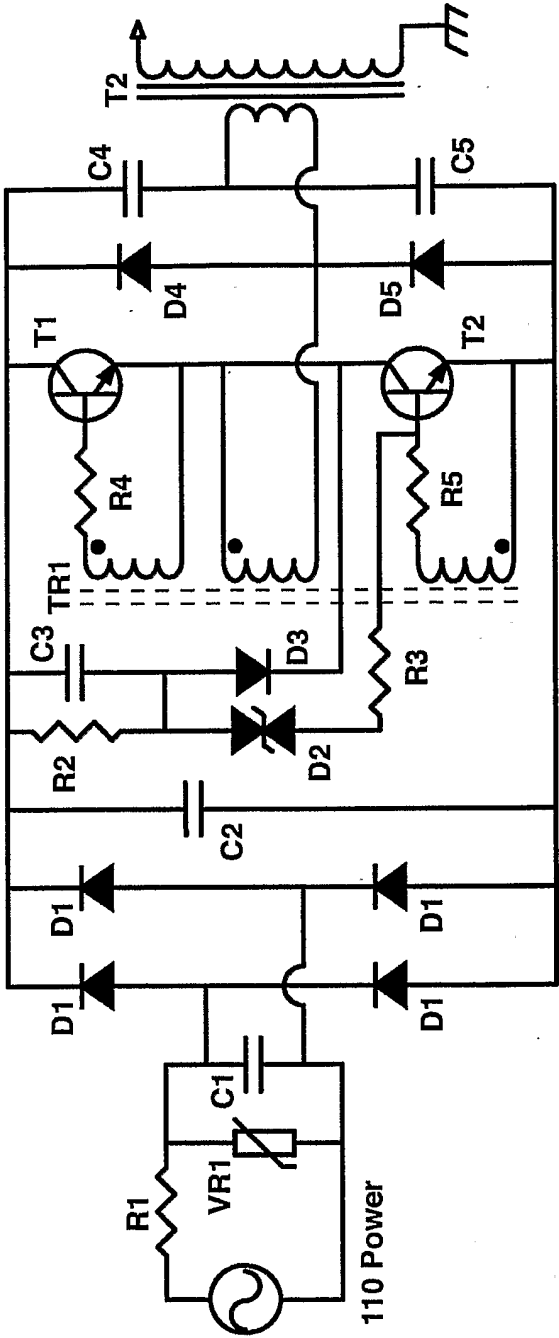


Figure 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/CA2005/000340

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(7): C01B 13/11, C01B 13/10

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC(7): C01B 13/11, C01B 13/10

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

Electronic database(s) consulted during the international search (name of database(s) and, where practicable, search terms used)
CPD, Delphion, Derwent, Patent Abstracts of Japan

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	CA 2,291,525 (Cooper et al.) 03-06-2001 *whole document*	1, 22
Y		5
X	CA 2,129,848 (Mausgrover et al.) 19-08-1993 *whole document*	1, 22
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X	WO 97/01507 (Arlemark) 16-01-1997 *page 5, lines 6-9*	1, 22
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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☒ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :	"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
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"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
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"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
"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)	"&" document member of the same patent family
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search 14 June 2005 (14-06-2005)	Date of mailing of the international search report 05 July 2005 (05-07-2005)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/CA Canadian Intellectual Property Office Place du Portage I, C114 - 1st Floor, Box PCT 50 Victoria Street Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0C9 Facsimile No.: 001(819)953-2476	Authorized officer Michelle Barriault (819) 934-2331

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/CA2005/000340

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/CA2005/000340

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of the first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons :

1. ☐ Claim Nos. :
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely :

2. ☒ Claim Nos. : 3
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically :

There is no support in the description for the subject matter of claim 3, and the claim lacks clarity (Article 6 PCT) to such an extent as to render it unsearchable.

3. ☐ Claim Nos. :
because they are dependant claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows :

Since the independent claims (1, 13 and 19) should specify all of the essential features needed to define the invention, and since the only elements which are common to all three independent claims are all standard in the art, the claims lack unity *a posteriori* even though the application does not necessarily disclose more than one inventive concept.

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.

2. ☒ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of additional fees.

3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claim Nos. :

4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claim Nos. :

Remark on Protest ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.

☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.

☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/CA2005/000340

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
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