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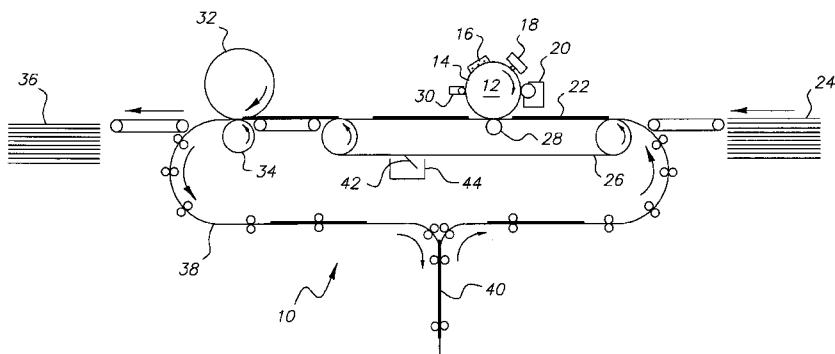


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: Method for producing a printed circuit using electrophotography, the method comprising: charging a primary member; creating an electrostatic latent image by image-wise exposing the primary imaging member; image-wise depositing thermoplastic particles onto the primary imaging member; transferring the thermoplastic particles to an electrically insulating substrate; depositing conductive powder over the substrate; permanently fixing the conductive powder on the thermoplastic substrate; and removing conductive powder from portions of the substrate other than that coated with the thermoplastic pattern.

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**METHOD OF PRODUCING ELECTRONIC CIRCUIT BOARDS USING
ELECTROPHOTOGRAPHY**

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention is directed generally to printing electronic circuits, and more particularly, to producing printed electronic circuits using electrophotography.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 A printed circuit board is used to mechanically support and electrically connect electronic components using conductive pathways, or traces, etched from copper sheets laminated onto a non-conductive substrate. They may also be referred to as printed wiring board or etched wiring board. A printed circuit populated with electronic components is a printed circuit assembly, also known as a printed circuit board assembly.

15 Printed circuits are rugged, inexpensive, and can be highly reliable. They require much more layout effort and higher initial cost than either wire-wrapped or point-to-point constructed circuits, but are much cheaper and faster for high-volume production. Conducting layers are typically made of thin copper foil. Insulating layers are typically laminated together with epoxy resin. The
20 board is typically green in color and made of materials like polytetrafluoroethylene, FR-4, FR-1, CEM-1 or CEM-3. Well known prepreg materials used in the PCB industry are FR-2 (Phenolic cotton paper), FR-3 (Cotton paper and epoxy), FR-4 (Woven glass and epoxy), FR-5 (Woven glass and epoxy), FR-6 (Matte glass and polyester), G-10 (Woven glass and epoxy),
25 CEM-1 (Cotton paper and epoxy), CEM-2 (Cotton paper and epoxy), CEM-3 (Woven glass and epoxy), CEM-4 (Woven glass and epoxy), CEM-5 (Woven glass and polyester).

 Most printed circuit boards are made by bonding a layer of copper over the entire substrate, sometimes on both sides, (creating a "blank PCB") then
30 removing unwanted copper after applying a temporary mask (e.g. by etching), leaving only the desired copper traces. A few PCBs are made by adding traces to

the bare substrate (or a substrate with a very thin layer of copper) usually by a complex process of multiple electroplating steps.

There are three common "subtractive" methods (methods that remove copper) used for the production of printed circuit boards:

5 Silk screen printing uses etch-resistant inks to protect the copper foil. Subsequent etching removes the unwanted copper. Alternatively, the ink may be conductive, printed on a blank (non-conductive) board. The latter technique is also used in the manufacture of hybrid circuits.

10 Photoengraving uses a photomask and chemical etching to remove the copper foil from the substrate. The photomask is usually prepared with a photoplotter from data produced by a technician using CAM, or computer-aided manufacturing software. Laser-printed transparencies are typically employed for phototools; however, direct laser imaging techniques are being employed to replace phototools for high-resolution requirements.

15 PCB milling uses a two or three-axis mechanical milling system to mill away the copper foil from the substrate. A PCB milling machine (referred to as a 'PCB Prototyper') operates in a similar way to a plotter, receiving commands from the host software that control the position of the milling head in the x, y, and (if relevant) z axis. Data to drive the Prototyper is extracted from files generated 20 in PCB design software and stored in HPGL or Gerber file format.

"Additive" processes also exist. The most common is the "semi-additive" process. In this version, the unpatterned board has a thin layer of copper already on it. A reverse mask is then applied. (Unlike a subtractive process mask, this mask exposes those parts of the substrate that will eventually become the traces.) Additional copper is then plated onto the board in the unmasked areas; copper may be plated to any desired weight. Tin-lead or other surface platings are then applied. The mask is stripped away and a brief etching step removes the now-exposed original copper laminate from the board, isolating the individual traces.

30 The additive process is commonly used for multi-layer boards as it facilitates the plating-through of the holes (to produce conductive bias) in the circuit board.

One method for printing images on a receiver member is referred to as electrography. In this method, an electrostatic image is formed on a dielectric member by uniformly charging the dielectric member and then 5 discharging selected areas of the uniform charge to yield an image-wise electrostatic charge pattern. Such discharge is typically accomplished by exposing the uniformly charged dielectric member to actinic radiation provided by selectively activating particular light sources in an LED array or a laser device directed at the dielectric member. After the image-wise charge pattern is formed, 10 the pigmented (or in some instances, non-pigmented) marking particles are given a charge, substantially opposite the charge pattern on the dielectric member and brought into the vicinity of the dielectric member so as to be attracted to the image-wise charge pattern to develop such pattern into a visible image.

Thereafter, a suitable receiver member (e.g., a cut sheet of plain 15 bond paper) is brought into juxtaposition with the marking particle developed image-wise charge pattern on the dielectric member. A suitable electric field is applied to transfer the marking particles to the receiver member in the image-wise pattern to form the desired print image on the receiver member. The receiver member is then removed from its operative association with the dielectric member 20 and the marking particle print image is permanently fixed to the receiver member typically using heat, and/or pressure and heat. Multiple layers or marking materials can be overlaid on one receiver, for example, layers of different color particles can be overlaid on one receiver member to form a multi-color print image on the receiver member after fixing.

25 Metal films, such as aluminum and gold, are commonly used in the manufacture of metal coated printed articles and electrical circuits in the commercial printing business. Currently there are commercial devices that stamp metal films, including a wide variety of reflective and electrically conductive thin films on various substrates.

30 There is a critical need in the art for a technique to create patterned conductive structures in a cost effective manner for short runs or with variable information. In addition to providing superior electrode performance, these

conductive layers also must be digitally patterned, must resist the effects of humidity change, and be manufacturable at a reasonable cost.

It is toward the objective of providing both such improved electrically conductive, digitally patterned articles that more effectively meet the

5 diverse commercial needs than those of the prior art, that the present invention is directed.

The printed circuits of the present invention are patterned by application of one or more toners using the electrographic development process. The final pattern is “fixed” by means of pressure and (or) heat fixing step, 10 whereupon the toner particles interacts with a conductive powder to adhere the conductive powder to a substrate.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is related to methods for printing a circuit onto a substrate using electrophotography.

15 One embodiment of the present invention contemplates a method for producing a printed circuit including the steps of image-wise producing a pattern comprising a thermoplastic on a substrate, depositing conductive powder over the substrate, permanently fixing the conductive powder on the thermoplastic substrate, removing the conductive powder from portions of the substrate other 20 than that coated with the thermoplastic pattern.

Another embodiment of the present invention contemplates a method for producing a printed circuit including the steps of charging a primary imaging member; creating an electrostatic latent image by image-wise exposing the primary imaging member, image-wise depositing thermoplastic particles onto 25 the primary imaging member, transferring the thermoplastic particles to an electrically insulating substrate, permanently fixing the thermoplastic particles, depositing conductive powder over the substrate, permanently fixing the conductive powder on the thermoplastic substrate, and removing conductive powder from portions of the substrate other than that coated with the 30 thermoplastic pattern.

A further embodiment of the present invention contemplates a method for producing a printed circuit including the steps of charging a primary

imaging member, creating an electrostatic latent image by image-wise exposing the primary imaging member, image-wise depositing thermoplastic particles onto the primary imaging member, transferring the thermoplastic particles to an electrically insulating substrate, permanently fixing the thermoplastic particles,

5 depositing conductive powder over the substrate, permanently fixing the conductive powder on the thermoplastic substrate, removing conductive powder from portions of the substrate other than that coated with the thermoplastic pattern, and driving the conductive particles into the thermoplastic by applying heat and/or pressure.

10 Another embodiment of the present invention contemplates a method of producing a multilayer printed circuit including the steps of charging a primary imaging member, create an electrostatic latent image by image-wise exposing the primary imaging member, image-wise depositing thermoplastic particles onto the primary imaging member, transferring the thermoplastic particles to an electrically insulating substrate, fixing the thermoplastic particles to form a first thermoplastic image, depositing metallic powder over the substrate, fixing the metallic powder on the first thermoplastic image, removing metallic powder from portions of the substrate other than that coated with the thermoplastic pattern, depositing a second image of electrically-insulating

15 thermoplastic particles uniformly over at least a portion of the substrate, cross-linking the thermoplastic particles of the second image so as to render them into a thermoset layer, charging a primary imaging member, creating an electrostatic latent image by image-wise exposing the primary imaging member, image-wise depositing thermoplastic particles onto the primary imaging member, transferring

20 the third image of thermoplastic particles to the thermoset layer in register with the previously transferred metallic particles, fixing the third image of thermoplastic particles, depositing metallic powder over the substrate, fixing the metallic powder on the thermoplastic substrate, and removing metallic powder from portions of the substrate other than that coated with the thermoplastic

25 pattern.

30 These and other aspects, objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more clearly understood and appreciated from a review

of the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments, the Figures, and appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic illustration of a side view of an electrographic reproduction apparatus in which the method of the present invention may be used;

FIG. 2 is a schematic illustration of a side view of an alternate electrographic reproduction apparatus in which the method of the present invention may be used; and

FIG. 3 is a schematic illustration of a side view of an electrographic reproduction apparatus with four imaging modules in which the method of the present invention may be used.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

For simplicity and illustrative purposes, the principles of the present invention are described by referring to various exemplary embodiments thereof. Although the preferred embodiments of the invention are particularly disclosed herein, one of ordinary skill in the art will readily recognize that the same principles are equally applicable to, and can be implemented in other systems, and that any such variation would be within such modifications that do not part from the scope of the present invention. Before explaining the disclosed embodiments of the present invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of any particular arrangement shown, since the invention is capable of other embodiments. The terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and not of limitation.

Further, although certain methods are described with reference to certain steps that are presented herein in certain order, in many instances, these steps may be performed in any order as would be appreciated by one skilled in the art, and the methods are not limited to the particular arrangement of steps disclosed herein.

Standard methods to produce printed circuits such as radio frequency identification devices (“RFIDs”), sensors, flexible displays, etc. do not employ electrophotography technology. The present invention provides an efficient method of making a printed circuit. (e.g. RFID tags)

Methods in accordance with the present invention enable the manufacture of such devices more efficiently and cost effectively than previously known methods. Any standard electrophotography equipment may be utilized in combination with equipment that is made to deposit particles. One example of equipment used to deposit particle is thermographic equipment.

In a preferred mode of practicing this invention, an electrostatic latent image in the pattern of the printed circuit is produced on a primary imaging member comprising a photoreceptor. The electrostatic latent image is then developed into a visible image using a specially prepared conductive powder, described forthwith. The image was then electrostatically transferred, using conventional electrostatic roller transfer, known in the electrophotography art, to a paper receiver. The image was then permanently fixed by exposing the image to either solvent vapors emanating from a sump containing dichloromethane or by heating the image bearing receiver to a temperature sufficient to fuse the powder to the receiver. If desired, conductivity can be enhanced by forcing the conductive powder particles into even closer proximity to each other by casting the fixed image-bearing receiver against a smooth material such as a polyimide sheet such as Kaptan-H (manufactured by DuPont), using heated rollers in a process known in the art as ferotyping.

Conductive particle per se are not suitable for use in the aforementioned application. Specifically, particles suitable for use must be able to be electrically charged to a desired level in order to develop the electrostatic latent image and to be transferred from the primary image bearing member to the receiver. This cannot be done with a conductive particle. Conversely, the particles must be highly conductive to be suitable for use in forming printed circuits. This is done by coating the conductive particles with a thermoplastic, electrically insulating polymer with a coating that is sufficient to prevent or at least substantially reduce discharging, but not so great as to prevent contact between the conductive particles in the fused image. This can be accomplished by blending an amount of conducting powder with an amount of polymer in a ratio by weight of between 0.7 and 3.0 times the ratio of the mass densities of the

polymer and material comprising the conducting powder. Suitable conducting powders include silver, gold, stainless steel, copper, carbon, and aluminum. Suitable polymers include thermoplastics, preferably with a glass transition temperature between 50 °C and 70 °C. Suitable materials include polyester, 5 polystyrene, polyester amides, polycarbonates, etc.

As an example, the conducting powder used in this study was prepared by first dissolving 4 g of polyester granules (mass density = 1.2 g/cm³) in 60 ml of dichloromethane. After dissolving the polyester, 60 g of silver powder (sold by DuPont (mass density = 10.5 g/cm³) was added, for a conducting powder 10 to polymer ratio of 15. The ratio of the density of the silver to polyester was 8.75, resulting in a blend of materials within the aforementioned limits. The dispersion was then allowed to thoroughly dry, after which the materials was ground into a fine powder in a mortar and pestle. Other means of preparing suitable materials include compounding and grinding, and chemical means such as evaporative 15 limited coalescence, as well as other means known in the literature. It should be noted that the concentration of the conducting powder to powder is much higher for this application than for normal electrophotographic printing applications and would not be suitable for such printing applications. Conversely, the carbon concentration in black pigment, for example, is much too low to be suitable for the 20 present application.

It should be noted that the size of the composite particles comprising the polymer and conductive powder, hereafter referred to as "toner" is not critical. However, there are several constraints that need to be taken into account when preparing the toner. Toner particles preferably should be greater 25 than approximately 2 µm if dry electrophotographic printing is used to make the image. However, smaller particles can be used if wet electrophotographic development, whereby the toner is dispersed in a carrier fluid such as Isopar-G. Maximum size of the toner is restricted by the fineness of the wires to be produced. For example, if it is desired to produce 1 mil wires (i.e. 25 µm) the 30 toner particles should preferably be less than 8 µm in diameter to ensure that there are sufficient particles to ensure good interparticle contact. To avoid formation of

satellites that can bridge wires, it is generally undesirable to have toner particles having diameters greater than approximately 20 μm .

First an electrode pattern for 1 or more circuits are printed with toner using a standard electostatographic process known in the industry,

5 preferably dry electrophotography

Electrostatographic reproduction apparatus generally are well known. Therefore the present description will be directed in particular to elements forming part of, or cooperating more directly with the present invention. There exist many different embodiments of the electrographic image forming process 10 used in such reproduction apparatus. This description will use three examples to teach the present invention, but it must be understood that the present invention is not limited to these examples, but rather could be practiced in any embodiment with the same image forming steps.

With reference to the electrographic reproduction apparatus 10 as 15 shown in FIG. 1, an imaging drum 12 is provided on which is coated a photoconductive member 14. The imaging drum 12 is selectively rotated, by any well-known drive mechanism (not shown), in the direction indicated by the arrow, to advance the photoconductive member 14 past a series of subsystems of the electrographic reproduction apparatus. A primary charging device 16 is provided 20 to deposit a uniform electrostatic charge onto the photoconductive member 14. The uniform charge on the photoconductive member 14 is subsequently selectively dissipated by, for example, a digitally addressed exposure subsystem 18, such as a Light Emitting Diode (LED) array or a scanned laser, to form an electrostatic latent image of a document to be reproduced. The electrostatic latent 25 image is then rendered visible by development subsystem 20, which deposits charged, pigmented marking particles onto the photoconductive member 14 in accordance with the electrostatic charge pattern of the latent image. The developed marking particle image is then transferred to a receiver member 22, also referred to as a substrate, that has been fed from supply 24 onto the transport 30 belt 26. The electric field to transfer the marking particle image from the photoconductive member 14 to the receiver member 22 is provided by electrically biased roller 28. Cleaner 30 cleans any marking particles that are not transferred

from the photoconductive member 14 to the receiver member 22. The receiver member 22 bearing the marking particle image is then transported through the nip formed between fuser roller 32 and pressure roller 34 wherein the marking particle image is fused by heat and pressure to the receiver member 22.

5 The fuser roller 32 is heated to a temperature high enough to fuse the marking particle image to the receiver member 22 as the receiver member 22 is passed through the nip with the side bearing the marking particle image in contact with the fuser roller 32. After exiting the fuser nip, if the print job calls for an image on just side one of the receiver member 22, the receiver member 22

10 10 is transported to output stack 36. If the print job calls also for an image on side two (the reverse side) of the receiver member 22, hereafter referred to as duplex printing, the receiver member 22 is not transported to the output stack 36, but rather is diverted to return path 38. In return path 38, the receiver member 22 is turned over in turnover device 40 and then returned to transport belt 26

15 15 whereupon a second marking particle image is transferred to side two of receiver member 22. The receiver member 22 bearing the marking particle image on side two is then transported through the nip formed between fuser roller 32 and pressure roller 34 wherein the marking particle image on side two of the receiver member 22 is fused by heat and pressure to side two of the receiver member 22.

20 20 After exiting the fuser nip the receiver member, with images on both sides, is transported to output stack 36.

FIG. 2 illustrates a variation of the electrographic reproduction apparatus in FIG. 1. In the variation illustrated in FIG. 2 the marking particle image formed on the photoconductor element is first transferred to an intermediate transfer element and then from the intermediate transfer element to the receiver element. All elements that are common to the two electrographic reproduction apparatus illustrated in FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 employ the same reference numerals. With reference to the electrographic reproduction apparatus 11 as shown in FIG. 2, an imaging drum 12 is provided on which is coated a photoconductive member 14. The imaging drum 12 is selectively rotated, by any well-known drive mechanism (not shown), in the direction indicated by the arrow, to advance the photoconductive member 14 past a series of subsystems of the electrographic

reproduction apparatus. A primary charging device 16 is provided to deposit a uniform electrostatic charge onto the photoconductive member 14. The uniform charge on the photoconductive member 14 is subsequently selectively dissipated by, for example, a digitally addressed exposure subsystem 18, such as a Light

5 Emitting Diode (LED) array or a scanned laser, to form an electrostatic latent image of a document to be reproduced.

The electrostatic latent image is then rendered visible by development subsystem 20, which deposits charged, pigmented marking particles onto the photoconductive member 14 in accordance with the electrostatic charge 10 pattern of the latent image. The developed marking particle image is then transferred from photoconductive member 14 to intermediate transfer member 15. The electric field to transfer the marking particle image from photoconductive member 14 to intermediate transfer member 15 is provided by an appropriate bias voltage applied to intermediate transfer member 15. Cleaner 30 cleans any 15 marking particles that are not transferred from the photoconductive member 14 to the intermediate transfer member 15. The marking particle image is then transferred from intermediate transfer member 15 to a receiver member 22 that has been fed from supply 24 onto the transport belt 26. The electric field to transfer the marking particle image from the intermediate transfer member 15 to 20 the receiver member 22 is provided by electrically biased roller 28. Cleaner 31 cleans any marking particles that are not transferred from intermediate transfer member 15 to the receiver member 22. The receiver member 22 bearing the marking particle image is then transported through the nip formed between fuser roller 32 and pressure roller 34 wherein the marking particle image is fused by 25 heat and pressure to the receiver member 22.

The fuser roller 32 is heated to a temperature high enough to fuse the marking particle image to the receiver member 22 as the receiver member 22 is passed through the nip with the side bearing the marking particle image in contact with the fuser roller 32. After exiting the fuser nip, if the print job calls 30 for an image on just side one of the receiver member 22, the receiver member is transported to output stack 36. If the print job calls also for an image on side two of the receiver member 22, hereafter referred to as duplex printing, the receiver

member 22 is not transported to the output stack 36, but rather is diverted to return path 38. In return path 38 the receiver member 22 is turned over in turnover device 40 and returned to transport belt 26 whereupon a second marking particle image is transferred to side two of receiver member 22. The receiver member 22

5 bearing the marking particle image on side two is then transported through the nip formed between fuser roller 32 and pressure roller 34 wherein the marking particle image on side two of the receiver member 22 is fused by heat and pressure to side two of the receiver member 22. After exiting the fuser nip the receiver member, with images on both sides, is transported to output stack 36.

10 In the electrographic reproduction apparatus 10 and 11 illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2 respectively, and described above, the combination of elements including the imaging drum 12 on which is coated the photoconductive member 14, the primary charging device 16, the exposure subsystem 18, the development subsystem 20, the electrically biased roller 28, the cleaner 30, (and the

15 intermediate transfer element 15 with cleaner 31 in apparatus 11) will henceforth be referred to as the imaging module. Either electrographic reproduction apparatus, 10 depicted in FIG. 1 or 11 in FIG. 2, could include a plurality of imaging modules in sequence along the length of the transport belt 26 for the purpose of creating and transferring different respective colored marking particle

20 images to the receiver element 22 in superimposed register. FIG. 3 illustrates, for example, a 4-color electrographic reproduction apparatus, generally designated by numeral 13 and corresponding to apparatus 11 in FIG. 2, with imaging modules respectively containing cyan (C), magenta (M), yellow (Y), and black (K) marking particles (of course, other members of modules are suitable for use with

25 this invention). In FIG. 3 individual process elements in the imaging modules corresponding to the same elements in FIG. 2 are designated with the same numeral as in FIG. 2 but with a C, M, Y, or K.

Step one of the process of the present invention utilizes an electrographic method to create a first thermoplastic image. The printed substrate 30 is preferably an insulating and thermally stable material such as polyimide but other materials such as PET, fiberglass, and paper are also envisioned. The

substrate may contain holes so that the electrical connections to the rear of the substrate could be made.

In step 2 the electrode pattern printed with toner is contacted with conducting particles or powder. Metallic particles such as copper, tin, tin plated 5 copper, or silver particles are preferred, however conducting polymer particles are also envisioned. The conducting particles may have coatings on them to improve conduction between particles. A conductive polymer coating on a metallic particle would facilitate the formation of conductive paths between particles in a subsequent fixing step. Conducting polymers may comprise metal salts or carbon 10 to enhance conduction.

In step 3 heat is applied to fix the conductive particles only to areas where the toned image resides. The heated toner in this step melts and acts as an adhesive to cause the conductive particles to adhere only in areas where the toner resides. When the toner cools the conductive particles becomes securely attached 15 to the substrate. Pressure may also be used in addition to or instead of heat in this step.

Step 4: Conducting particle not adhering to the thermoplastic image are then removed by vacuum, pressurized air, a rotating brush or other means well known by those skilled in the art.

20 Step 5: the printed substrate may then be optionally printed with another toner pattern using a standard electrostatographic process so that an insulating layer is applied over the conductive electrodes in areas that will not be in contact to subsequently applied circuit elements [see step]. Means to adequately register the first toner image with the second toner image are used as 25 known in the industry. An example of a registration system is described in DE200410051293 filed 10-20-04 by Jan D. Boness, Ingo K. Dreher, Heiko Hunold, Karlheinz Peter, Stefan Schrader and US 2008/0050132 publication that are incorporated by reference.

Step 6: The toner used in step 1 and or optional step 5 may be cross 30 linkable. The toner in one or both of the layers may optionally be cross-linked by application of heat (thermal cross-linking) or UV light (UV cross-linking) through

the backside of the transparent or semi-transparent printing substrate for toner printed in step 1 and directly for the toner printed in optional step 5.

Circuit elements, such as integrated circuits, resistors, and capacitors, are then adhered to the printed substrate so that the electrodes of the

5 printed electrodes make electrical contact to the appropriate electrodes of the circuit elements using any method known in the industry. Additional steps known in the industry can be used if needed to cut the substrate and , if needed, apply the substrate to a rigid board.

The above methods may also be used for making a multilayer 10 printed circuit. Steps 1-6 above are used to create each pair of layers of the printed circuit board which may be rigid or flexible in its final state. The substrate is preferably polyimide. The substrate may contain holes so that the connections to the rear of the substrate could be made.

At least the second printed toner layer in step 5 is then cross-linked 15 as described above so that it will not become tacky when a second conductive layer is applied.

The previous steps are then repeated for each circuit layer that makes up the multi-layer printed circuit board. Means to adequately register the first pair of layers with the second pair of layers are used as known in the industry.

20 Circuit elements, such as integrated circuits, resistors, and capacitors are then adhered to the printed substrate so that the electrodes of the printed circuit make electrical contact to the appropriate electrodes of the circuit elements. Additional steps known in the industry are then used to cut the substrate and if needed apply to a rigid board.

25 In both methods described above the printed substrate can be subsequently printed on the rear surface using the similar steps so that circuit elements can be mounted on both sides of the substrate. Connections between each side can be made by filling holes that are drilled into the substrate either before the substrate is printed or afterward with conducting material.

30 Example 1: Conducting toner was prepared as described above using silver powder and polyester. The toner was mixed with a ferrite carrier to

make a developer and 12 g were loaded onto the shell of a sumpless magnetic electrophotographic development station comprising a core of 20 magnets with alternating poles. An electrostatic latent image comprising lines approximately 0.5 mm across was formed on a photoreceptor and the photoreceptor brought into 5 close proximity with the development station. The developed image was electrostatically transferred to paper and the resulting image fused by exposing to the vapors of dimethyl chloride. The electrical resistance measured between two points approximately 1 inch apart on one of the lines was found to be approximately 100 Ω .

10 Example 2: Similar to example 1 except that the image was fused in an oven. The electrical resistance was similar.

Example 3: This example is similar to example 2 except that, after oven fusing, the circuit was placed on a hot plate and heated to approximately 100 °C. A sheet of Kaptan-H was placed over the circuit and the Kaptan-H was then 15 manually pressed against the circuit, thereby ferotyping it. After cooling, the Kaptan-H and the circuit were separated. The resistivity decreased to a few tens of ohms.

Example 4: In this example, a printed circuit was made by 20 depositing silver powder onto an electrophotographically formed image of the aforementioned pattern. Specifically, an electrophotographic image was formed in the pattern of the circuit using conventional toner. After oven fusing the image, the pattern was then coated with silver powder. The powder was tacked to the pattern using vapors of dichloromethane. Excess silver powder was removed by first holding the circuit on edge and tapping, followed by blowing with 25 compressed air. After tacking, the circuit was ferrotyped, as described above. The resulting resistance was approximately several hundred ohms.

Example 5: This was similar to example 4 except that, after the tacking and removal processes, several additional coating of silver powder were deposited. After each tacking, excess silver was removed, as described above.

30 Finally, after ferotyping, the resultant resistance was found to be less than 100 Ω .

CLAIMS:

1. A method for producing a printed circuit comprising:
image-wise producing a pattern comprising a thermoplastic on a substrate;
5 depositing conductive powder over the substrate; and
permanently fixing the conductive powder on the thermoplastic substrate;
removing conductive powder from portions of the substrate other than that coated
with the thermoplastic pattern.

- 10 2. The method as in Claim 1, and characterized in that the
conductive powder is permanently fixed by the application of heat.

3. The method as in the previous claims, characterized in that the
conductive powder is permanently fixed by the application of pressure.

- 15 4. The method as in the previous claims, characterized in that the
conductive powder is permanently fixed by the exposure to solvent vapor.

5. The method as in the previous claims, characterized in that the
20 conductive powder is metal.

6. The method as in the previous claims, characterized in that the
conductive powder is removed with compressed air.

- 25 7. The method as in the previous claims, characterized in that the
conductive powder is removed with vacuum.

8. The method as in the previous claims, characterized in that the
conductive powder is removed with a rotating brush.

- 30 9. A method for producing a printed circuit comprising:
charging a primary imaging member;

create an electrostatic latent image by image-wise exposing
the primary imaging member;

image-wise depositing thermoplastic particles onto the
5 primary imaging member;

transferring the thermoplastic particles to an electrically
insulating substrate;

permanently fixing the thermoplastic particles;

depositing conductive powder over the substrate;

10 permanently fixing the conductive powder on the
thermoplastic substrate; and

removing conductive powder from portions of the substrate
other than that coated with the thermoplastic pattern.

15 10. The method as in claim 9, and characterized in that the
conductive powder is permanently fixed by the application of heat.

11. The method as in one of the previous claims, characterized in
that the conductive powder is permanently fixed by the application of pressure.

20 12. The method as in one of the previous claims, characterized in
that the conductive powder is permanently fixed by the exposure to solvent vapor.

13. The method as in one of the previous claims, characterized in
25 that the conductive powder is metal.

14. A method for producing a printed circuit comprising:

charging a primary imaging member;

creating an electrostatic latent image by image-wise
30 exposing the primary imaging member;

image-wise depositing thermoplastic particles onto the
primary imaging member;

transferring the thermoplastic particles to an electrically insulating substrate;

15. A method for producing a multilayer printed circuit comprising:

creating an electrostatic latent image by image-wise
exposing the primary imaging member;
image-wise depositing thermoplastic particles onto the
5 primary imaging member;
transferring the thermoplastic particles to the thermoset
layer in register with the previously transferred conductive particles;
permanently fixing the thermoplastic particles;
depositing conductive powder over the substrate;
10 permanently fixing the conductive powder on the
thermoplastic substrate;
removing conductive powder from portions of the substrate
other than that coated with the thermoplastic pattern.

15 16. The method as in claim 15, characterized in that the conductive
powder is permanently fixed by the application of heat.

17. The method as in one of the previous claims, characterized in
that the conductive powder is permanently fixed by the exposure to solvent vapor.

20 18. The method as in one of the previous claims, characterized in
that the conductive powder has a size range less than 2 μm .

19. The method as in one of the previous claims, characterized in
25 that the conductive powder has a size range between 2 μm and 8 μm .

20. The method as in one of the previous claims, characterized in
that the conductive powder has a size range less than 20 μm .

30 21. The method as in one of the previous claims, characterized in
that the conductive powder has a size range of less than 8 μm .

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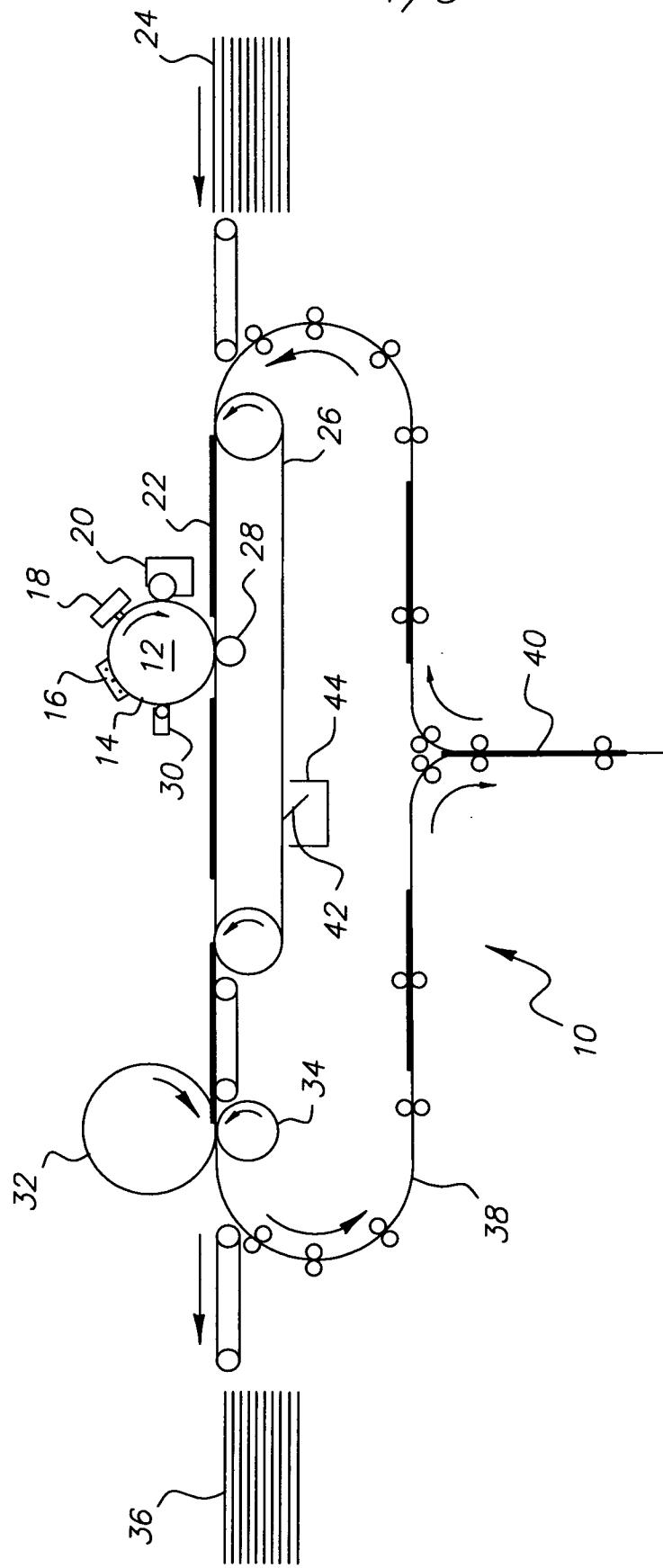


FIG. 1

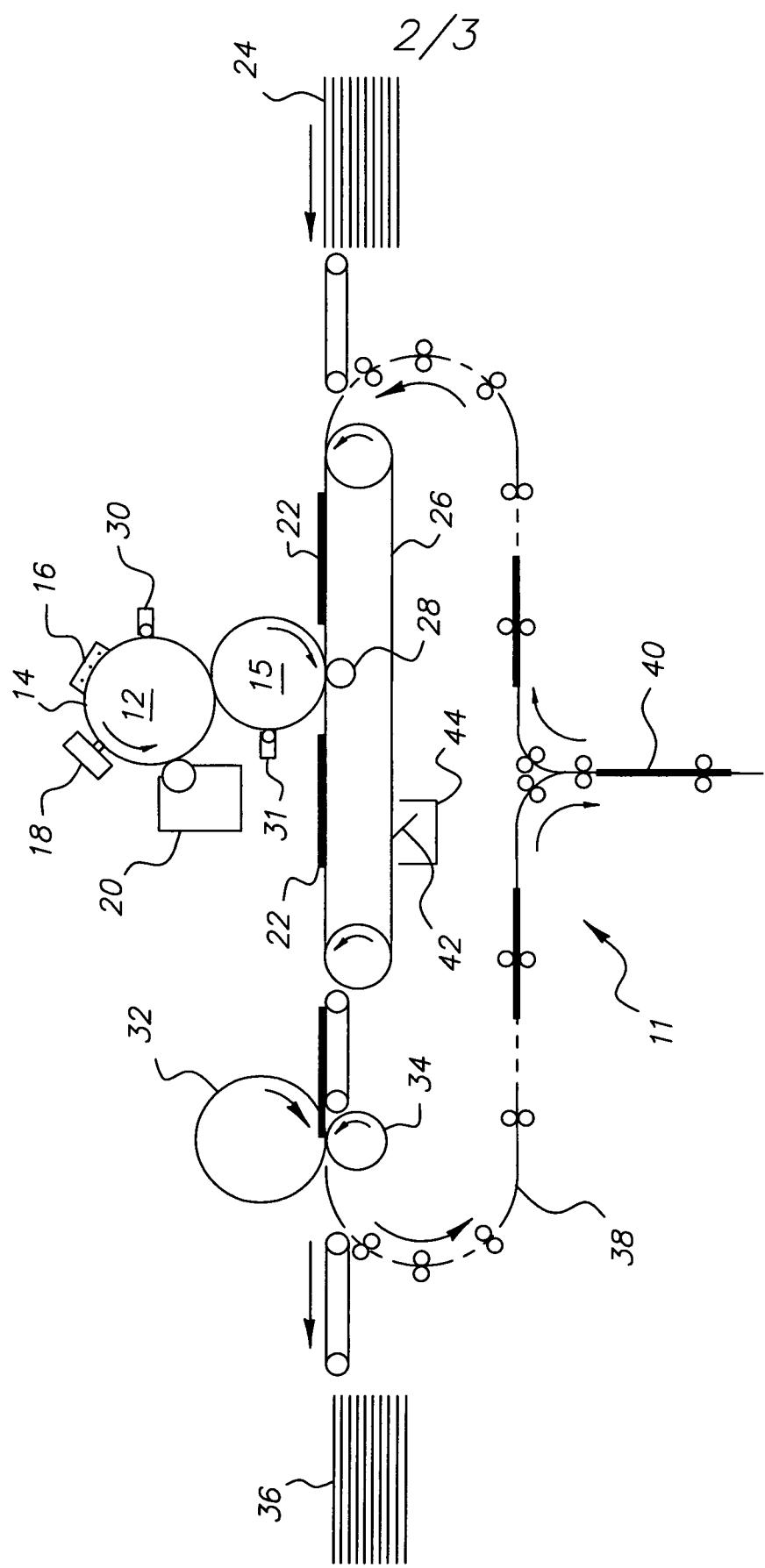


FIG. 2

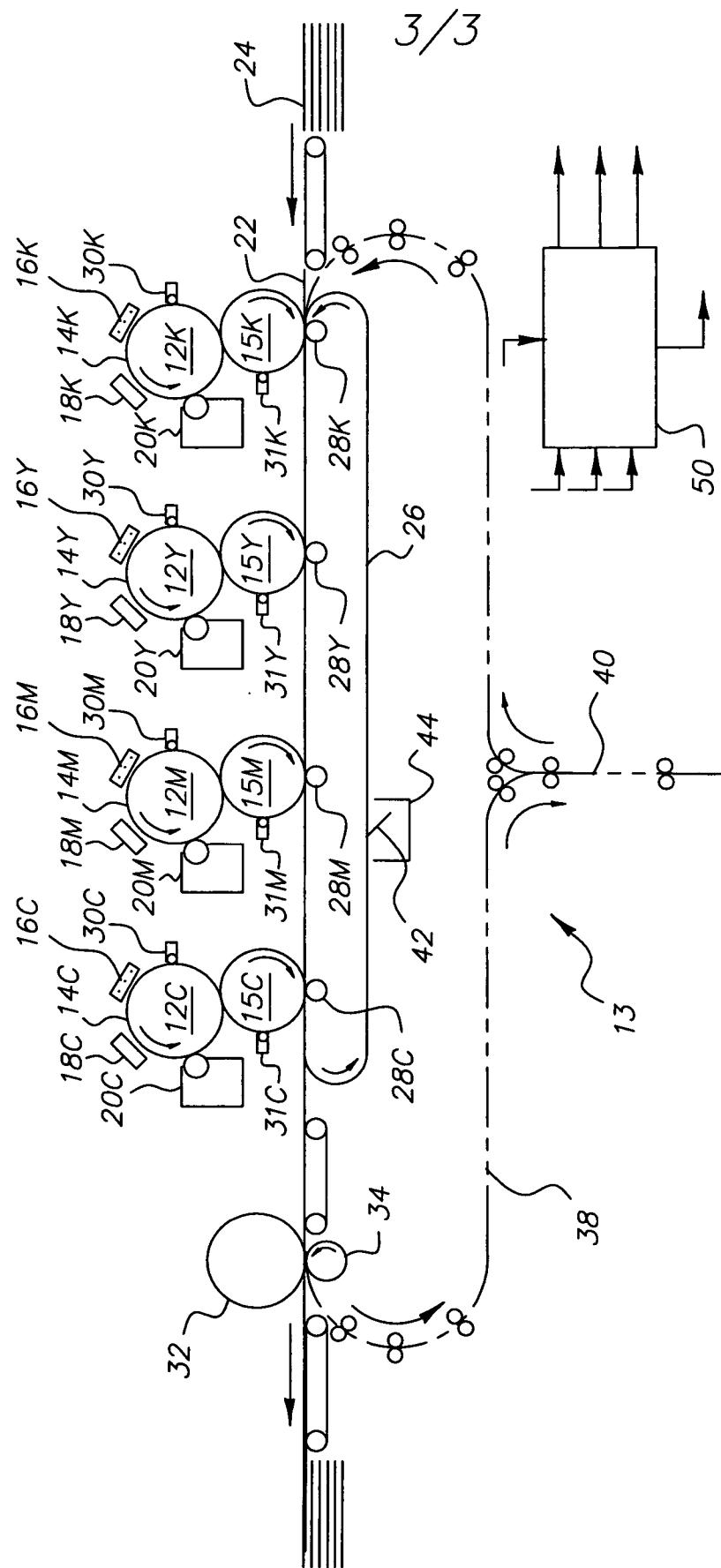


FIG. 3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2009/006541

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. H05K3/10
ADD.

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)
H05K

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

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

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2005/153249 A1 (YAMAGUCHI NAOKO [JP] ET AL) 14 July 2005 (2005-07-14) paragraphs [0025] – [0035], [0058], [0064]; figures 1,3,4 -----	1-3, 5-11, 13-16, 18-21
X	US 2004/197487 A1 (AOKI HIDEO [JP] ET AL) 7 October 2004 (2004-10-07) paragraphs [0038] – [0048], [0071], [0087]; figure 10 -----	1-3, 5-11, 13-16, 18-21

 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
"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
"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)
"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

"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
"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
"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.
"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search 21 May 2010	Date of mailing of the international search report 01/06/2010
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL – 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer Degroote, Bart

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

Continuation of Box II.2

Claims Nos.: 4, 12, 17

Claim 4 is not supported by the description (Article 6 PCT). The use of a solvent vapor has been described on p. 7, lines 7-30. However, this "preferred mode of practicing the invention" is different from the method claimed in claim 1. Firstly, in claim 1, there is the step of "permanently fixing the conductive powder on the thermoplastic substrate", whereas in the method disclosed in the description the substrate is a paper receiver which is not a thermoplastic substrate. Instead, the conductive particles themselves are coated with a thermoplastic material. Hence, there is no step of "permanently fixing the conductive powder on the thermoplastic substrate" in the method of the description. Secondly, in claim 1, there is the step of "removing conductive powder from portions of the substrate other than that coated with the thermoplastic pattern", whereas in the method of the description there is no such step as a pattern of conductive particles is directly formed on the paper receiver. In conclusion, there is no support in the description for using solvent vapor in combination with the method of claim 1. For this reason, no meaningful search is possible for claim 4. This applies mutatis mutandis to claims 12 and 17.

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.2), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US2009/006541

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of 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. Claims Nos.: because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.: 4, 12, 17 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:
see FURTHER INFORMATION sheet PCT/ISA/210

3. Claims Nos.: because they are dependent 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:

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 an 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 claims 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 claims 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

Information on patent family members

International application No
PCT/US2009/006541

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)			Publication date
US 2005153249	A1 14-07-2005	JP 2005203396 A			28-07-2005
		KR 20050074317 A			18-07-2005
		KR 20060114310 A			06-11-2006
		TW 243435 B			11-11-2005
US 2004197487	A1 07-10-2004	JP 2004048030 A			12-02-2004