



US010046692B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Van Straten

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 10,046,692 B2**

(45) **Date of Patent:** **Aug. 14, 2018**

(54) **HEATED LIGHT ENCLOSURE HAVING AN ADAPTABLE HEATING SYSTEM**

H05B 3/84 (2013.01); *B60S 1/603* (2013.01);
H05B 2203/02 (2013.01)

(71) Applicant: **George A. Van Straten**, Chassell, MI (US)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

None

See application file for complete search history.

(72) Inventor: **George A. Van Straten**, Chassell, MI (US)

(56)

References Cited

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

6,601,983 B1 * 8/2003 Runfola B60S 1/026
219/202

6,902,267 B2 8/2005 Taylor
7,262,388 B2 8/2007 Moreth et al.

7,281,811 B2 * 10/2007 Thuot Rann A61L 9/037
219/220

7,914,162 B1 * 3/2011 Huang B60L 1/14
219/220

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/827,176**

(22) Filed: **Aug. 14, 2015**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2016/0046262 A1 Feb. 18, 2016

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 62/037,430, filed on Aug. 14, 2014, provisional application No. 62/135,060, filed on Mar. 18, 2015.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

H05B 3/06 (2006.01)

H05B 3/40 (2006.01)

H05B 3/84 (2006.01)

B60S 1/02 (2006.01)

B60Q 1/04 (2006.01)

B60Q 1/00 (2006.01)

F21S 41/141 (2018.01)

F21S 45/60 (2018.01)

B60S 1/60 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC *B60Q 1/04* (2013.01); *B60Q 1/0005*
(2013.01); *B60Q 1/0017* (2013.01); *F21S*
41/141 (2018.01); *F21S 45/60* (2018.01);
H05B 3/06 (2013.01); *H05B 3/40* (2013.01);

(Continued)

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

WO WO 2015106024 A1 * 7/2015 F21V 29/006

Primary Examiner — Joseph M Pelham

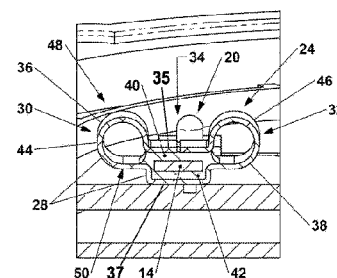
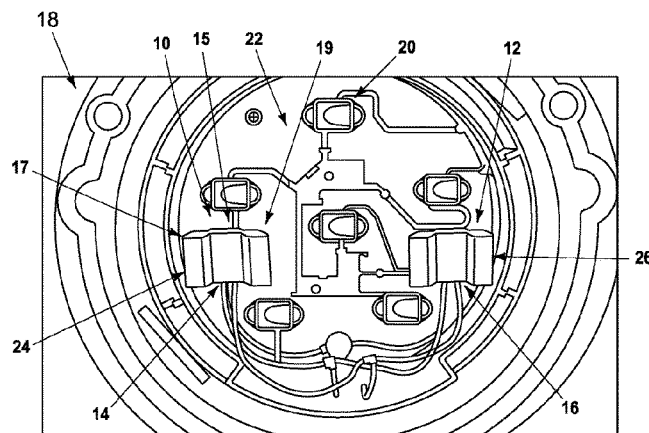
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Wells St. John, P.S.

(57)

ABSTRACT

A heated light enclosure having an adaptable heating system is provided with a controlled heating system to deliver enough heat to a lens on a lamp assembly to remove snow, frost, and/or condensation without overheating the lens. By heating the lens using a combination of one or more of PTC heaters, heat sinks and heat pipes, accumulation of snow, ice, or vapor is mitigated or eliminated from a surface of the lens, thereby enabling light to transmit through the lens. Applications include lamps and bulbs on conveyance devices, including vehicles, boats, planes, and trains, as well as sedentary structures, such as lamp posts, street lights, railroad crossing markers and lights, and airport ground and runway lighting systems.

21 Claims, 28 Drawing Sheets



(56)

References Cited

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

8,314,559	B1 *	11/2012	Helms	B60Q 1/0094
				315/82
8,399,805	B2 *	3/2013	Biddell	A42B 3/245
				219/203
9,726,362	B2	8/2017	Rosen et al.	
2006/0245202	A1 *	11/2006	Moreth	B60Q 1/0005
				362/547
2010/0006554	A1 *	1/2010	Inoue	F21S 48/1159
				219/202
2010/0008099	A1 *	1/2010	Inoue	F21S 48/1145
				362/520
2011/0228529	A1 *	9/2011	Patel	F21V 3/02
				362/235
2012/0201031	A1 *	8/2012	Marley	G02B 27/0006
				362/294
2013/0043234	A1 *	2/2013	Tsai	H05B 3/20
				219/220
2013/0114279	A1 *	5/2013	Marley	F21S 48/115
				362/516
2014/0184075	A1 *	7/2014	Ter-Hovhannissian .	F21V 29/20
				315/114
2015/0055363	A1 *	2/2015	Van Straten	F21S 8/085
				362/520
2015/0055944	A1 *	2/2015	Van Straten	H05B 3/16
				392/426
2015/0204533	A1	7/2015	Rosen et al.	
2016/0109088	A1 *	4/2016	Orr	F21S 48/34
				362/520
2016/0209022	A1 *	7/2016	Cai	F21V 29/70
2016/0215952	A1 *	7/2016	Dunn	F21S 48/34
2016/0363286	A1 *	12/2016	Deering	F21S 48/34

* cited by examiner

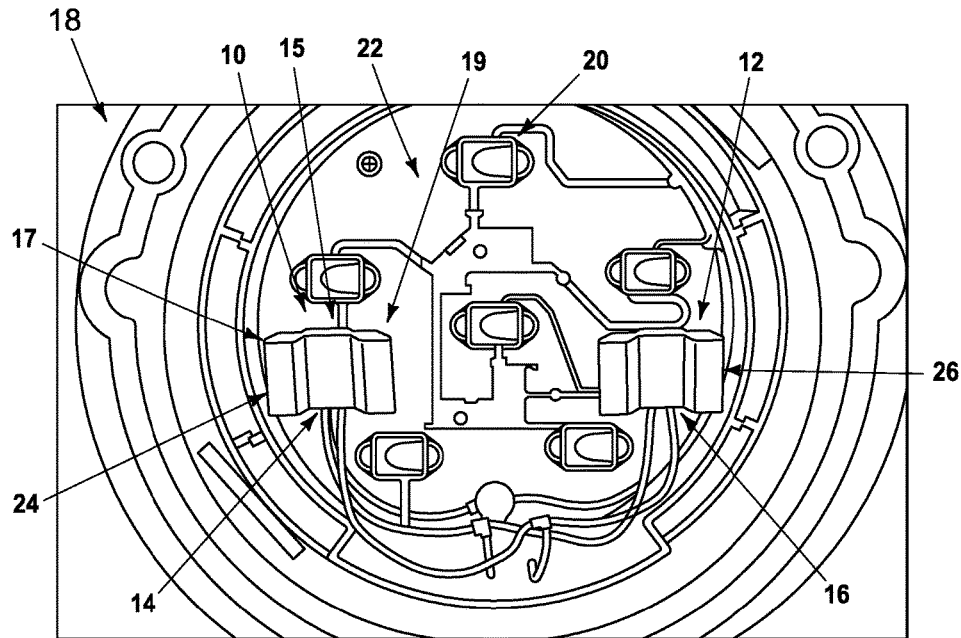


FIG. 1

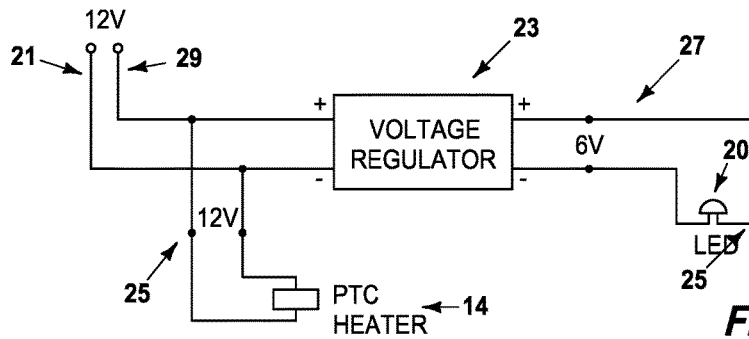


FIG. 1A

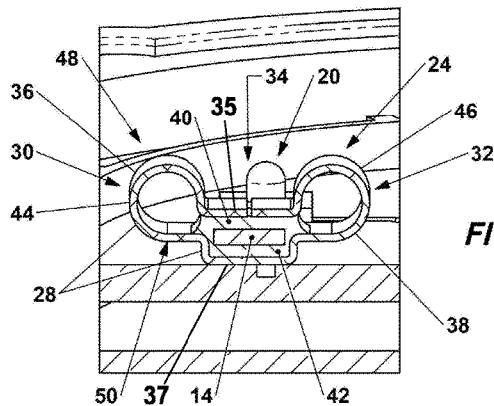


FIG. 1B

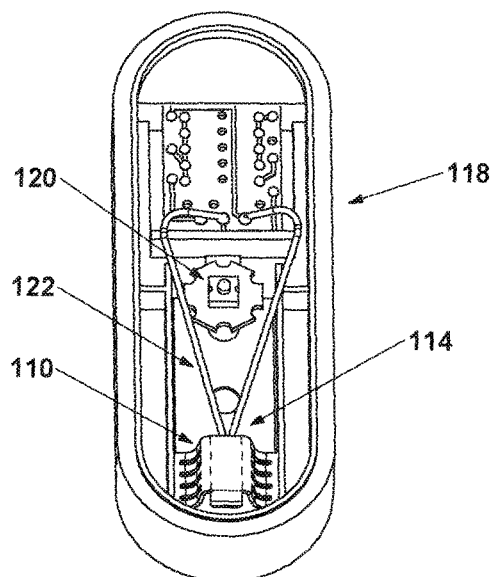


FIG. 2

General technical data

Max. operating voltage		V_{max}	30	V DC
Rated voltage		V_R	12	V DC
Breakdown voltage		V_{BD}	> 36	V
Curvature			< 0.2	mm
Operating temperature range	($V = 0$)	T_{op}	-40/+200	°C
Operating temperature range	($V = V_R$; $T_{op} \leq 60$ °C)	T_{op}	-40/+60	°C
Operating temperature range	($V = V_R$; $T_{op} > 60$ °C)	T_{op}	-40/+100	°C
Tolerance of R_R	(not valid for B59060A0000A010)	ΔR_R	±30	%

FIG. 3

PTC resistance R_{PTC} versus
PTC temperature T_{PTC}
(measured at low signal voltage)

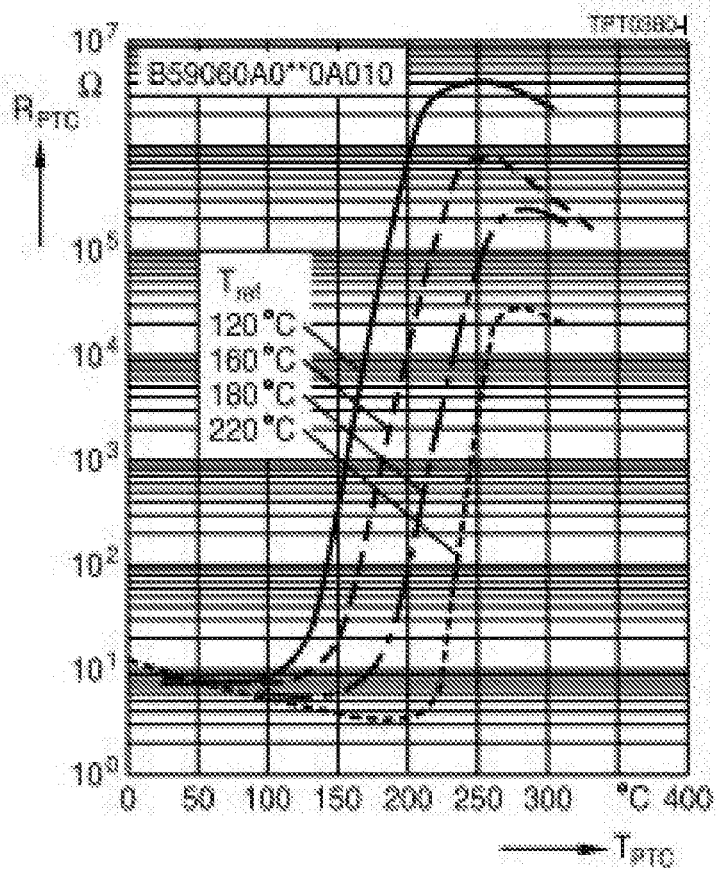


FIG. 4

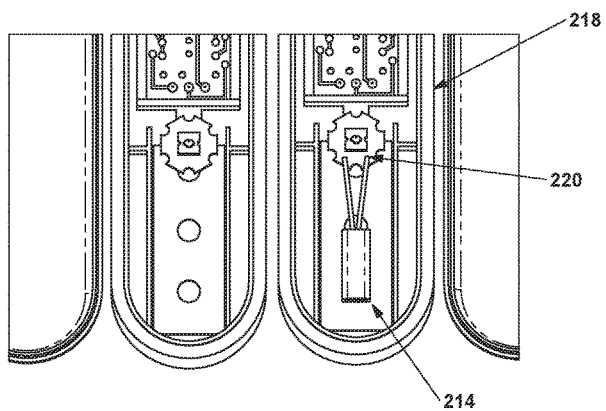


FIG. 5

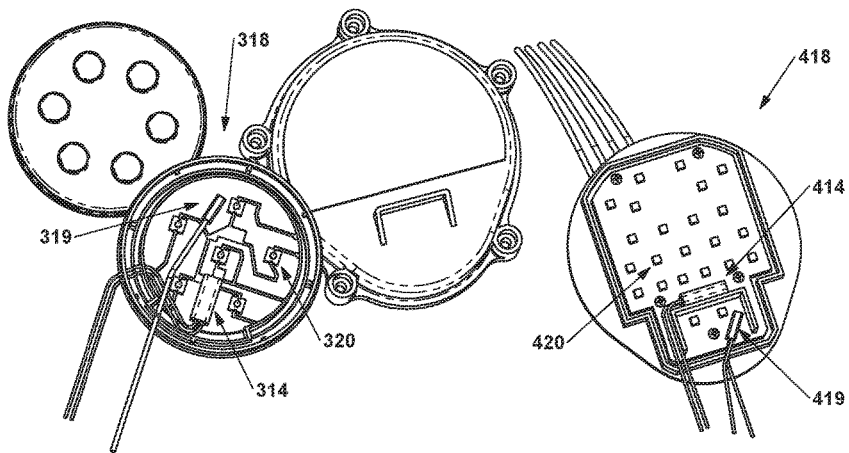
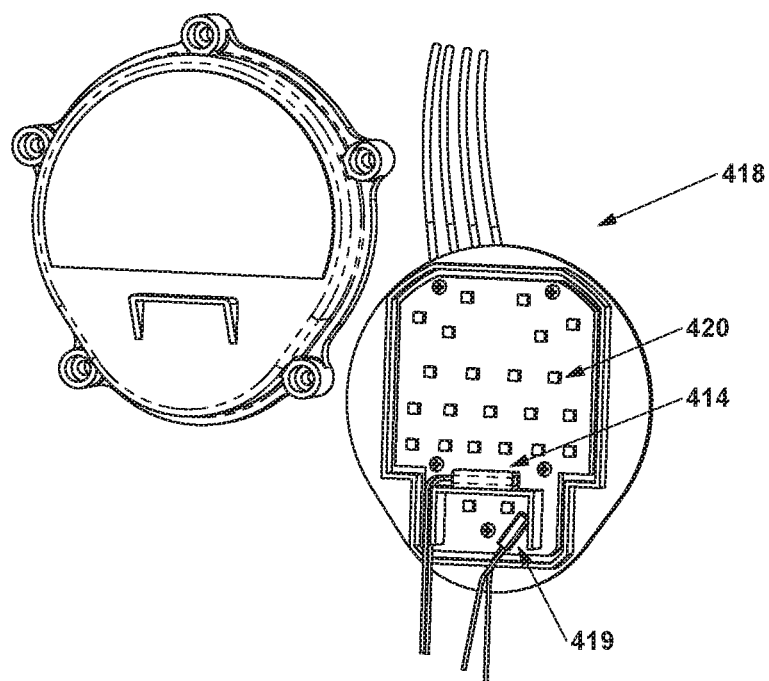
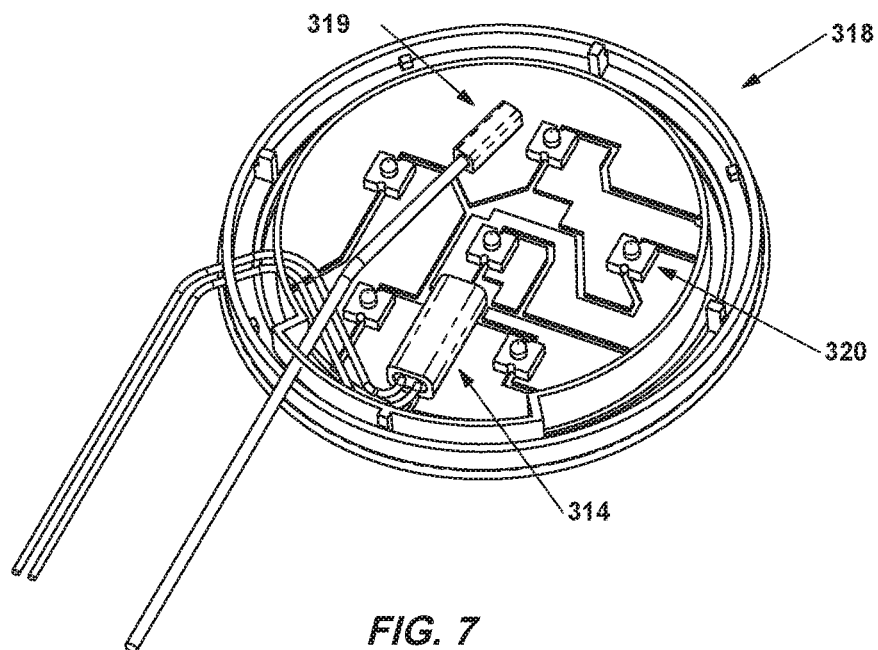
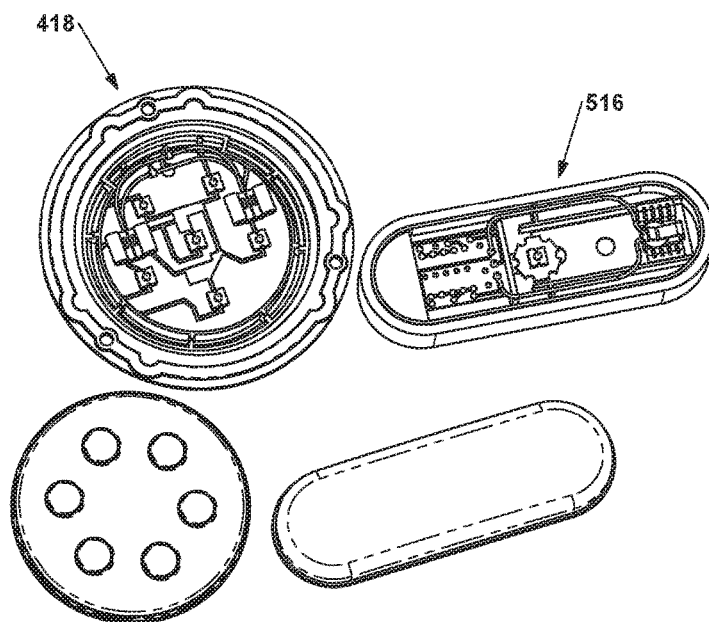
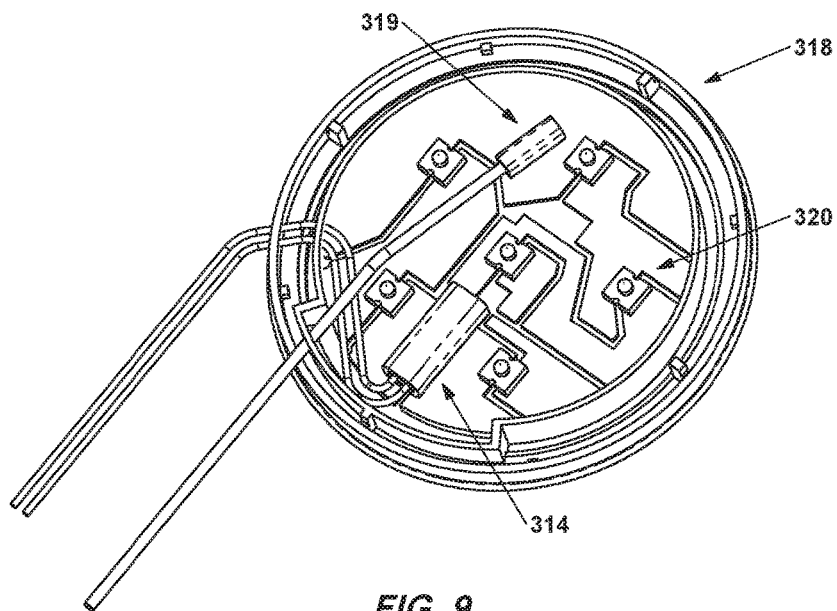


FIG. 6





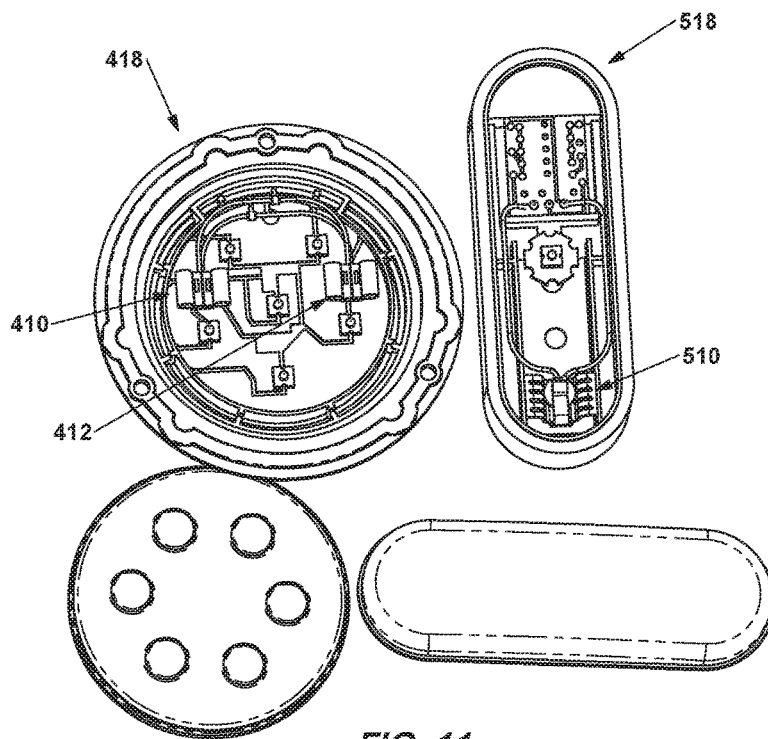


FIG. 11

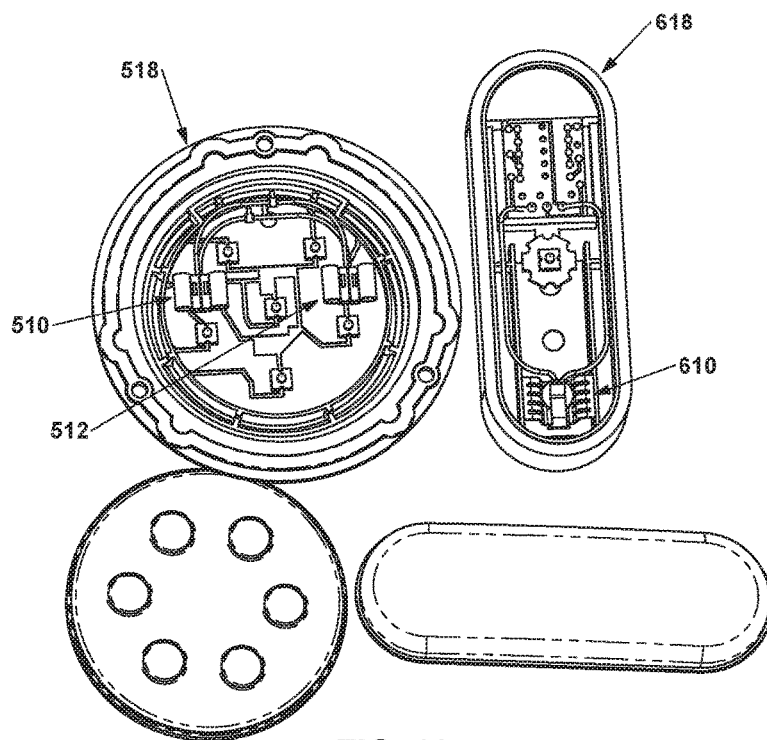


FIG. 12

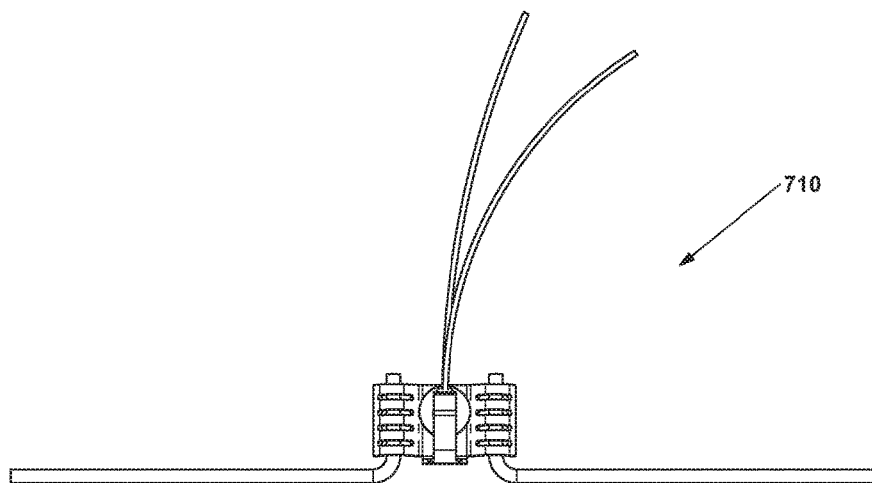


FIG. 13

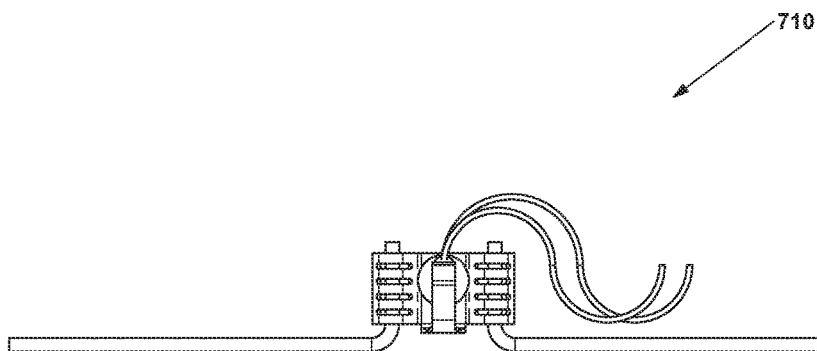


FIG. 14

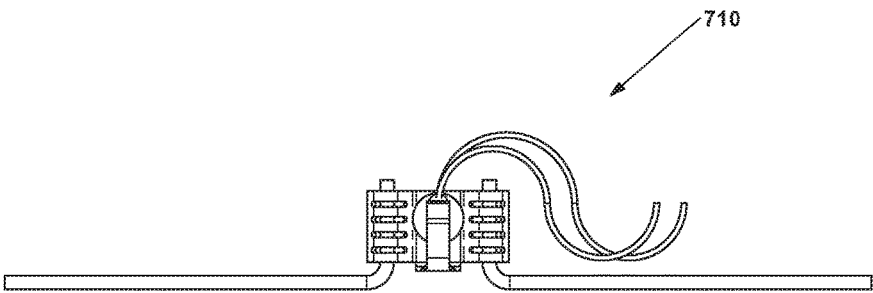


FIG. 15

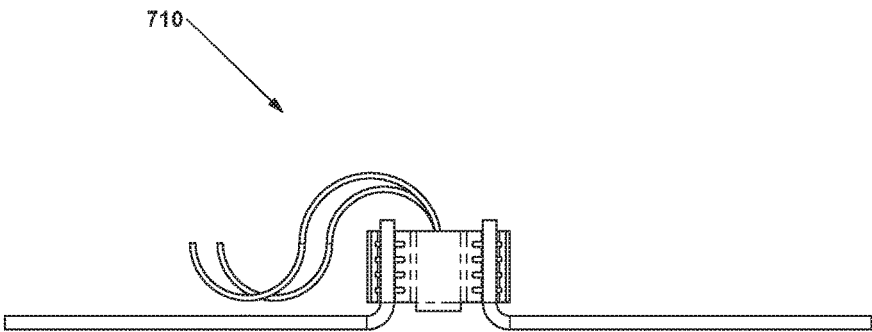


FIG. 16

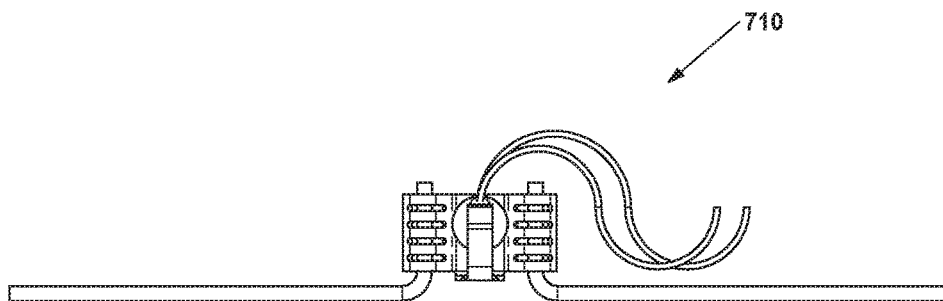


FIG. 17

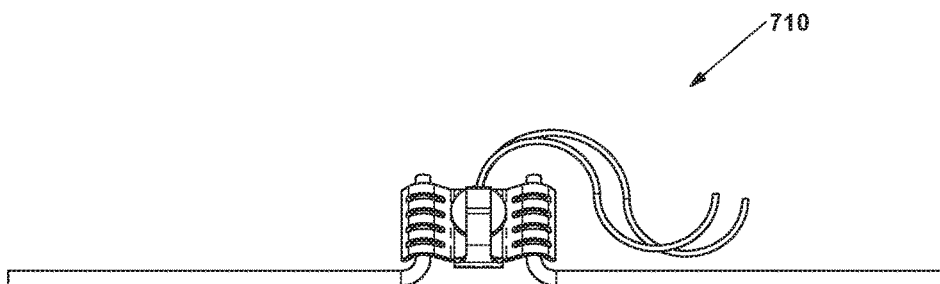


FIG. 18

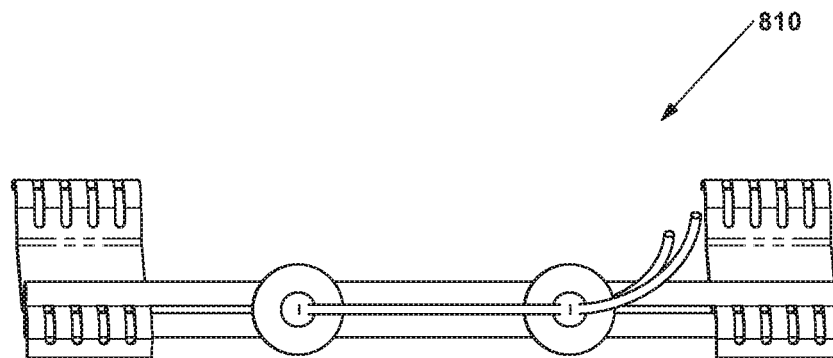


FIG. 19

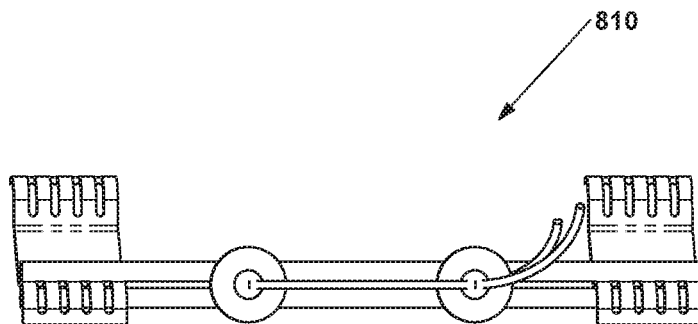


FIG. 20

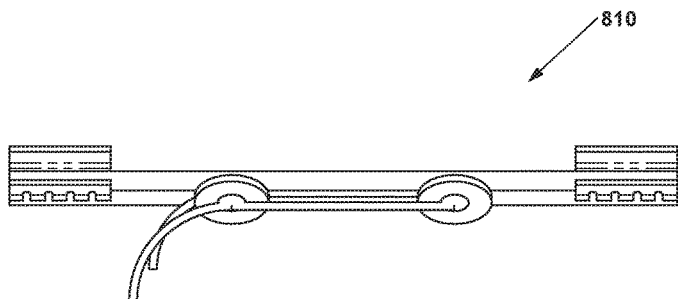


FIG. 21

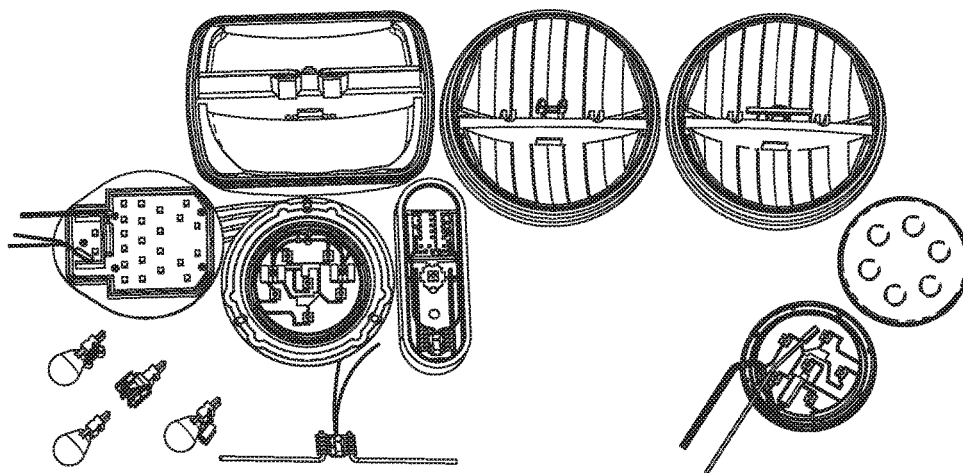


FIG. 22

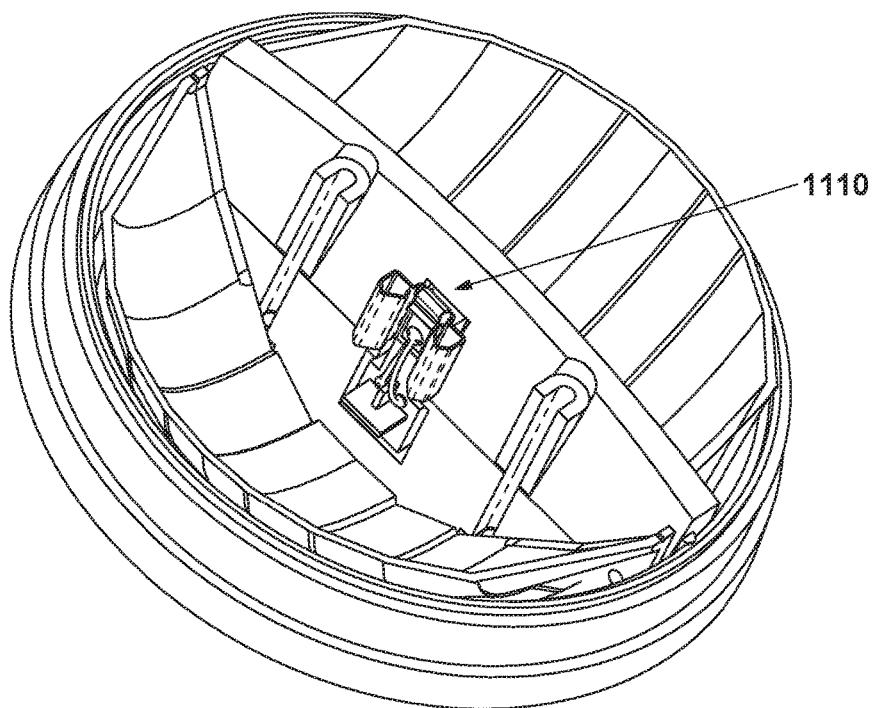


FIG. 23

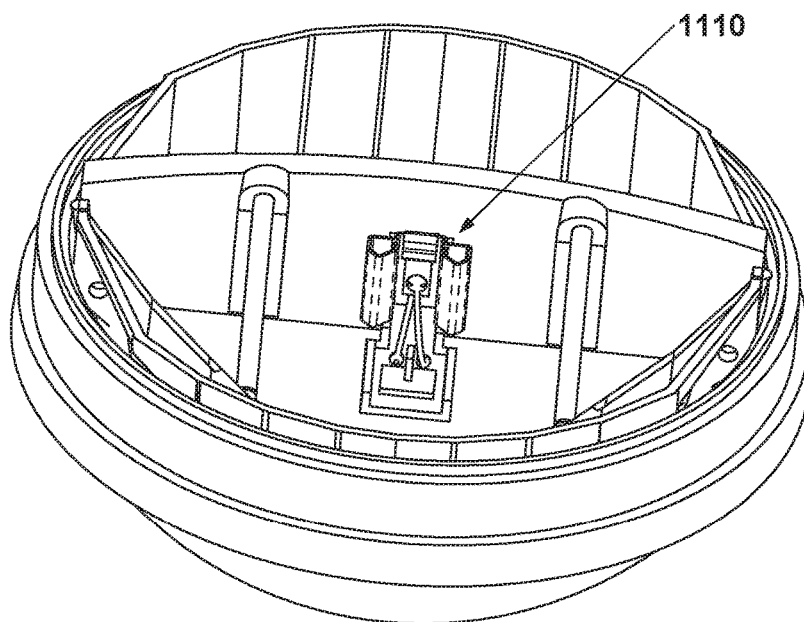


FIG. 24

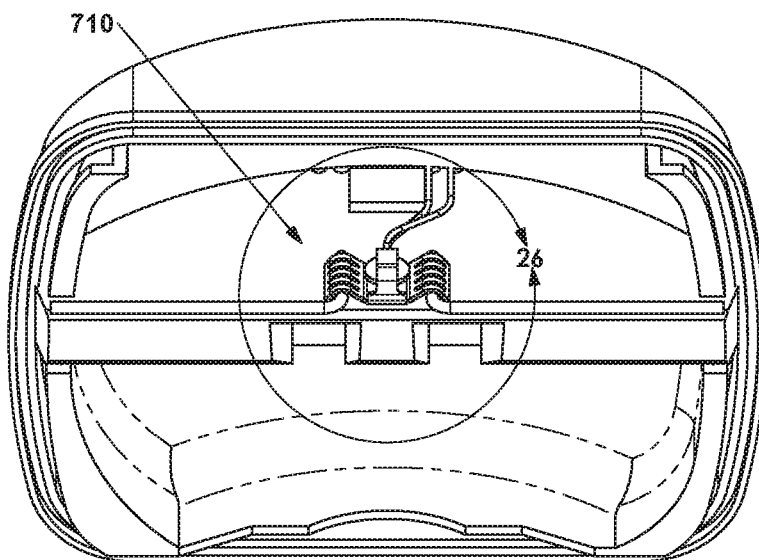


FIG. 25

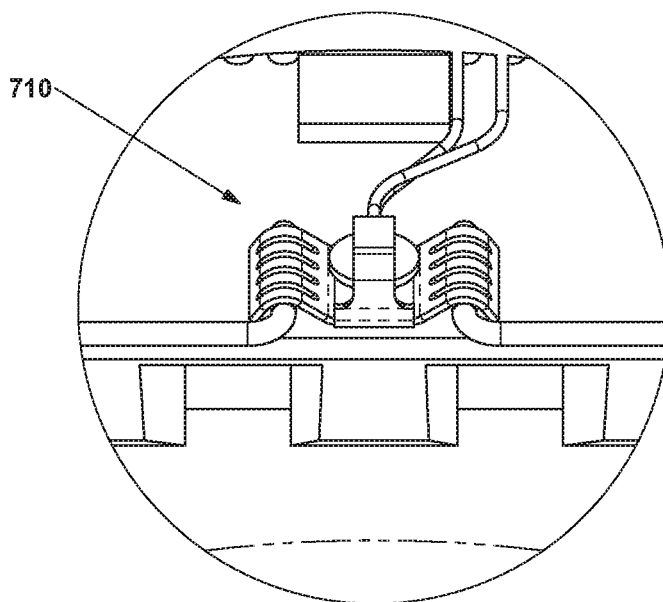


FIG. 26

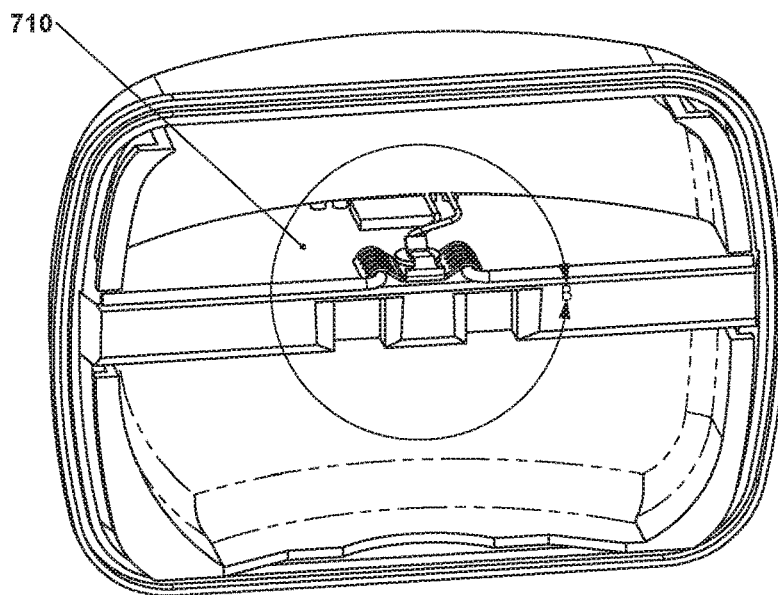


FIG. 27

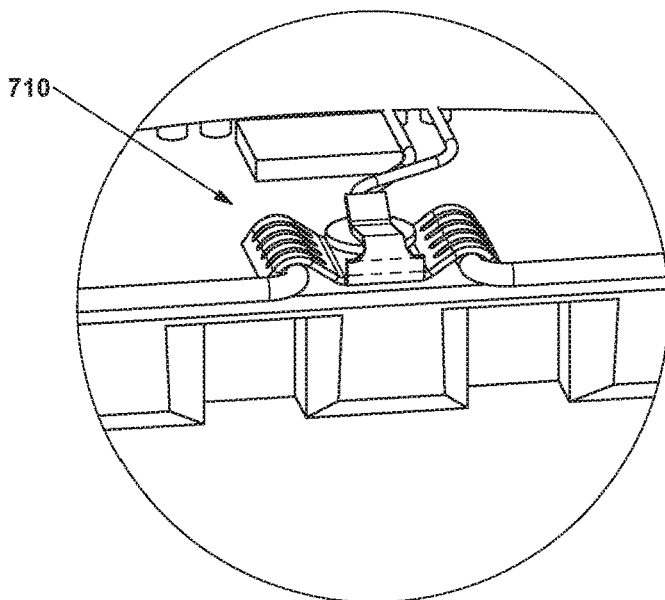


FIG. 28

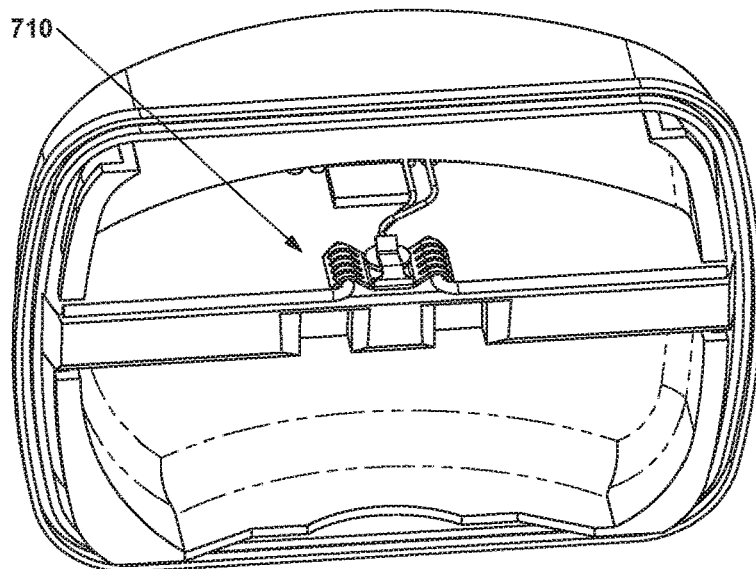


FIG. 29

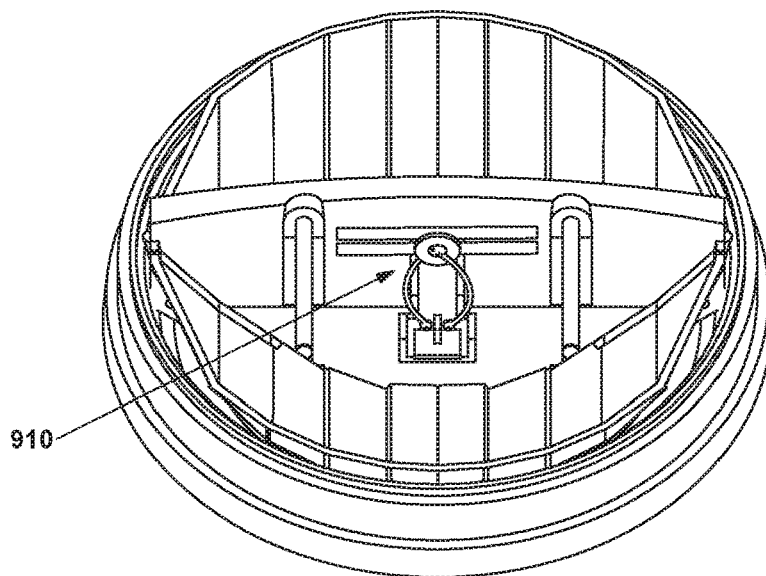


FIG. 30

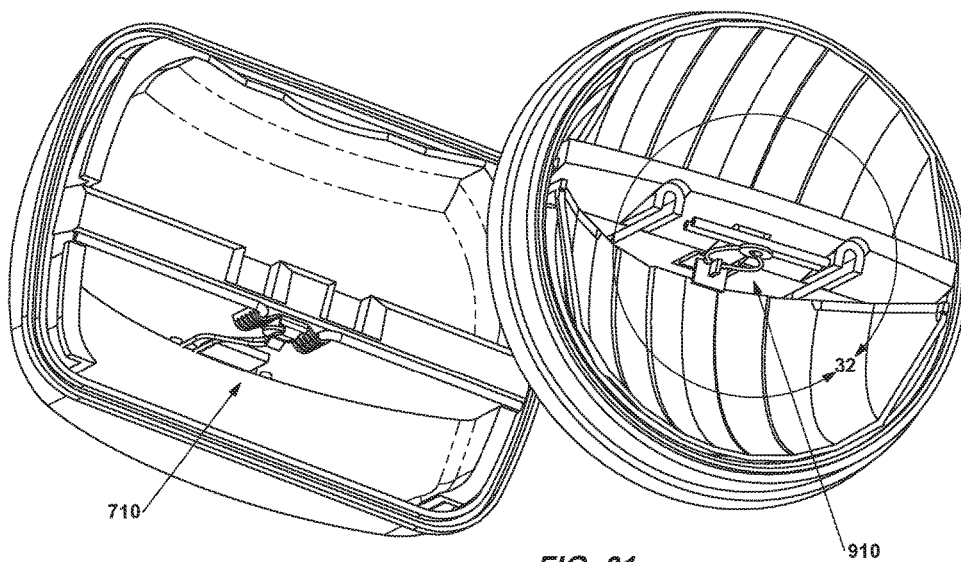


FIG. 31

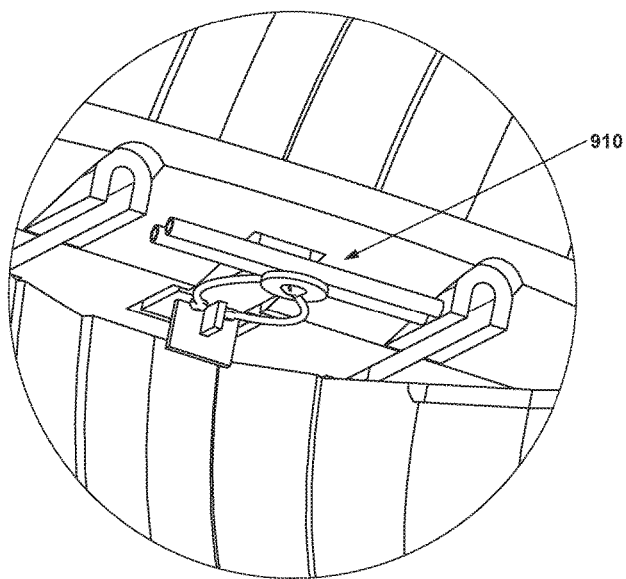


FIG. 32

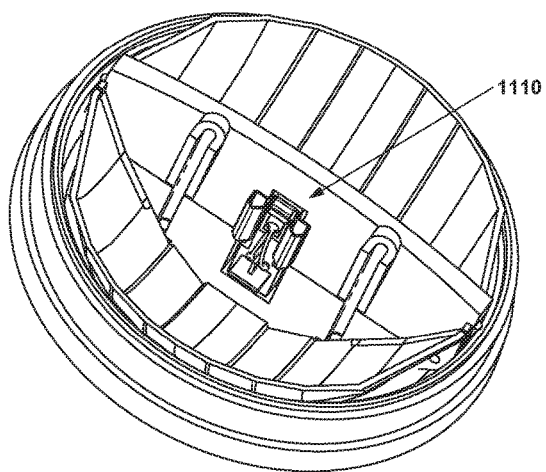


FIG. 33

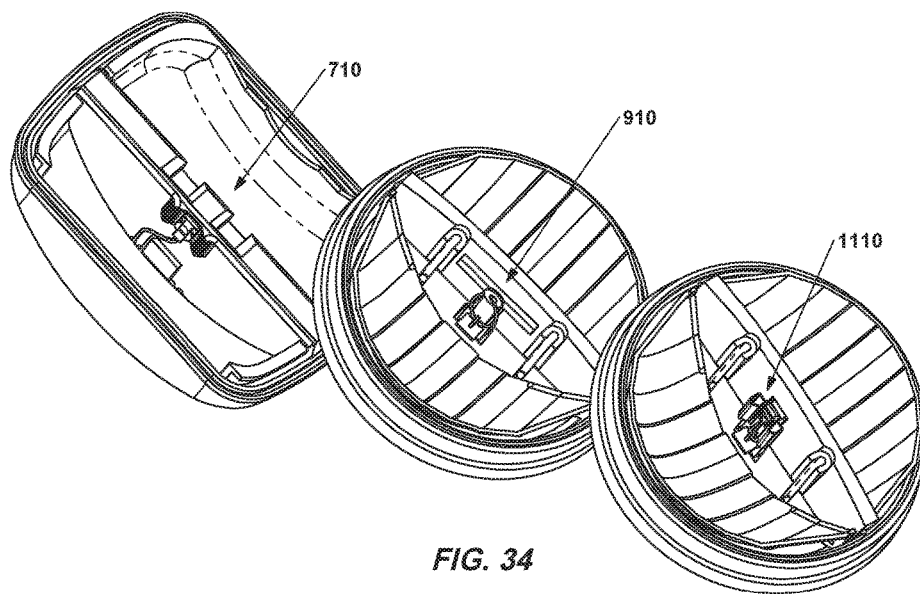


FIG. 34

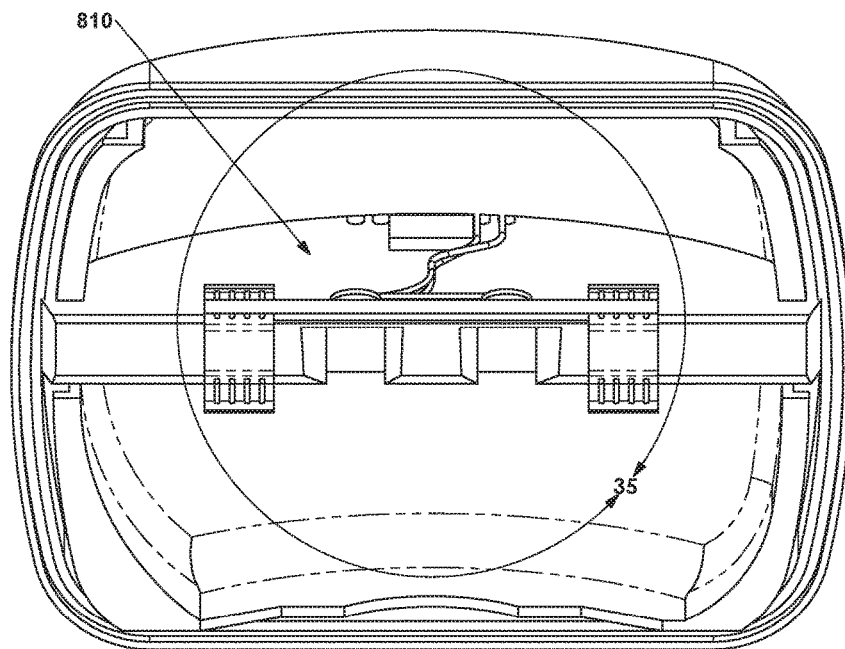


FIG. 35

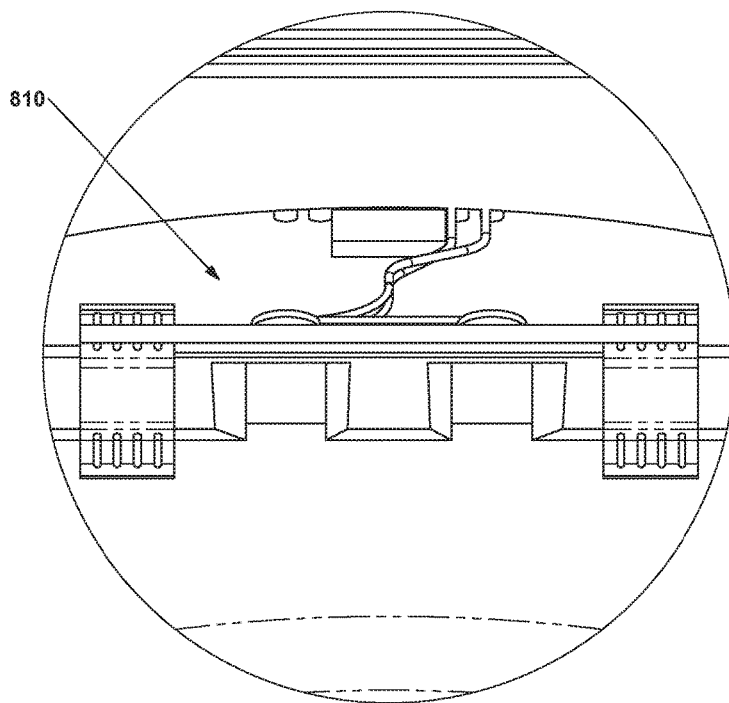


FIG. 36

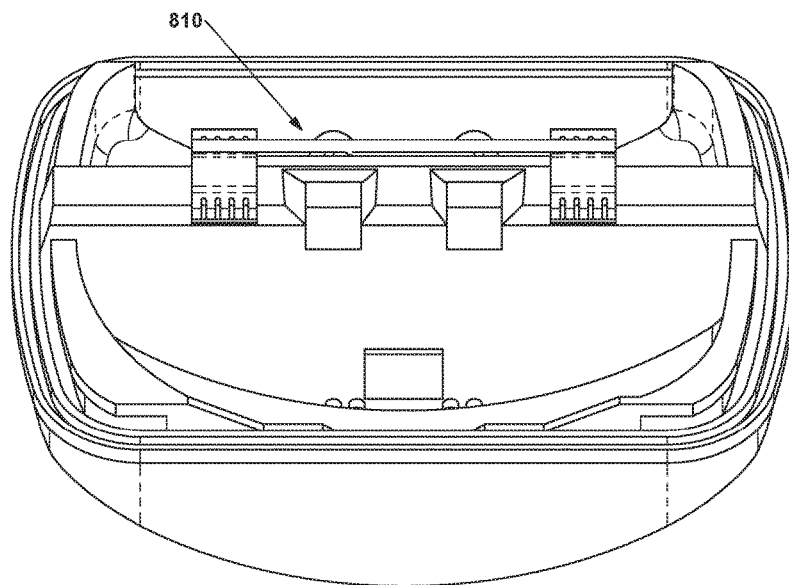


FIG. 37

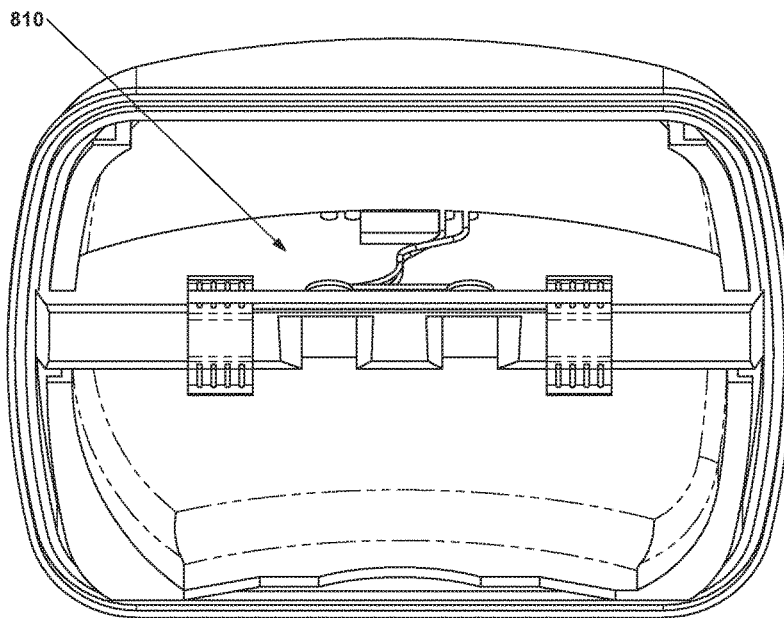


FIG. 38

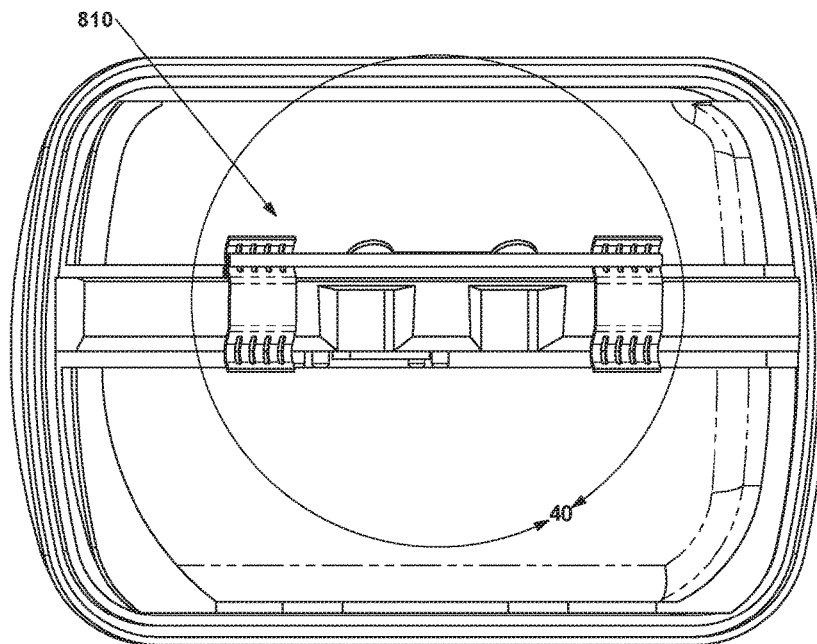


FIG. 39

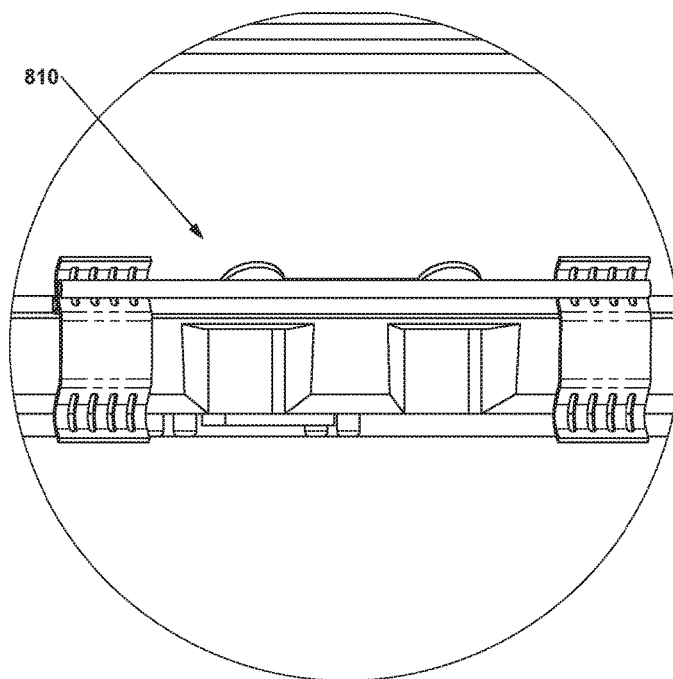


FIG. 40

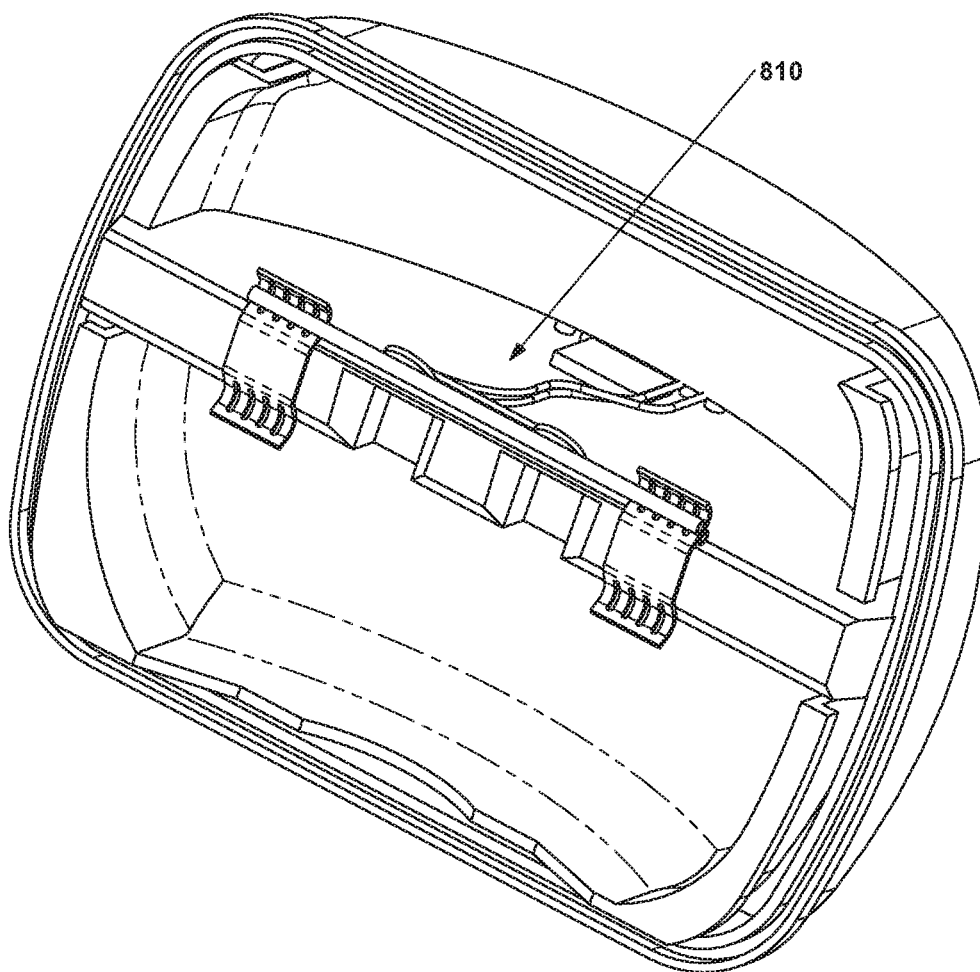


FIG. 41

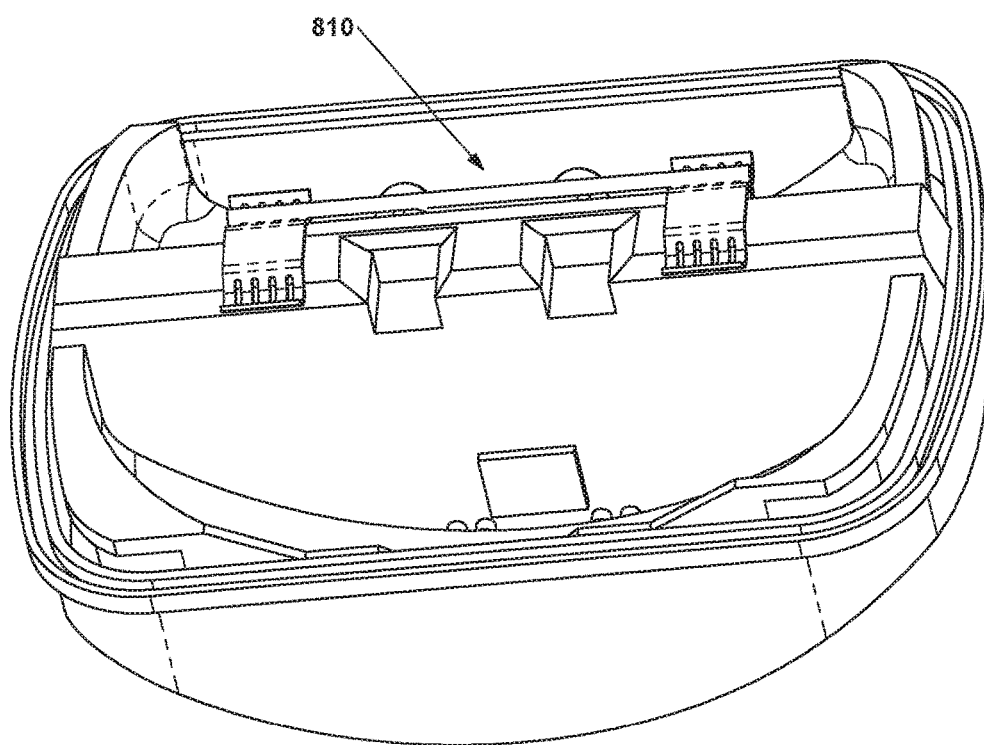


FIG. 42

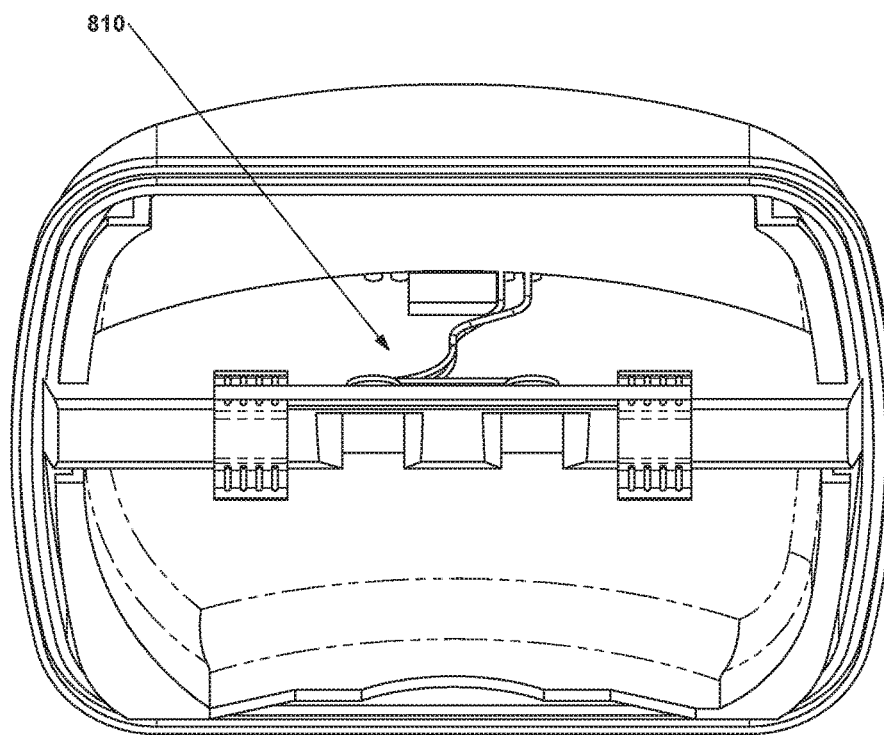


FIG. 43

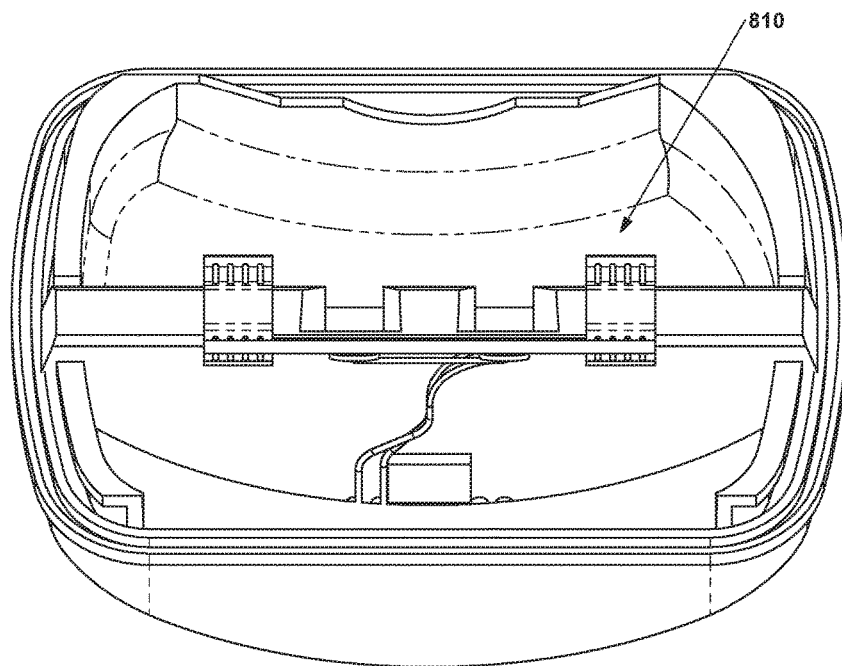


FIG. 44

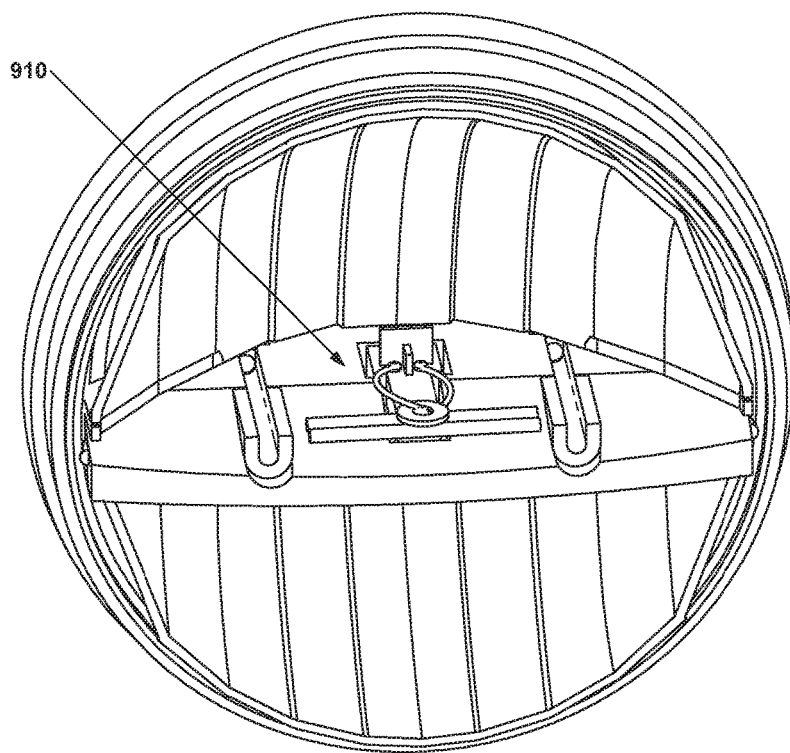


Fig. 45

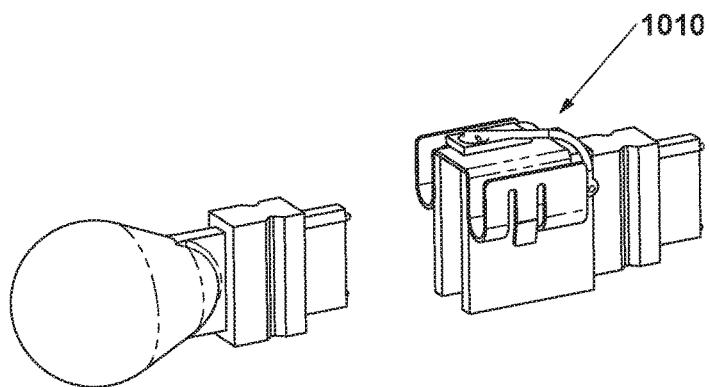


Fig. 46

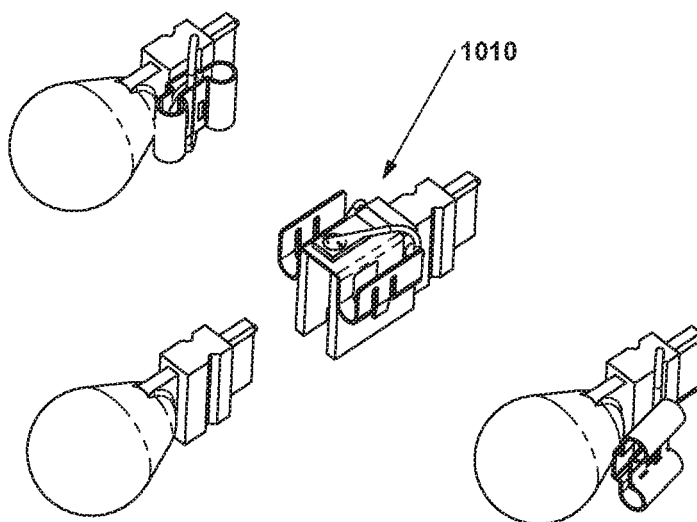


FIG. 47

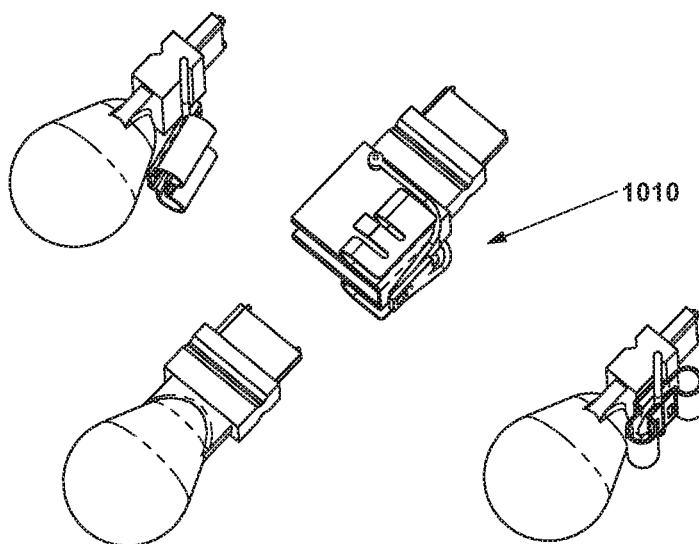


FIG. 48

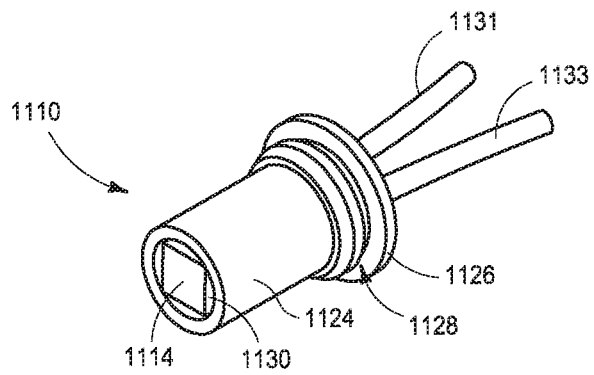


FIG. 49

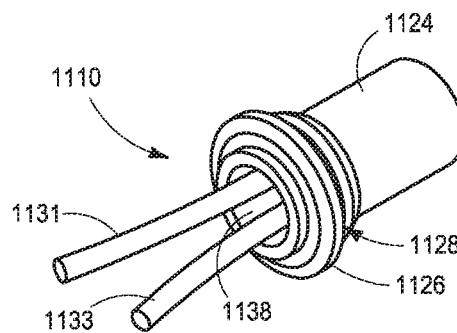


FIG. 50

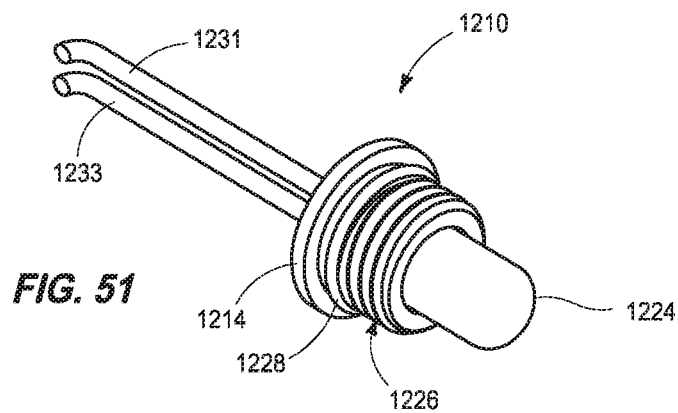


FIG. 51

1

HEATED LIGHT ENCLOSURE HAVING AN ADAPTABLE HEATING SYSTEM

TECHNICAL FIELD

This disclosure pertains to heated lamps and heated light assemblies for lamps. More particularly, this disclosure relates to apparatus and methods for melting snow and ice and removing condensation from lenses of lights and lighting systems for mobile and stationary applications.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Techniques are known for heating lamps and lighting systems. One technique involves providing a heating wire on a back surface of a cover element provided over a vehicle light. However, such a system does not necessarily provide thermal protection for overheating. The recent adoption of LED lighting systems, which generate very little heat, increases the problem of snow and ice accumulating on the lens of such a lighting system. Accordingly, improvements are needed to better enable removal of ice, snow and condensation from lenses of lights and lighting systems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Lamps, lights and bulbs are provided with a controlled heating system that provides enough heat to a lens on a lamp assembly to remove snow, frost, and/or condensation without overheating the lens. By heating the lens, accumulation of snow, ice, or vapor is mitigated or eliminated from a surface of the lens, thereby enabling light to transmit through the lens. Applications include lamps and bulbs on conveyance devices, including vehicles, boats, planes, and trains, as well as sedentary structures, such as lamp posts, street lights, railroad crossing markers and lights, and airport ground and runway lighting systems.

According to one aspect, a vehicle heated light assembly is provided including an enclosure, a light emitting diode lamp, a positive temperature coefficient heater, a thermal heat sink, power circuitry, and a power supply connection. The enclosure is provided by a housing and a lens. The light emitting diode lamp is provided in the enclosure configured to emit light through the lens. The positive temperature coefficient heater is provided within the enclosure. The thermal heat sink is provided in the enclosure and is physically affixed in thermally conductive relation with the positive temperature coefficient heater. The power circuitry has a source voltage coupled with the positive temperature coefficient heater and voltage regulating circuitry coupled with the source voltage and configured to provide a reduced voltage to the light emitting diode lamp. The power supply connection is coupled with the power circuitry to provide the source voltage.

According to another aspect, a vehicle heated light assembly is provided including an enclosure, a light emitting diode lamp, a positive temperature coefficient heater, a thermal heat sink, power circuitry, a power supply connection, and at least one elongate and thermally conductive heat pipe. The enclosure is provided by a housing and a lens. The light emitting diode lamp is provided in the enclosure and is configured to emit light through the lens. The positive temperature coefficient heater is provided within the enclosure. The thermal heat sink is provided in the enclosure and is physically affixed in thermally conductive relation with the positive temperature coefficient heater. The power circuitry has voltage regulating circuitry, a first pair of nodes

2

providing a first voltage to the positive temperature coefficient heater, and a second pair of nodes providing at a second, reduced voltage. The voltage regulating circuitry is configured to provide a reduced voltage source to the light emitting diode lamp. The power supply connection is coupled to the power circuitry to provide the first voltage to the power circuitry. At least one elongate and thermally conductive heat pipe is affixed in thermally conductive relation with the heat sink proximate the lens.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the disclosure are described below with reference to the following accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1 is a plan view of a tail light assembly with the lens removed showing a pair of PTC heaters with self-regulating temperature features according to one aspect.

FIG. 1A is a simplified circuit diagram for one suitable power circuitry for powering a vehicle heated light assembly, as shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 1B is a vertical sectional view taken along line 1B-1B of FIG. 1.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view from above with a cylindrical lens cover removed of a heated vehicle tail light assembly with a PTC heater according to another aspect.

FIG. 3 is a Table showing general technical data for the custom PTC heater of FIGS. 1 and 2.

FIG. 4 is a Plot of a power curve for the PTC heater of FIGS. 1-3.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view from above for an earlier version of the heated vehicle tail light assembly of FIG. 2 with lens removed.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view from above in disassembly of two earlier versions of the heated vehicle tail light assembly of FIG. 1.

FIG. 7 is a close up of the PTC heater placement on a first of the heated vehicle tail light assemblies of FIG. 6.

FIG. 8 is a close up of the PTC heater placement on a second of the heated vehicle tail light assemblies of FIG. 6.

FIG. 9 is another close up of the PTC heater placement of FIG. 7.

FIG. 10 is a perspective view from above in disassembly of modified two earlier versions of the heated vehicle tail light assembly of FIG. 1 using a heat sink with a PTC heater to provide a heating source.

FIG. 11 is another perspective view of the heated tail light assemblies of FIG. 10.

FIG. 12 is yet another perspective view of the heated tail light assemblies of FIGS. 10 and 11.

FIGS. 13-18 each are perspective views from above of a heating source using a PTC heater with a heat sink and a pair of elongate, thermally conductive L-shaped heat pipes.

FIGS. 19-21 each are perspective views from above of an alternate geometric configuration heating source using a PTC heater with a heat sink and a pair of elongate, thermally conductive I-shaped heat pipes each additionally having a heat sink affixed at each end with a double-backed adhesive mounting strip.

FIG. 22 is a perspective view of eight unique heating sources for vehicle lights.

FIGS. 23-24, 33-34 are partially disassembled perspective views of a unique heating source using a PTC heater and a heat sink mounted within a vehicle headlight.

3

FIGS. 25-29, 31 and 34 are partially disassembled perspective views of another unique heating source, shown in FIGS. 13-18, using a PTC heater, a heat sink, and L-shaped heat pipes.

FIGS. 30, 32, 34 and 45 are partially disassembled perspective views of another unique heating source using a centrally mounted PTC heater and a pair of I-shaped heat pipes.

FIGS. 35-44 are partially disassembled perspective views of yet another unique heating source, shown in FIGS. 19-21, using a pair of PTC heaters affixed in spaced-apart relation along a medial portion of a pair of I-shaped heat pipes, with a heat sink affixed at each end of the pair of heat pipes.

FIGS. 46-48 are perspective views of lamp and adapter assemblies having a unique heating source on either the lamp base or the adapter assembly.

FIG. 49 is a perspective view from a leading end of a heater assembly for a vehicle light assembly according to even another unique version.

FIG. 50 is a perspective view of the heater assembly of FIG. 49 taken from a trailing end.

FIG. 51 is a perspective view from a leading end of another unique heater assembly for a vehicle light assembly.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

This disclosure is submitted in furtherance of the constitutional purposes of the U.S. Patent Laws "to promote the progress of science and useful arts" (Article 1, Section 8).

LED (light emitting diodes) light enclosures for on-road or off-road use are non-heated lights. A series of temperature controlled heated light assemblies are shown below in FIGS. 1-2 and 5-9. These lights are independently controlled environments to ensure a constant temperature on the surface of the lens. Guaranteeing no ice or fog build up on the inside or outside of the lens allows for clarity even in the coldest climates. An adaptable heating system is used to perform this task. PTC (Positive Temperature Coefficient) heating elements provide a mechanism where the heater is self-regulating, eliminating the need for a thermostat. The heating element filament will increase or decrease the resistive property (increasing the resistance decreases the heat and decreasing the resistance increases the heat) depending on the surrounding temperature. This gives the heating element a more efficient power consumption than for regular, or prior design heating elements. The prior design heating elements just turn on to the maximum heat until a thermostat turns it off. The PTC heater is placed at the bottom of the enclosure, allowing for natural convection to occur (hot air rises and cold air will cycle down), and ensuring even heat transfer to the lens. The element is tied right into the existing light circuitry, making installation of a heated light as simple as unplugging one and plugging the other in its place.

FIG. 1 illustrates one construction for a heating source 10 and 12 that uses a custom PTC (positive temperature coefficient) heater unit 14 and 16, respectively, designed to keep the ambient temperature within a vehicle light 18 (such as a head light, tail light or marker light) at 140 Degrees F. This pair of heat sources 10 and 12 allows for the heat transfer to the lens to be hot enough to keep snow and ice build up from occurring. Key features of our heating implementation are the simplicity of having a heater and thermostat all in one unit, and also the power tie in before the voltage regulator circuit in the existing light hardware (i.e., a vehicle 12 Vdc source). A new feature is the upgraded heat sink 24 and 26

4

used with the PTC element 14 and 16, which allows for maximum radiant heat to be achieved. When constructing these units, each heat sink 24 and 26 is pried open along a medial section and a respective PTC element 14 and 16 is inserted therein, after which the medial segment of the heat sink is physically compressed onto the respective PTC element 14 and 16, and silver solder is applied therebetween to affix the element and provide a heat transfer pathway that will also withstand the rapid heat change and also provide for a good connection. A high heat UV cured adhesive can also be used to keep and retain components secure from vibration and act as a heat barrier to protect the existing circuitry, as shown in FIGS. 6-9. FIG. 3 provides data for the custom PTC heater (of FIGS. 1 and 2) and FIG. 4 provides a power curve.

The present custom designed PTC heater is made to turn on when temperatures are below 32 Degrees Fahrenheit and to keep the ambient temperature at 140 Degrees Fahrenheit. The unique power tie for the heating system is directly wired to the leads before (or upstream of) the power regulating circuit. This eliminates the need for additional leads or power ties to be added in the existing system. Other temperature change thresholds (and ranges) can also be realized by selecting a PTC heater having different operating characteristics.

One exemplary PTC heater for elements 14 and 16 is available for purchase from Mouser Electronics, 1000 North Main Street Mansfield, Tex. 76063 USA, using a PTC thermistors as a heating element. A metallized round disk PTC thermistor can be used by EPCOS/TDK, 12 Vdc, 3 ohms disc PTC heating, Series/Type: B59060, Mouser Part No. 871-B59060A0160A010, EPCOS/TDK Manufacturer Part No. B59060A0160A010. Alternatively, PTC heaters can have rectangular or square configurations.

One exemplary thermal heat sink for elements 24 and 26 is available for purchase from Digikey Electronics, 701 Brooks Avenue South, Thief River Falls, Minn. 56701 USA, as an Aavid Thermalloy 577500B00000G, Digikey Part No. HS216-ND, Aavid Thermalloy Part No. 577500B00000G, HEATSINK TO-126 VERT MNT SLIP-ON. Such heat sinks 24 and 26 are formed from aluminum, a material that has desirable thermal conductivity characteristics for dissipating heat within a lighting enclosure. Such heat sink has a thermal resistance of 26 c/W with a cross-sectional tubular width of 19.81 mm, tubular axial depth of 13.21 mm, and a cross-sectional height of 8.13 mm.

FIG. 1A illustrates a simplified circuit diagram for one suitable power circuitry for powering a vehicle heated light assembly, as shown in FIG. 1. More particularly, power circuitry includes a source of power and power supply connection, such as a 12 Vdc vehicle battery and/or alternator associated with a vehicle wiring harness. Conductive wiring 29 on the vehicle wiring harness includes a pair of conductive leads, or wires 25 at a pair of nodes that provides 12 Vdc power directly to one or more PTC heaters 14 within a vehicle light assembly. A voltage regulator 23 provides a reduced voltage through a pair of conductive leads, or wires at a second pair of nodes 27 to one or more light emitting diode (LED) lamps 20 within the vehicle light assembly.

FIG. 1B shows heat unit 14 in cross section adjacent an LED 20. Heat sink 24 is formed from a tubular cross-sections portion 28 with a pair of opposed, symmetric and isomeric wings 30 and 32 extending from a central, medial section 34 of opposed planar top and bottom surfaces 35 and 37 of a reduced dimension tubular portion defined between surfaces 35 and 37 that provides a centrally thermally conductive contact portion. Wings, or wing portions 30 and

5

32 each form an enlarged tubular outer end portion **36** and **38**, respectively, relative to medial section **34**. Heater unit **14** is inserted inside of medial section **34** where it is affixed with layers **40** and **42** of solder or thermally conductive glue. Wings **30** and **32** each form a peripheral edge **44** and **46**, respectively. Furthermore, wings **30** and **32** form a top heat dissipating surface **48** and a bottom heat dissipating surface **50**, respectively.

A rectangular PTC heater **114** is similarly affixed onto a heat sink **110** that is further affixed onto a base plate **122** within an oblong, vehicle tail light assembly **118**, as shown in FIG. 2. An LED lamp **120** is also mounted atop base plate **122**.

FIG. 3 depicts a Table showing general technical data for the custom PTC heater of FIGS. 1 and 2.

FIG. 4 is a plot of a power curve for the PTC heater of FIGS. 1-3.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view from above for an earlier version of the heated vehicle tail light assembly **218** shown in FIG. 2 with lens removed. A polyimide heater **214** is adhesively affixed to a support structure within tail light assembly **218**, adjacent an LED lamp **220**.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view from above in disassembly of two earlier versions of the heated vehicle tail light assembly, namely tail light assemblies **318** and **418** which are similar to the tail light assembly of FIG. 1. A polyimide heater **314** is provided with a thermistor **319** embedded in an array of LED lamps **320**, which provides an on/off function controlled by a preset temperature range with the heater **314**. A polyimide heater provides radiant heat and the attached thermistor is wired together to regulate temperature and maximize efficiency. Similarly, light **418** includes a polyimide heater **414** and a thermistor **420** embedded in an array of LED lamps **420**.

FIG. 7 is a close up view showing placement of the polyimide heater **314** with adhesive on a first of the heated vehicle tail light assemblies **318** of FIG. 6, including thermistor **319** provided adjacent an LED lamp **320**.

FIG. 8 is a close up view showing placement of the polyimide heater **414** on a second of the heated vehicle tail light assemblies **418** of FIG. 6, including thermistor **420** provided adjacent an array of LED lamps **420**.

FIG. 9 is another close up view showing placement of the polyimide heater **314** and thermistor **319** relative to LED **320** within light **318** of FIG. 7.

FIG. 10 is a perspective view from above in disassembly of two unique heated vehicle tail light assemblies **418** and **518** similar to those depicted in FIG. 1 using a heat sink with a PTC heater to provide a heating source.

FIG. 11 is another perspective view of the heated tail light assemblies of FIG. 10. More particularly, heated tail light **418** includes two heat sources **410** and **412**, each including a heat sink and a PTC heater. Likewise, heated tail light **518** has a heat source **510** including a heat sink and a PTC heater.

FIG. 12 is yet another perspective view of the heated tail light assemblies of FIGS. 10 and 11. More particularly, heated tail light **518** includes two heat sources **510** and **512**, each including a heat sink and a PTC heater. Likewise, heated tail light **618** has a heat source **610** including a heat sink and a PTC heater.

FIGS. 13-18 each are perspective views from above of a heating source **710** using a PTC heater with a heat sink and a pair of elongate, thermally conductive L-shaped heat pipes. The PTC heater comprises a rectangular PTC heater wired to deliver current delivered across the PTC heater with insulated wire leads that are conductively soldered to each side of the heater. Conductive insulated wire leads are

6

affixed to opposite sides of the PTC heater, and current is applied across the PTC heater, in operation. The PTC heater is either soldered onto the heat sink, or physically seated on the heat sink, after which silver solder is applied along edges to secure the PTC heater in thermally conductive relation with the heat sink. Each heat pipe is formed from a hollow copper tube. Each heat sink includes a pair of cylindrical edge apertures and slits are cut into each aperture. A leg on each L-shaped heat pipe is inserted into one of the apertures, after which adhesive or epoxy is applied in each slit, thereby securing an end of each heat pipe in thermally conductive relation within the heat sink. Likewise, individual heat sinks are adhesively (or soldered) in thermally conductive relation onto ends of the heat pipes

FIGS. 19-21 each are perspective views from above of an alternate geometric configuration heating source **810** using a pair of PTC heaters with a pair of heat sinks and a pair of elongate, thermally conductive I-shaped heat pipes each additionally having a heat sink adhesively and/or physically affixed at each end with a double-backed adhesive mounting strip. The PTC heaters are wired in parallel, with current delivered across each PTC heater by insulated wire leads. Each heat pipe is formed from a hollow copper tube. Other thermally conductive materials can be used for the heat pipes, such as aluminum or any other suitable thermally conductive structural material. Individual PTC heaters are silver soldered (or adhesively affixed) onto both heat pipes. Likewise, individual heat sinks are adhesively affixed (or soldered) in thermally conductive relation onto ends of the heat pipes. Segments of adhesively doubled sided foam trim tape are affixed to each heat sink to facilitate fixation (along with fasteners) to a component on a vehicle light assembly. Optionally, fasteners can be used.

FIG. 22 is a perspective view of eight unique heating sources for vehicle lights.

FIG. 23-24, 33-34 are partially disassembled perspective views of a unique heating source **1110** using a PTC heater and a heat sink mounted within a vehicle headlight. The PTC heater includes a heat sink comprising an Aavid Thermalloy Part No. 577500B00000G, HEATSINK TO-126 VERT MNT SLIP-ON, available from Digikey Electronics, 701 Brooks Avenue South, Thief River Falls, Minn. 56701 USA, Digikey Part No. HS216-ND. A rectangular PTC heater is soldered or adhesively affixed in thermally conductive relation atop the heat sink which is further retained or affixed to a component of the vehicle light housing.

FIGS. 25-29, 31 and 34 are partially disassembled perspective views of another unique heating source **710**, shown in FIGS. 13-18, using a PTC heater, a heat sink, and L-shaped heat pipes.

FIGS. 30, 32, 34 and 45 are partially disassembled perspective views of another unique heating source **910** using a centrally mounted PTC heater and a pair of I-shaped heat pipes. FIG. 34 illustrates three applications of unique heating sources on vehicle lights, sources **710**, **910** and **110**.

FIGS. 35-44 are partially disassembled perspective views of yet another unique heating source **810**, shown in FIGS. 19-21, using a pair of PTC heaters affixed in spaced-apart relation along a medial portion of a pair of I-shaped heat pipes, with a heat sink affixed at each end of the pair of heat pipes.

FIGS. 46-48 are perspective views of lamp and adapter assemblies having a unique heating source **1010** on either the lamp base or the adapter assembly. An aftermarket heated adaptor plug is provided for the clearing of snow and ice build up on headlight or taillight lenses. Such heating source **1010** can also be used to eliminate condensation

buildup within a vehicle light assembly, from an inner surface of a lens. This plug is a male to female plug with a PTC (positive temperature coefficient) heater that self regulates its temperature based on the ambient temperature around it. Designed to plug into the existing light fixture outlet and then plug the stock light into it. No need for any modifications to the light or enclosure is necessary.

According to even another construction, a heated circular headlight was developed. A custom made heat sink was attached to the front corner of an LED mount board. The heat sink is made of two copper tubes on the PTC heating element side. The PTC heating element can be interchanged for different temperature ranges. Hollow copper tubes are used because copper pulls heat way from surfaces faster than aluminum. The copper tubes are attached to two small U-shaped aluminum heat sinks. Aluminum has a better radiant heat property than copper, so the combined benefits of copper and aluminum achieve a desired combined effect. With this combination, maximum heat transfer is achieved. The PTC heating element is connected in parallel with the top LED light source. This was done to simplify the circuitry. The only side effect of this configuration is that it takes three second for the top led to turn on. This results because the PTC heater initially has less resistance than the LED lamp, but the LED lamp stays on after the initial start up. Test results were collected in development with time lapse pictures. The test environment was at -5 Degrees Fahrenheit. Testing was performed on this prototype design.

According to yet another construction, a heated tail light (both round and oblong) was developed. A power tie was provided before the voltage regulator circuit in the existing light hardware. An upgraded heat sink was used with the PTC element, which allows for maximum radiant heat to be achieved. FIGS. 3 and 4 provide exemplary data about the PTC heater and a power curve. When constructing these units, silver solder is used to withstand the rapid heat change and for a good connection. The PTC heaters that are used are a circular design, they are bi-directional so it does not matter what side to which the ground and power are connected. After connecting the wires to the heater, the heater is slid between the heat sink with enough tension to hold them securely together. Lastly, the heat sink and the heater are secured inside to the bottom of the enclosure with a UV light cured adhesive.

The above-described PTC heater designs start with the perfect pairing of components for the enclosure. Depending on the cubic volume of the air required to be heated in order to transfer enough heat through the lens material, a specific heater design is selected. After knowing this, one can pick the right temperature constant for the application. Subsequently, the PTC heater is paired with the right heat sink that will not block any light and will fit in the allowed area. It is then necessary to make sure that the heat sink dissipates as much heat as possible to ensure a fast clear time. With the right selected components, it is now time to assemble them together. Depending on the distance the wires have to travel and the current they have to be able to carry, an appropriate conductive wire gauge is selected. Silver solder is used to ensure the best contact and heat resistance. The PTC heater is placed in the middle of the heat sink and one wire is soldered onto the back surface and the other wire is soldered on to the front surface. A ceramic square plate is used to separate the heat sink from the delicate electrical components to ensure that no harm results from over heating. With the heater assembled and the ceramic plate down, it is time to place the package at the bottom of the enclosure and secure it in place with a UV cured adhesive. The adhesive

maximizes radiant heat transfer and also protects the heating unit from vibrations. Additionally and/or optionally, one or more fasteners can be used to secure the resulting package to a vehicle lighting component. Optionally, these constructions can be use on other light sources beyond just vehicle lighting, such as street lights, solar yard lights, and other security lights.

FIGS. 49 and 50 are perspective front and rear views of a heater assembly for a vehicle light assembly according to even another unique version. More particularly, FIG. 49 illustrates a heating source 1110 comprising a heating unit in the form of a positive temperature coefficient heater 1114 affixed in thermally conductive relation with thermally conductive adhesive 1130, such as thermally conductive epoxy, within a tubular heat sink 1124. A pair of insulated conductive leads 1131 and 1133 enter a rear portion of heat sink 1124 through a bore provided by cylindrical inner wall portion 1135, as shown in FIG. 50.

As shown in FIG. 49, PTC heater 1114 according to one construction has a square cross-section and has a length of approximately twice the distance of one side of the square face, extending longitudinally within heat pipe 1124. Heat pipe 1124 is formed from any of a number of thermally conductive materials, such as aluminum to facilitate transfer of heat generated by PTC heater 114 through heat sink 1124 into air (or gases) within the enclosure of a vehicle light. To facilitate assembly, a resilient rubber (or plastic) grommet 1126 is affixed at a trailing end of heat pipe 1124, seated within a circumferentially reduced diameter portion, or groove, formed in an outer cylindrical surface of heat pipe 1124. An inner circumferential diameter of grommet 1126 is urged into seated engagement within the groove of heat pipe 1124 during assembly. A radially inwardly extending circumferential groove 1128 is formed between two adjacent cylindrical walls on grommet 1126 with is urged and seated in assembly within a hole that is formed in a wall portion of a vehicle light assembly, or housing.

Such a tubular grommet construction readily facilitates modification of an existing vehicle light assembly to make the assembly heated by merely forming a hole in a housing wall portion of the light assembly and inserting a leading end of heating source 1110 through the hole until grommet 1128 overlies a circumferential edge of the hole, seating firmly within groove 1128 and sealing heating source 1110 within the hole provided in the light assembly housing. The provision of elongate heat sink, or tube 1124 enables close placement of a heat source in a desired location within a light assembly, proximate a lens of the light assembly.

FIG. 51 is a perspective view from a leading end of another unique heater assembly for a vehicle light assembly. More particularly, FIG. 51 illustrates a heating source 1210 having a positive temperature coefficient heater in the shape of a cylindrical disk to which a cylindrical nipple-shaped button or rod heat sink 1224 is affixed with thermally conductive adhesive, such as a thermally conductive epoxy. Heat sink 1224 is a cylindrical thermally conductive rod with a round, or semi-spherical nose, or leading end. Heat sink 1224 can be made of any suitable thermally conductive material, such as aluminum, metal, metal allow, composite or plastic material, or any other material having a desired thermal conductivity suitable to transfer heat from the PTC heater to an interior of a vehicle light assembly. A hollow threaded cylindrical collar 1226 is further affixed with thermally conductive adhesive around heat sink 1224 and atop PTC heater 1214. Collar 1226 included a circumferential groove for receiving a rubber o-ring 1228 at the base of threaded portion 1226. A threaded bore or port is then

provided through a wall portion of a housing for a vehicle light assembly, and heating source 1210 is threaded in sealed engagement within the port via threaded portion 1226 and o-ring seal 1228 as a leading end of heat sink 1224 is inserted within the housing of the vehicle light assembly at a location where it is desirable to generate heat to remove or prevent ice and/or condensation that might accumulated on a lens surface of a vehicle light assembly, either on an inner surface or an outer surface of a lens. The provision of elongate heat sink, or nipple 1224 enables close placement of a heat source in a desired location within a light assembly, proximate a lens of the light assembly.

In compliance with the statute, embodiments of the invention have been described in language more or less specific as to structural and methodical features. It is to be understood, however, that the entire invention is not limited to the specific features and/or embodiments shown and/or described, since the disclosed embodiments comprise forms of putting the invention into effect. The invention is, therefore, claimed in any of its forms or modifications within the proper scope of the appended claims appropriately interpreted in accordance with the doctrine of equivalents.

I claim:

1. A vehicle heated light assembly, comprising:
 - an enclosure provided by a housing and a lens;
 - a light emitting diode lamp provided in the enclosure configured to emit light through the lens;
 - a positive temperature coefficient heater provided within the enclosure;
 - a heat sink having a tubular cross-sectional portion having a pair of symmetric wing portions with each wing portion including an enlarged tubular outer end portion, the heat sink provided in the enclosure and physically affixed in thermally conductive relation with the positive temperature coefficient heater;
 - power circuitry having a source voltage coupled with the positive temperature coefficient heater and voltage regulating circuitry coupled with the source voltage and configured to provide a reduced voltage to the light emitting diode lamp; and
 - a power supply connection coupled with the power circuitry to provide the source voltage.
2. The heated light assembly of claim 1, further comprising at least one elongate, thermally conductive heat pipe affixed in thermally conductive relation with the thermal heat sink and carried in the housing proximate the lens to impart conductive and convective heat delivery to the lens.
3. The heated light assembly of claim 1, wherein the outer end portion of each wing comprises a cylindrical portion.
4. The heated light assembly of claim 3, wherein an elongate and thermally conductive heat pipe is affixed within each cylindrical portion.
5. The heated light assembly of claim 4, wherein each heat pipe is L-shaped and has a cylindrical outer tubular wall.
6. The heated light assembly of claim 1, wherein the positive temperature coefficient heater is affixed in thermally conductive relation within a tubular medial portion of the heat sink.
7. A vehicle heated light assembly, comprising:
 - an enclosure provided by a housing and a lens;
 - a light emitting diode lamp provided in the enclosure configured to emit light through the lens;
 - a positive temperature coefficient heater provided within the enclosure;
 - a tubular body heat sink having an inner surface and an outer surface provided in the enclosure and physically affixed in thermally conductive relation along opposed

inner wall portions of the heat sink with the positive temperature coefficient heater in a reduced dimension tubular portion of the tubular body, the heat sink including a pair of opposed symmetric wing portions each comprising an enlarged tubular portion each provided laterally of the reduced dimension tubular portion;

power circuitry having voltage regulating circuitry, a first pair of nodes providing a first voltage to the positive temperature coefficient heater, and a second pair of nodes providing at a second, reduced voltage, the voltage regulating circuitry configured to provide a reduced voltage source to the light emitting diode lamp; a power supply connection coupled to the power circuitry to provide the first voltage to the power circuitry; and at least one elongate and thermally conductive heat pipe affixed in thermally conductive relation with the heat sink proximate the lens.

8. A vehicle heated light assembly, comprising:
 - an enclosure provided by a housing and a lens;
 - a light emitting diode lamp provided in the enclosure configured to emit light through the lens;
 - a positive temperature coefficient heater provided within the enclosure;
 - a heat sink having a tubular cross-sectional profile with a reduced dimension tubular portion and a pair of enlarged dimension outwardly extending tubular wing portions provided in the enclosure and physically affixed in thermally conductive relation with the positive temperature coefficient heater;
 - power circuitry having voltage regulating circuitry, a first pair of nodes providing a first voltage to the positive temperature coefficient heater, and a second pair of nodes providing at a second, reduced voltage, the voltage regulating circuitry configured to provide a reduced voltage source to the light emitting diode lamp;
 - a power supply connection coupled to the power circuitry to provide the first voltage to the power circuitry; and
 - at least one elongate and thermally conductive heat pipe affixed in thermally conductive relation with the heat sink proximate the lens.

9. The vehicle heated light assembly of claim 8, wherein a plurality of light emitting diode lamps are affixed in an array within the enclosure.

10. The vehicle heated light assembly of claim 8, wherein the positive temperature coefficient heater is affixed in thermally conductive relation within the heat sink.

11. The vehicle heated light assembly of claim 8, wherein a first and a second elongate and thermally conductive heat pipe is affixed in thermally conductive relation within each of the tubular wing portions.

12. The vehicle heated light assembly of claim 11, wherein the positive temperature coefficient heater is affixed in thermally conductive relation to one of an inner surface and an outer surface of the tubular heat sink.

13. A heated vehicle illumination assembly, comprising:
 - a housing providing a cavity and having a light transmission portion;
 - an illumination source provided in the housing; and
 - a heat source provided in the housing having a Positive Temperature Coefficient (PTC) heater and a winged heat transfer body having at least one central thermally conductive contact portion and a pair of isomeric wing portions, each wing portion having opposed top and bottom heat dissipating surfaces spaced from the housing and exposed to gas within the cavity and configured to transfer heat from the heat sink within the

11

enclosure to the light transmission portion, the heat source affixed in the cavity and the Positive Temperature Coefficient (PTC) heater physically affixed in thermally conductive relation with the central thermally conductive contact portion of the heat transfer body between the pair of isomorous wing portions to present the heat source to deliver heat to the light transmission portion operative to mitigate condensate from occluding the light transmission portion.

14. The heated vehicle illumination assembly of claim 13, wherein each wing portion of the heat sink has a peripheral edge that transitions between the top heat dissipating surface and the bottom heat dissipating surface.

15. The heated vehicle illumination assembly of claim 14, wherein each of the peripheral edges has a tubular cross-sectional profile contiguously formed between the top heat dissipating surface and the bottom heat dissipating surface.

16. The heated vehicle illumination assembly of claim 13, wherein the power circuitry is coupled with a first wire to a top surface of the positive temperature coefficient heater and a second wire to a bottom surface of the positive temperature coefficient heater.

17. The heated vehicle illumination assembly of claim 13, wherein the isomorous wing portions are a pair of opposed symmetric wing portions.

12

18. The heated vehicle illumination assembly of claim 17, wherein at least a portion of each of the pair of opposed symmetric wing portions are planar to one another.

19. The heated vehicle illumination assembly of claim 18, wherein each wing portion has opposed planar top and bottom heat dissipating surfaces configured to transfer heat from the heat sink within the enclosure, the heat dissipative surfaces provided in the enclosure and physically affixed in thermally conductive relation with the positive temperature coefficient heater at the central thermally conductive contact portion of the heat dissipative body, between the pair of symmetric wing portions.

20. The heated vehicle illumination assembly of claim 19, further comprising power circuitry having a source voltage coupled with the positive temperature coefficient heater and voltage regulating circuitry coupled with the source voltage and configured to provide a reduced voltage to the light emitting diode lamp.

21. The heated vehicle illumination assembly of claim 20, further comprising a power supply connection coupled with the power circuitry to provide the source voltage.

* * * * *