



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:
26.09.2001 Bulletin 2001/39

(51) Int Cl.7: **B65D 33/34**

(21) Application number: **00650015.1**

(22) Date of filing: **08.03.2000**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE
 Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

(72) Inventors:
 • **Meldon, Bernard**
Kilmacanogue, Country Wicklow (IE)
 • **Meldon, Mary**
Kilmacanogue, Country Wicklow (IE)

(71) Applicants:
 • **Meldon, Bernard**
Kilmacanogue, Country Wicklow (IE)
 • **Meldon, Mary**
Kilmacanogue, Country Wicklow (IE)

(74) Representative: **O'Connor, Donal Henry**
c/o Cruickshank & Co.,
1 Holles Street
Dublin 2 (IE)

(54) **A security bag**

(57) A tamper evident container (1) having front (2) and rear (3) side faces of a translucent plastics material having panels (12) adapted for the reception of a depos-

itor's signature. The container (1) has a strip of adhesive (15) to seal the bag while simultaneously covering the depositor's signature. A unique identifying indicia (11) is printed on the container.

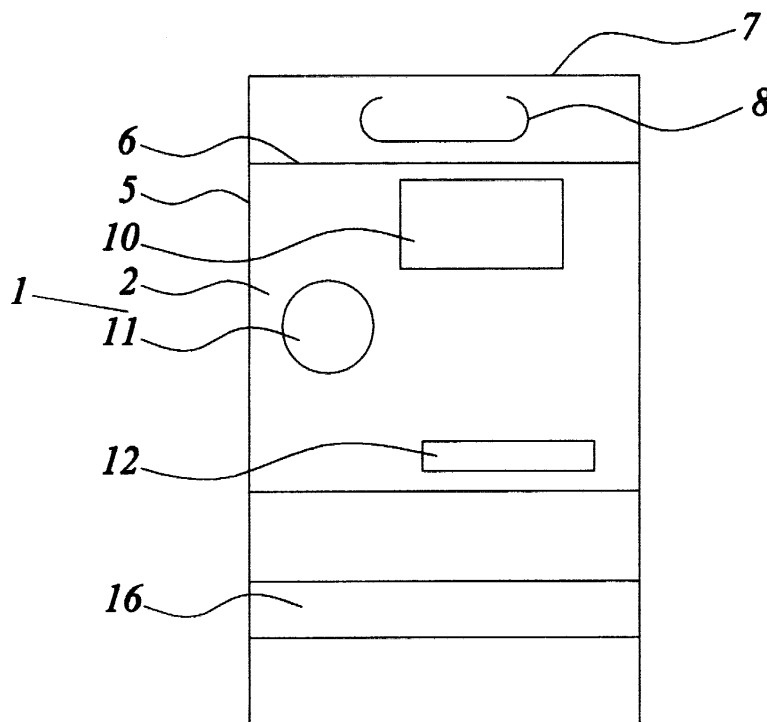


Fig. 1

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a device and method for indicating the potential tampering with portable articles deposited for temporary storage or safe-keeping with third parties, or in places where the articles may be even left unattended and in particular to a tamper evident container.

[0002] Where articles such as handbags, valuables and other personal belongings are left in the care of, for example, cloakroom staff, there is always a problem of pilferage. This is particularly the case where articles are deposited for safe-keeping in cloakrooms of public places such as hotels, restaurants, concert halls, museums, art galleries and such other places of entertainment. Where, for example, a handbag, shopping bag or the like article is left with cloakroom staff, there is always the possibility that pilferage will occur, or what in many cases can be even more important, accusations of pilfering can arise which may be totally unjust and incorrectly based. Such accusations inevitably lead to claims for compensation against the owners of the establishment and of their very nature cause conflict between the owners and their staff operating such cloakrooms. There is thus a need to protect not just simply any depositor from pilferage, but also to protect staff from accusations of such pilferage. It is always easier for people to claim that they had something stolen and indeed they may often genuinely believe so than to actually admit to others or, indeed, more importantly to themselves that they might possibly have mislaid the item.

[0003] Even if pilferage does not occur, most people do not particularly want their belongings examined for the extraction of valuable information such as addresses, car registration numbers and credit card numbers, personal information, the latter being particularly important where credit card numbers are noted. Nor indeed do many people want their more intimate possessions such as letters, diaries, etc. read by third parties. This, at its mildest is perceived to be an invasion of privacy and at its worst could indeed lead to subsequent loss of property due to theft, burglaries, credit card fraud etc. since knowing that somebody is attending a concert, sporting, or other event is a very good way of ascertaining a potential address for burglary.

[0004] It must also again be emphasised that there is a major problem for the venue owner and cloakroom operator who is trying to provide a service for his or her customers, by taking their possessions into safe-keeping while at the same time avoiding major litigation. Even if litigation does not occur, it is of no benefit whatsoever to a cloakroom operator to have accusations of theft levelled against the establishment since such an allegation automatically ensures that there is now almost certainly as well as a dissatisfied customer an equally dissatisfied and disgruntled member or members of staff. No matter how an employer will assure a staff member that he or she is not under any cloud of suspicion, the mere fact

of such an allegation being raised must of necessity cause distress and upset. The customer, even when he or she is confident that their possessions have not been tampered with, there is still always the nagging doubt that somebody has indeed rifled through one's possessions.

[0005] One particular area where these type of accusations, counter-accusations and general disquiet occurs is in many a workplace where there is an unsupervised cloakroom and employees leave possessions in the cloakroom, which possessions are not stolen, but may indeed be examined or otherwise rifled through by other members of staff. These, in some ways, are the most difficult situations to handle, since there has been no loss of property, but at the same time there is dissension among staff members.

[0006] The present invention is directed towards overcoming these and similar problems, by providing a method and apparatus for facilitating the temporary storage of portable articles when out of the owner's possession, whether in the care of third party or simply left unattended.

[0007] The invention is further directed towards providing a method for the safe-keeping of such articles when left in temporary storage and further for reassuring the depositor that the articles have not been tampered with during such temporary storage.

Statements of Invention

[0008] According to the invention there is provided a tamper evident container for the temporary storage of articles of the type comprising a bag having front and rear side faces, an opening and a flap-like closure forming an extension of the rear side face for folding over the opening against the front side face and sealing means to close and seal the bag, characterised in that portion of the front side face of the bag is adapted to receive a depositor's signature. The advantage of this is that once the articles have been placed in the container, there is no possibility whatsoever of anybody being able to examine the contents or take anything from the contents of the container without destroying the container and indicating immediately to the owner on retrieval of the container that the articles or valuables contained therein have been tampered with.

[0009] In one embodiment of the invention the flap is of a translucent material and the sealing means is formed from an elongate strip of adhesive adjacent to the free edge of the flap, covered by a removable covered strip and in which the portion of the bag adapted to receive a depositor's signature is covered by adhesive on closing the bag. The advantage of this is that any attempt to remove the flap by for example melting or otherwise interfering with the adhesive will of necessity interfere with the signature and will afford clear evidence of tampering.

[0010] In another embodiment of the invention the

bag is of a plastics heat sealable material and at least the flap is translucent and the sealing means is provided by a heat sealing device which forms an elongate fused strip across the flap and the front and rear side faces which also covers the portion of the bag adapted to receive the depositors signature. The advantage of this is that even if an identical bag were to be used by somebody who has indeed destroyed the original bag, it will not be possible to replicate the signature and thus any attempt to open the container will of necessity as in the previous embodiment described, damage the signature and provide clear evidence of tampering.

[0011] Ideally, the end of the bag remote from the opening includes a handle. A handle can be quite useful. Preferably, the bag is of a clear plastics material and preferably has printed thereon unique identifying indicia. The advantage of having a clear plastics bag is that even prior to retrieving the bag and opening it the depositor will be aware if tampering has taken place. Further the bag has unique indicia printed thereon - sequential numbering is a obvious way of doing this. Once the bag has been identified and sealed then if somebody else should remove the contents and then reseal them in another bag even where a signature has been placed in the bag attempting to duplicate the signature this tampering will be immediately apparent.

[0012] Further in one embodiment of the invention the bag comprises:

a pair of inelastic transparent flexible sheets each having a substantially rectangular configuration with a periphery having a short top edge, a short bottom edge and a pair of elongated side edges, the sheets each having a common width and including a first front sheet having a first length, the top edges and side edges of the sheets being coupled to define an opening with the top edge of the second rear sheet extending beyond that of the first front sheet, the sheets further being coupled together along a line parallel with and adjacent to the bottom edge, wherein an elongated cut out is formed in the sheets between and in parallel with the bottom edge of the sheets and the line to define a handle;

said first front sheet further including indicia situated thereon in the shape of a rectangle for allowing a verification signature to be written therein;

an adhesive strip formed along the second rear sheet between the top edges of the first and second sheets to form a flap such that the second rear sheet may be folded to adhere to the first sheet, thereby rendering a sealed compartment for placing article front therein; and

a removable cover sheet with a size similar to that of the adhesive strip adapted for being removably coupled to the adhesive strip.

[0013] Further the invention provides a dispensing apparatus for a tamper evident container comprising:

a body member for a plurality of containers,

a delivery device for dispensing one container at a time out of the body member; and

a coin released mechanism to operate the delivery device.

[0014] Ideally this dispensing apparatus includes a heat sealing means for use with the bag when formed by heat sealable plastics material. There are major advantages of such a dispensing device and people can purchase a bag prior to coming to for example a cloak-room counter and can then hand the bag and contents to the attendant preferably removing a ticket which could ideally be placed in the bag from the bag, which ticket would have identical indicia such as numbering to that of the bag. Such a system allows quicker processing of the deposit of articles.

[0015] Ideally the invention provides a method of depositing articles for temporary storage comprising the steps of:

placing at least one article in a container as described above;

sealing the container so that it can only be opened by destroying the structural integrity of the bag;

leaving the filed container for safe-keeping; and

checking the integrity of the container before opening and retrieving the contents.

[0016] In this latter method ideally prior to leaving the filled container for safe-keeping the exterior of the bag is signed and then preferably the container is retrieved upon verification of the signature.

Detailed Description of the Invention

[0017] The invention will be more clearly understood from one description of a device for use according to the invention, described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a plan view of a tamper evident container according to the invention; and

Fig. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the tamper-evident container.

[0018] There is provided a tamper evident container, in this case a plastics bag, indicated generally by the reference numeral 1. The plastics bag 1 is manufactured

from a clear plastics material and comprises a front side face 2 and a rear side face 3 extending beyond the front side face 1 and forming therebetween an opening 4. The front side face 2 and the rear side face 3 are sealed together along side edges 5 which may be manufactured from a suitable tubular plastics material. They are also sealed along a bottom edge 6 and again at a further edge 7. A cut-out handle 8 is provided between the bottom edge 6 and the edge 7. Instructions on how to use the bag are printed at 10, while unique bag identifying indicia, probably a number, is printed at 11. Portion of the front side face 2 is adapted to receive a signature and is provided by a delineated rectangle 12. The rear side face 3 projects beyond the front side face 2 to form a cover flap 14 carrying a strip of adhesive 15 covered by a tear-off removable cover strip 16. A ticket with the same number or indicia as at 11 is ideally contained in the bag as a receipt.

[0019] In use, a depositor places valuable and other articles into the bag 1, signs in the delineated rectangle 12 and then removes the cover strip 16 and folds the flap 14 over the opening 4 to adhere to the front side face 2 across the rectangle 12. The ticket carrying the same number as that as at 11 which if already placed in the bag may be removed from the bag prior to sealing. When the bag is presented to a cloakroom attendant for retrieval, the cloakroom attendant can verify the signature before returning the bag and at the same time the depositor can check the bag to ensure that the signature has not been disturbed or the bag not been tampered within any way.

[0020] While in the embodiment described above has been illustrated with the use of adhesive, it will be appreciated that instead of adhesive, particularly where a heat sealable plastics material is used, the flap may be sealed across the delineated rectangle 12 and thus the signature by suitable heat sealing, which will secure not alone the flap 14 to the front side face 2, but will also secure the front side face 2 to the rear side face 3 thus sealing the bag securely with the signature underneath. Whether the heat sealing is across the signature or not is a matter of choice. In many instances it may not be sealed across the signature in some position remote therefrom.

[0021] While in the embodiment above the container has been formed from a bag of clear plastics material which would generally be extruded so that it could be formed from any inelastic plastics material for example from the one rectangular sheet of material, but in general the bag will comprise a pair of inelastic transparent flexible sheets each having a substantially rectangular configuration with a periphery having a short top edge, a short bottom edge (6) and a pair of elongated side edges, the sheets each having a common width and including a first front sheet (2) having a first length, the top edges and side edges of the sheets being coupled to define an opening with the top edge of the second rear sheet (3) extending beyond that of the first front sheet

(2), the sheets further being coupled together along a line (7) parallel with and adjacent to the bottom edge (6), wherein an elongated cut out is formed in the sheets between and in parallel to the bottom edge (6) of the sheets and the line (7) to define a handle (8), said first front sheet (2) further including indicia situation thereon in the shape of a rectangle (12) for allowing a verification signature to be written therein, an adhesive strip formed along the second rear sheet (3) between the top edges of the first and second sheets to form a flap (14) such that the second rear sheet may be folded to adhere to the first sheet, thereby rendering a sealed compartment for placing article front therein and a removable cover sheet (16) with a size similar to that of the adhesive strip (15) adapted for being removably coupled to the adhesive strip. (15).

[0022] It is also envisaged that suitable dispensing apparatus for the tamper evident container according to the present invention may be provided. Such dispensing apparatus would generally comprise some form of body member for holding the containers, a delivery device for dispensing one container at a time out of the body member and a coin-release mechanism to operate the delivery device. In this way the cloakroom provider is not assuming the responsibility of providing a storage container. The dispensing apparatus may also incorporate a heat sealing means when the bag is of a heat sealable plastics material.

[0023] A particular advantage of the dispensing device is that it will allow the articles and other valuables to be placed in a bag and to have everything ready when somebody arrives at the counter of a cloakroom, or the like place where articles are accepted for storage and safe-keeping.

[0024] It will be appreciated that ideally the bag is made from a suitable plastics material, but indeed can be made from any totally opaque or indeed translucent material. However, if the bag is provided such that ideally a signature is provided on the bag, then at least one portion of the bag must have something on which the user can write.

[0025] Ideally the bag as mentioned is of a transparent material, but in many instances an opaque material may be preferable as people may not wish to have their possessions on view.

[0026] It will also be appreciated that the bag does not have to have any particular size, but can vary from a size sufficient to contain relatively small articles of considerable value such as jewellery in a safe to much larger articles. An example of the former use would be in hotels and the like places where people do not want to have individual safe-keeping boxes, but simply want to deposit their valuables with the hotel keeper for the duration of their stay, or indeed may be prepared to pay a small sum each time they have to remove and open the tamper evident container.

[0027] It will be appreciated that the present invention provides safe and secure storage for small personal

items such as wallets, purses, keys, scarves, gloves, etc. in a cloakroom, or other place of storage.

[0028] It will further be appreciated that the container according to the present invention may be produced from any durable, clear and puncture resistant plastic, but there is no need for a relatively heavy bag, since once it can be easily ascertained whether a bag has been punctured or not, that is sufficient.

[0029] In the specification the terms "comprise, comprises, comprised and comprising" or any variation thereof and the terms "include, includes, included and including" or any variation thereof are considered to be totally interchangeable and they should all be afforded the widest possible interpretation and vice versa.

[0030] The invention is not limited to the embodiments described above, or to the various other methods and ways of carrying out the invention, described above which may be varied in both construction and detail.

Claims

1. A tamper evident container for the temporary storage of articles of the type comprising a bag having front and rear side faces, an opening and a flap-like closure forming an extension of the rear side face for folding over the opening against the front side face and sealing means to close and seal the bag, **characterised in that** portion (12) of the front side face (2) of the bag (1) is adapted to receive a depositor's signature.
2. A tamper evident container as claimed in claim 1 in which the flap (14) is of a translucent material and the sealing means is formed from an elongate strip of adhesive (15) adjacent to the free edge of the flap (14), covered by a removable cover strip (16) and in which the portion (12) of the bag (1) adapted to receive a depositor's signature is covered by adhesive (15) on closing the bag (1).
3. A tamper evident container as claimed in claim 1 in which the bag (1) is of plastics heat sealable material and at least the flap (14) is translucent and the sealing means is provided by a heat sealing device which forms an elongate fused strip across the flap (14) and the front (2) and rear (3) side faces which also covers the portion (12) of the bag (1) adapted to receive the depositor's signature.
4. A tamper evident container as claimed in any preceding claim in which the end of the bag remote from the opening includes a handle (8).
5. A tamper evident container as claimed in any preceding claim in which the bag (1) is of a clear plastics material.
6. A tamper evident container as claimed in any preceding claim in which the bag (1) has printed thereon unique identifying indicia (11).
7. A tamper evident container as claimed in any preceding claim in which the bag (1) comprises:
 - a pair of inelastic transparent flexible sheets each having a substantially rectangular configuration with a periphery having a short top edge, a short bottom edge (6) and a pair of elongated side edges, the sheets each having a common width and including a first front sheet (2) having a first length, the top edges and side edges of the sheets being coupled to define an opening with the top edge of the second rear sheet (3) extending beyond that of the first front sheet (2), the sheets further being coupled together along a line (7) parallel with and adjacent to the bottom edge (6), wherein an elongated cut out is formed in the sheets between and in parallel with the bottom edge (6) of the sheets and the line (7) to define a handle (8);
 - said first front sheet (2) further including indicia situated thereon in the shape of a rectangle (12) for allowing a verification signature to be written therein;
 - an adhesive strip formed along the second rear sheet (3) between the top edges of the first and second sheets to form a flap (14) such that the second rear sheet may be folded to adhere to the first sheet, thereby rendering a sealed compartment for placing article front therein; and
 - a removable cover sheet (16) with a size similar to that of the adhesive strip (15) adapted for being removably coupled to the adhesive strip (15).
8. A tamper evident container substantially as described herein with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.
9. A dispensing apparatus for a tamper evident container as claimed in any preceding claim comprising:
 - a body member for a plurality of containers,
 - a delivery device for dispensing one container at a time out of the body member; and
 - a coin released mechanism to operate the delivery device.
10. A dispensing apparatus as claimed in claim 9 which

includes a heat sealing means for use with the bag when formed of a heat sealable plastics material.

11. A method of depositing articles for temporary storage comprising the steps of: 5
- placing at least one article in a container as claimed in any of claims 1 to 9;
- sealing the container so that it can only be 10
opened by destroying the structural integrity of the bag;
- leaving the filled container out for safe-keeping; 15
and
- checking the integrity of the container before opening and retrieving the contents.
12. A method as claimed in claim 11 in which 20
prior to leaving the filled container for safe-keeping the exterior of the bag is signed.
13. A method as claimed in claim 12 in which the container is released upon verification of the signature. 25

30

35

40

45

50

55

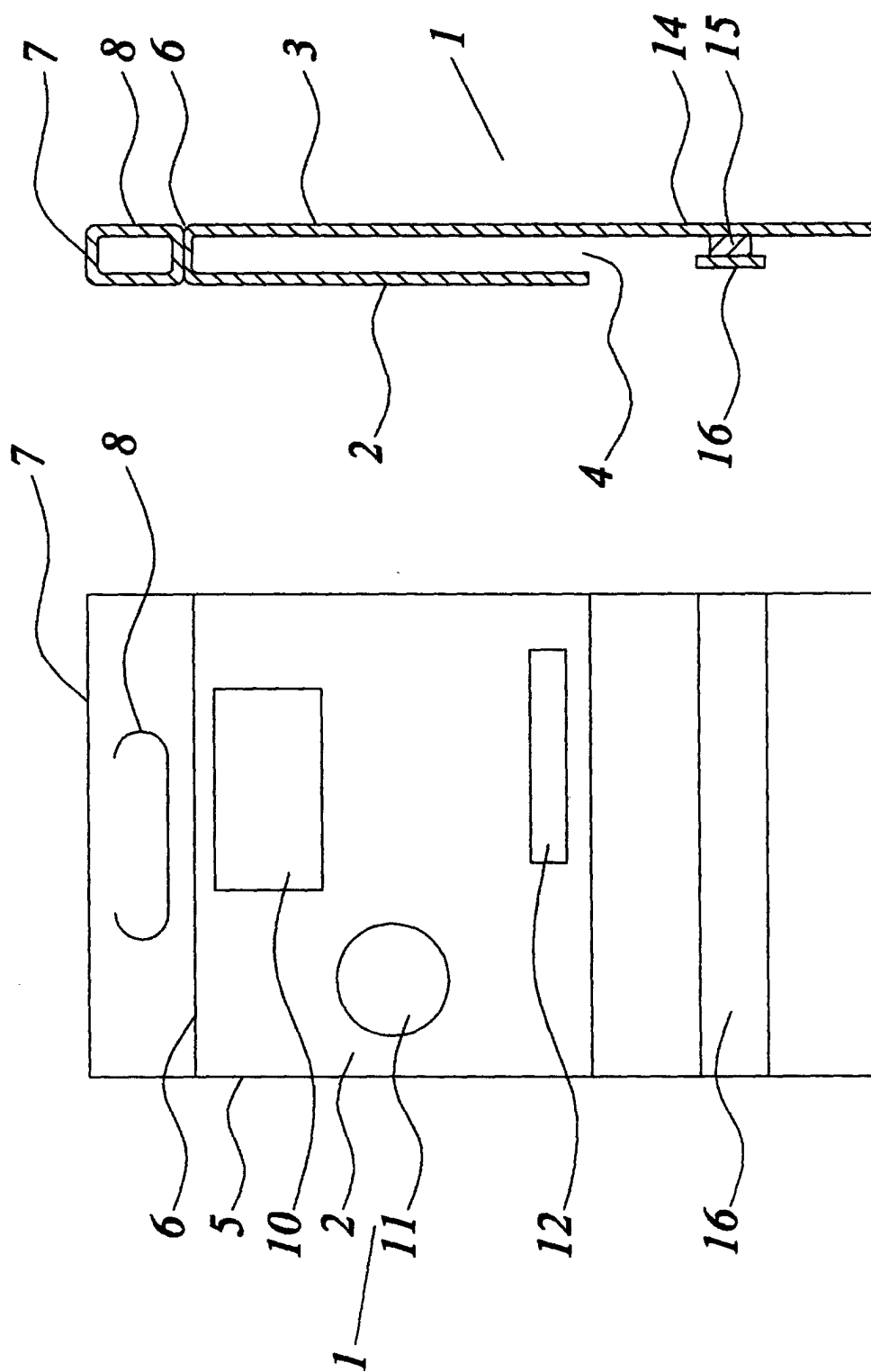


Fig. 1

Fig. 2



European Patent
Office

PARTIAL EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

which under Rule 45 of the European Patent Convention EP 00 65 0015 shall be considered, for the purposes of subsequent proceedings, as the European search report

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	GB 2 250 011 A (DECOFLEX LTD) 27 May 1992 (1992-05-27)	1,4,11	B65D33/34
Y	* the whole document *	2,7	
A	---	3	
X	US 4 720 040 A (GUREWITZ RICHARD M) 19 January 1988 (1988-01-19)	1,5,6, 11-13	
Y	* column 2, line 1 - line 3 *	2,7	
	* column 3, line 51 - line 58; figures 2,3,5 *		

X	EP 0 965 532 A (BRITTON SECURITY PACKAGING LIM) 22 December 1999 (1999-12-22) * paragraphs [0010],[0017]; figure 2 *	1,4	

A	WO 98 32351 A (REITZ FRANK J ;NORTHWEST AIRLINES INC (US)) 30 July 1998 (1998-07-30) * page 3, paragraph 3; figure 11 * * page 4, paragraph 2 * * page 6, paragraph 4 *	1,4-6	

	-/--		
TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7) B65D			
INCOMPLETE SEARCH The Search Division considers that the present application, or one or more of its claims, does/do not comply with the EPC to such an extent that a meaningful search into the state of the art cannot be carried out, or can only be carried out partially, for these claims. Claims searched completely : 1-7,11-13 Claims searched incompletely : Claims not searched : 8 Reason for the limitation of the search: Claim 8. was excluded from the search, since claims shall not rely, in respect of the technical features of the invention, on references to the description or drawings, Rule 29(6) EPC.			
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
THE HAGUE		2 August 2000	Sundell, O
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

EPO FORM 1503 03/82 (P04C07)



European Patent
Office

Application Number
EP 00 65 0015

CLAIMS INCURRING FEES

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing more than ten claims.

- ☐ Only part of the claims have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid, namely claim(s):
- ☐ No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims.

LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

see sheet B

- ☐ All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the Search Division did not invite payment of any additional fee.
- ☐ Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid, namely claims:
- ☒ None of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims, namely claims:

1-7,11-13



European Patent
Office

PARTIAL EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 00 65 0015

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	
A	WO 99 18001 A (JENNINGS ANTONY ; ROWE SIMON 3 (GB); BRITTON SECURITY PACKAGING LIM () 15 April 1999 (1999-04-15) * page 1, last paragraph * * page 2, paragraph 4 * -----		
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)



European Patent
Office

**LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION
SHEET B**

Application Number
EP 00 65 0015

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

1. Claims: 1-7,11-13

A security bag.

2. Claims: 9,10

A dispensing device.

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 00 65 0015

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

02-08-2000

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
GB 2250011	A	27-05-1992	NONE		
US 4720040	A	19-01-1988	NONE		
EP 0965532	A	22-12-1999	NONE		
WO 9832351	A	30-07-1998	AU	6032698 A	18-08-1998
WO 9918001	A	15-04-1999	AU	9357298 A	27-04-1999

EPO FORM P0459

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82