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(54) **DECK SYSTEM AND COMPONENTS**

(57) A decking system is made up of a variety of decking boards and other components are disclosed. In some aspects, the decking boards are connectable to each other so that adjacent boards will provide a water barrier and a drainage channel. Some versions of the boards may have a hollow region to accept the provision of heat-

ing elements or other accessory structures. A connector piece is disclosed in various embodiments span the gap between the butt ends of the boards to provide a water barrier at the butt ends of the boards. A gutter and downspout system is disclosed, as well as structures for protecting the ends or sides of the deck structure.

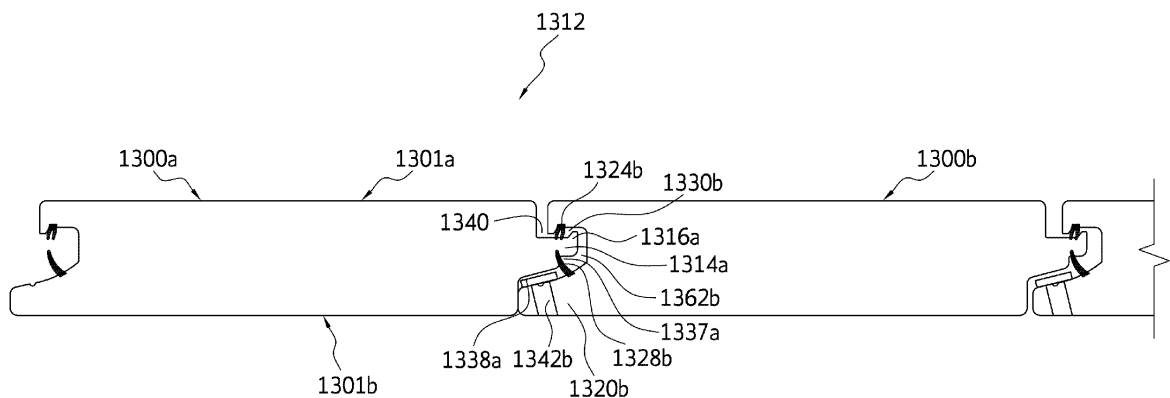


FIG. 13A

Description

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 14/276,402 entitled, "Deck Systems and Components", filed May 13, 2014, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

Field of the Invention

[0002] Various aspects of the invention relate to structures such as floors, roofing and exterior decking, and more specifically, relate to deck boards, deck planks, porch boards, flooring, the connection of adjacent boards to each other, the connection of the end of boards to each other, and various accessories used with such structures.

[0003] Certain aspects of the invention relate to the management of rain water & melting snow to keep the underside of a deck system substantially dry, providing for storage of articles and the ability to have a first floor patio/deck area underneath it without rain water affecting the enjoyment of the space or reaching the foundation of the house.

Description of Related Art

[0004] Deck systems are in wide use in both residential and commercial applications. Some deck systems consist of simple wooden boards having a rectangular cross-section each arranged longitudinally parallel to each other onto a supporting structure. Similar systems are in use with the deck boards being made of manmade material such as a composite or plastic based material.

[0005] These known systems sometimes have several disadvantages. For example, the parallel boards usually are spaced apart from each other laterally to some degree, and even if the deck boards are abutting each other along their length, there is generally still some type of gap between them. This gap between the long edges of the boards allows water to pass through. Thus, when natural rain water or a cleaning water, spilled water, melting snow or other liquid contacts the top surface of the deck boards, it will typically leak down through between the deck boards. This can be undesirable in situations where it is preferred that the region under the deck surface be kept dry. Such situations include structures having a deck surface on an upper floor and a residential area on a lower floor beneath the deck surface. Other situations where it is preferred that the region under the deck surface be kept dry include decks having a dirt surface beneath the deck surface. By keeping the dirt surface beneath the deck surface dry, the resident may prevent the dirt beneath the deck surface from becoming a haven for insects and weeds. In other commercial or in-

dustrial uses, it is desirable to keep liquids on the upper surface from inadvertently dripping to the lower area. In addition, where deck boards are also end-to-end, there is typically a space between the end surfaces of the deck boards. In some instances a relatively wide space is left between the ends of the deck boards in order to allow for a thermal expansion and contraction of boards placed end to end. This gap also can allow for undesirable fluid leakage or liquid leakage under the deck as described above.

[0006] Another disadvantage of some deck boards is that in some instances it is necessary to screw the deck boards down to the supporting structure and in a conventional rectangular cross-section board, the screw heads are exposed on the top surface which may be undesirable for cosmetic or other reasons.

SUMMARY

[0007] In light of the present need for improved decking systems and accessories, a brief summary of various embodiments is presented. Some simplifications and omissions may be made in the following summary, which is intended to highlight and introduce some aspects of the various embodiments, but not to limit the scope of the invention.

[0008] Various embodiments disclosed herein can relate to new and useful decking board constructions. For example, the decking board may feature an extruded cross-section having a generally tongue-and-groove mating fit between lateral and adjacent boards. In various embodiments, the decking board may be a symmetrical, two sided product, with each side optionally having different pattern or color, thereby creating two products in one. One side of the board may feature an upwardly directed U-shaped hook next to a downwardly directed groove or channel. The other side of the decking board may have a complimentary, but opposite shaped, downwardly directed U-shaped hook adjacent to an upwardly directed groove or channel. When the boards are interlocked side-to-side, each hook will mate into each groove thereby providing secure connection between the boards. Further, since the tongues and grooves are overlapping, there is no vertical path for water on the top of the board to pass in between the boards. In various embodiments, the upwardly directed U-shaped tongue forms a primary water channel to collect and direct water along the length of the structure to the end of the structure.

[0009] In another aspect, a flashing element may be provided to act as a butt joint to connect the butt ends of the boards. The flashing element has a complimentary shape to the upper surface of the board, and can reside in longitudinal grooves that are cut into the butt ends of the boards. The flashing can also be a sharpened and or hardened element which is installed by tapping the first sharp end of the flashing element into the relatively soft edge of the first board, and then bringing the second

board into contact with the second end of flashing element and then tapping the far end of the second board so that the second edge of the flashing element is pushed into the relatively soft first end of the second board. When installed, the flashing prevents water from passing downward between the butt ends of the boards. In various embodiments, the flashing allows for expansion and contraction of the boards due to fluctuations between hot and cold environments. In one embodiment, a metal flashing that taps into place can be held in place by an integral structure that then presses or affixes onto one or more edges of the board or boards and holds it in place to make assembly easier.

[0010] Another embodiment of the butt joint involves installation of a polymer part having a primarily "V-shaped" profile that flexes. The polymer part having a primarily "V-shaped" profile is installed between the butt ends of the planks. The flexing of the polymer part ensures a tight fit is maintained during expansion and contraction of the planks.

[0011] In another aspect, the boards may feature one or more longitudinal hollow regions. The longitudinal hollow regions may accept a heating element such as a heatable wire or a heating fluid conduit or hose. Other heating elements such as radiant heating elements or hot air containing passages may reside in or be part of the interior of the board. In some instances, a particular longitudinal hollow shape may be provided, or the heating elements may be embedded in the structure during manufacture.

[0012] In addition, at least one flexible member may be added inside the tongue and groove area on either part to align the planks when originally installed tightly together and to also withstand the expansion and contraction of the planks in the widthwise direction during hot and cold weather. Initially, at points of contact between adjacent tongues and grooves of adjacent boards, a bumper protrusion may be provided on one board which will frictionally engage with a complimentary groove on the other board.

[0013] In another embodiment, a gutter may be added to the perimeter of the deck surface to collect the water that is shed from the surface and direct it downwards in a controlled fashion to connectors connecting to a leader which guides water away from the underside of the deck.

[0014] In another embodiment, the addition of a perimeter element may take the form of a bull nose type extrusion that provides some protection to the end boards when objects come in contact with the end of the deck. This may be particularly useful where the ends of the deck may come in contact with vehicles such as carts or, where the deck is being used as a dock and may come in contact with watercraft.

[0015] In another embodiment, the decking board comprises first and second longitudinal sides. The first longitudinal side has a male projecting member with an upwardly directed rib and the second longitudinal side has a female slot defining a downwardly directed rib. The

boards can be interlocked adjacent each other with the upwardly directed rib snapped past the downwardly directed rib to form a frictional engagement therebetween. A central main body portion is disposed in longitudinal sides.

[0016] In another embodiment, the decking board comprises a first longitudinal side having an extension member including a first surface and an opposing second surface, the first surface including an upwardly projected abutment defining a first lip. The second surface has a recess formed therein. The second longitudinal side includes a first portion defining a tongue and a second portion including a second lip. The tongue includes a first flexible member extending generally upward from the first portion. The second lip includes a second flexible member extending generally downward from the second portion. Further, a main central body is disposed intermediate to the first longitudinal side and second side wherein the first portion and second portion of the second longitudinal side define a cavity therebetween to receive an extension member of an associated decking board therein.

[0017] In another aspect, a dock board may be provided in the form of a relatively simple dock board extrusion.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] In order to better understand various exemplary embodiments, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1A shows various elements of a decking system, including decking boards and a flashing element.

FIG. 1B is a cross-section of the embodiment of FIG. 1A.

FIG. 1C is a detailed view of a part of the cross-section of FIG. 1B.

FIG. 1D shows a cross-section of one embodiment of a decking board.

FIG. 1E shows a cross-section of another embodiment of a decking board.

FIG. 1F shows a cross-section of yet another embodiment of a decking board.

FIG. 2A shows a number of decking boards according to the embodiment of FIG. 1F in an installed condition.

FIG. 2B shows additional details of the system of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2C shows a number of decking boards accord-

ing to the embodiment of FIG. 1E in an installed condition.

FIG. 3A illustrates a drain and gutter system.

FIG. 3B is an exploded view of the system of FIG. 3A.

FIG. 3C is a further exploded view of the system of FIG. 3A.

FIG. 3D depicts components of the drain and gutter system.

FIG. 3E shows a drain and gutter system corner connector

FIG. 4 shows a cross-section of a component of the drain and gutter system having a bull nose profile.

FIG. 5 shows a simplified decking board in the form of a dock plank.

FIG. 6 shows a bull nose component for mounting to the end a deck or dock system.

FIGS. 7A and 7B show polymer parts which aid in connecting planks of FIG. 1 in an end-to-end relationship.

FIG. 8A is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a decking board.

FIG. 8B shows two decking boards according to FIG. 8A joined together.

FIG. 9A is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a decking board.

FIG. 9B shows two decking boards according to FIG. 9A joined together.

FIG. 10A is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a decking board.

FIG. 10B shows two decking boards according to FIG. 10A joined together.

FIG. 11A is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a decking board.

FIG. 11B is a side view of the board of FIG. 11A.

FIG. 11C is a bottom view of the board of FIG. 11A.

FIG. 11D is a top view of the board of FIG. 11A.

FIG. 11E is a cross-sectional view of two boards according to FIG. 11A mounted together.

FIG. 12A is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a dock board.

FIG. 12B is a side view of the dock board of FIG. 12A.

FIG. 12C is a bottom view of the dock board of FIG. 12A.

FIG. 12D is a top view of the dock board of FIG. 12A.

FIG. 13A is a side view of a decking board system, illustrating two decking boards in locking engagement.

FIG. 13B is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a decking board.

FIG. 13C is a sectional view of the decking board of FIG. 13B, further illustrating the decking board connection and fastening component.

FIG. 13D is a side view of a decking board system of FIG. 13A illustrating the attachment of plural decking boards.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0019] Referring now to the drawings, in which like numerals refer to like components or steps, there are disclosed broad aspects of various exemplary embodiments.

[0020] The board is used herein to refer to any type of longitudinal surface or substrate board. Some embodiments are referred to as decking boards, but any embodiments could be used in porches, floors, roofing or other uses as will be understood by one skilled in the art of construction components.

[0021] Various embodiments disclosed herein can relate to new and useful decking board constructions. For example, the decking board may feature an extruded cross-section having a generally tongue-and-groove mating fit between lateral and adjacent boards. One side of the board may feature an upwardly directed U-shaped hook next to a downwardly directed channel. The other end of the decking board may have a complimentary, but opposite shaped, downwardly directed U-shaped hook adjacent to an upwardly directed groove. When the boards are interlocked side-to-side, each hook will mate into each groove thereby providing secure connection between the boards. Further, since the tongues and grooves are overlapping, there is no vertical path for water on the top of the board to pass in between the boards. In addition, the downwardly directed U-shaped tongue forms a water channel to collect and direct water along the length of the structure to the end of the structure.

[0022] FIG. 1A depicts a deck system 10 including a plurality of decking boards 12. Each board 12 has a downwardly directed tongue 14 which has an upwardly facing

groove 16. Located inward of the downward facing tongue 14 is a downward facing groove 18. A reversed structure is provided on the other side of the board 12 including an upward facing tongue 20 having a downward facing channel 22. Located inward of the upward facing tongue 20 is an upward facing groove 24. Figure 1A also shows the boards interconnected with each other with the downward facing tongue 14 residing in the upward facing groove 24 of an adjacent board. The farthest edge 26 of the downward facing tongue 14 slides against a resilient tab 28. Similarly, the outer surface 30 of the board will abut against a tab 32 in an adjacent board. In the assembled system, therefore, a water collecting channel 40 is provided which appears from the upper surface of the deck as a simple downward rectangular channel. In various embodiments, the boards are symmetrical so the customer can turn the decking boards upside down while still allowing interconnection between the boards. In some embodiments, the symmetrical boards have identical patterns and colors on each side. This contributes to ease of assembly, as each board may be used with either side uppermost. In some embodiments, the symmetrical boards have different patterns or colors on each side. The presence of different patterns or colors on each side of the decking boards allows the customer to choose between two different or complementary surface styles while buying only one board item version.

[0023] In another aspect, a flashing element may be provided to connect the butt ends of the boards. The flashing element has a complimentary shape to the upper surface of the board, and can reside in longitudinal grooves that are cut into the butt ends of the boards. When installed, the flashing element prevents water from passing downward between the butt ends of the boards. This is true even if a relatively wide end to end gap is selected to allow for thermal expansion and contraction.

[0024] Into the end of each board is cut a slot 42 which extends a predetermined distance into the board, but not all the way through its length. The slot 42 is sized to receive the insertion of a flashing element 50. The flashing element, therefore, resides in the slots 42 in the butt ends of boards 12 placed end to end, and prohibits any water flow between the ends of the boards. To the extent the flashing element 50 is visible between butt end gap between the boards, any liquid that contacts the flashing will be directed into a channel portion 52 of the board and will, once a certain volume of liquid is reached, be carried away by channel 40. The flashing element 50 can be made from folded or extruded metal and may have its edges sharpened for tapping into place into slots 42 in the butt ends of the boards.

[0025] In various embodiments, the flashing can be a sharpened and/or hardened element which is installed by tapping the first sharp end of the flashing element into the relatively soft end of a first board, and then bringing a second board into contact with the second end of flashing element and then tapping the far end of the second

board so that the second edge of the flashing element is pushed into the relatively soft first end of the second board. In such embodiments, the presence of slots 42 in the butt ends of boards 12 is optional.

[0026] A feature of the boards 12 shown in FIG. 1A is that they can be slid together along their length. That is, rather than snapping the boards in together to mate from the top, which is possible, another assembly option is to slide the boards together end to end, one next to another. Accordingly, boards can be assembled into an overlapping deck without the use of any hardware to hold the boards to each other.

[0027] A device for facilitating formation of watertight butt joints is shown in FIG 7A. It is a polymer part 700 that has a primarily "V-shaped" profile 701 that flexes during installation between the butt ends of the planks. The butt ends of the planks contact the outer surface of the "V-shaped" profile 701. Flexing of the profile 701 ensures a tight fit is maintained during expansion and contraction of the planks. The polymer part 700 may also have a hidden tape or other sealant material to keep the butt joint in place and provide further water sealant ability. The polymer part 700 may have one or more snap provisions to hold it down in place between the ends of the planks. This "V-shaped" profile 701 directs the water that would normally have fallen between the ends of the planks into channel 702, which fits into rain grooves 40 in the planks and bridges rain grooves in two planks in an end-to-end relationship. Channel 702 guides water into the rain groove 40 in FIG 1A.

[0028] Another embodiment of the device for facilitating formation of watertight butt joints is shown in FIG. 7B, and is a polymer part 210 that has a primarily "T-shaped" profile 711 installed between the butt ends of the planks, with the vertical member of the "T-shaped" profile 711 fitting between the butt ends of the boards. The polymer part 710 may have a sealant or tape used to keep it in place and may have one or more snap provisions to keep it in place between the ends of the deck planks. The horizontal member of the "T-shaped" profile 711 covers the top surface of the planks and has a "U-shaped" extension forming channel 712 that fits on top of and spanning the space between the ends of the rain grooves 40 of the planks whose ends are being joined. This embodiment may or may not have some sealant, tape or snap fit to help hold it into place.

[0029] In an alternate embodiment, a device for facilitating formation of watertight butt joints is a polymer part 710 that has a primarily "I-shaped" profile installed between the butt ends of the planks, with the vertical member of the "I-shaped" profile fitting between the butt ends of the boards. The "I-shaped" profile has an upper horizontal member which covers the top surface of the planks and has a "U-shaped" extension forming a channel that fits on top of and spans the space between the ends of the rain grooves 40 of the planks whose ends are being joined. The "I-shaped" profile has a lower horizontal member. The butt ends of the boards fit between the

upper and lower horizontal members.

[0030] Device 700 and 710 for facilitating formation of watertight butt joints may have a snap fit feature for securing them between boards.

[0031] Returning to FIG. 1A, the boards may also be assembled by installing a first board having an upwardly facing groove 24, and then connecting a second board having a downwardly facing tongue 14 to the first board. This is done by placing the downwardly facing tongue 14 of the second board over the already installed first board. Then the second board's downwardly facing tongue 14 is aligned over the first board's upwardly facing groove 24 and the second board is dropped down onto and over the top of the edge of the first board so tongue 14 goes into groove 24. The second board then slides into the groove 24 of the first board, tightly against the first board, so that the edge 26 of the downward facing tongue 14 slides against a resilient tab 28 in groove 24. The edge 26 of the downward facing tongue 14 makes tight contact with tab 28. This creates a perfect alignment between the boards as the installer puts screws down onto the surface of grooves 24, securing the boards in place. This also contributes to the water tightness of channel 40, which also has upwardly facing and downwardly facing interconnecting elements. The resilient tab 28 allows for thermal based expansion of the boards after assembly. It may be desirable to mount the boards to an underlying structure (this will be described further with reference to FIG. 2A using the board of FIG. 1F). The board of FIG. 1A provides a conveniently accessible mounting location for such screws through the surface of the groove 24, which may or may not be pre-drilled with holes 63 for ease of installation.

[0032] In another aspect, the boards may feature one or more longitudinal hollow regions 62. The longitudinal hollow regions may accept a heating element such as a heatable wire or a heating or cooling fluid conduit or hose. Other thermal elements such as radiant heating elements or hot air containing passages may reside in or be part of the interior of the board. In some instances, a particular longitudinal hollow shape may be provided, or the heating elements may be embedded in the structure during manufacture.

[0033] The board 12 also includes a main body region 60. This main body region 60 may be solid or may be provided with one or more hollow regions 62. The hollow region 62 may provide a number of benefits including, for example, reducing the weight of the board compared to a solid board. Further, the hollow region 62 may allow for the insertion of heating devices. The board depicted in FIG. 1A also features stiffening ribs 64. These ribs 64 can provide stiffening, and can also maintain heater cables separate from each other if they are installed in back and forth rows.

[0034] It is also noted that the openings 62 may have a wide variety of shapes as are shown in the other figures, and other cross-sectional shapes. In addition to or instead of containing heating elements, other items such

as wires for power outlets, speakers, dog fences, or other wire based products may be passed through the hollow portions 62.

[0035] In another aspect, a flexible assembly tab or member such as tab 28, 32 and 128 may be provided on the boards near the tongue and groove region to provide a firm frictional contact between the adjacent tongues and grooves and to align the boards during assembly. Initially, at points of contact between adjacent tongues and grooves of adjacent boards, a bumper protrusion may be provided on one board which will frictionally engage with a complimentary groove on the other board. It is also noted that tabs 28, 32 and 128 provide a stop feature during the assembly process, but further allow for lateral expansion and contraction of the boards during temperature extremes. The tabs 28, 32 and 128 may be referred to as flexible members. The resilient or flexible members may provide for alignment and frictional engagement. They may thus be in a slightly bent configuration in the assembled state. However the tabs may also be sacrificial in that they are designed to be breakable or frangible, that is, they may break off upon application of sufficient force during installation of adjacent boards.

[0036] FIG. 1D shows a decking board having a different cross-section from FIG. 1A. This board 112 may be thought of as having a tongue 114 which projects into a groove 124. An upward facing channel 116 is provided that will function similarly to the channel 16 described above. A resilient tab 128 is also provided. Instead of an upwardly directed tongue, this embodiment features a laterally extending tongue 120. The tongue 120 can provide for a screw location similar to that in the channel 24 and may or may not be pre-drilled with holes for easy assembly. The tongue 120 can also nest in a rectangular notch 118 provided on the other side of an adjacent board. An additional relief area 119 is provided on the lower surface of the tongue 114 which permits clearance for a screw head. The embodiment of FIG. 1D features a single central hollow area 162. FIG. 1D also schematically depicts heating elements 170 in hollow portion 162.

[0037] FIG. 1E shows a deck board similar to the board of FIG. 1D, but without the central hollow area 162. FIG. 1E shows a decking board having a tongue 114 which projects into a groove 124. A resilient tab 128 is also provided. This embodiment features a laterally extending tongue 120. The tongue 120 can nest in a rectangular notch 118 provided on the other side of an adjacent board. The embodiment of FIG. 1D optionally includes a pivot bump 117, and a pocket 126. Pocket 126 is adapted to receive a mounting screw. However the pocket 126 can also serve as a track for accepting a longitudinal heating wire 130 as shown.

[0038] FIG. 1F shows a deck board having a similar outer profile to that of FIGS. 1D and 1C, but having a central hollow opening 162 that includes stiffening ribs 164. FIG. 1D also illustrates that the lower surface of the hollow region 162 has a parabolic concave upward shape to reflect heat upwards. A fastener 66 is shown being

screwed into hole 63 for mounting.

[0039] FIGS. 2A and 2B show additional details utilizing the board of FIG. 1F. In this embodiment, the board of FIG. 1F has been further provided with a bump/rib 115 and a corresponding bump/rib 125. Instead of both items 115 and 125 being projecting bumps, one or the other could be a small groove notch, dimple or detent. It will be appreciated that as shown in the lower portion of FIG. 2A, the bumps/ribs 115 and 125 can engage each other to enhance the frictional connection of adjacent boards. Another bump or protrusion 117 may be placed at the edge of the bottom surface next to 118. This bumper creates a pivot point for the plank so that when fastening the board at area 120, the wall tongue 114 is pushed upwards to create a tight fit between the seal elements 115 & 125. Further, FIG. 2A depicts installation screws being placed through the laterally extending tongues 120.

[0040] In this embodiment, a top surface 111 of each board 112 has a slightly crowned surface to direct water towards the water channels 140 between the boards. FIG. 2A also shows further details of the interaction between the bump/ribs 115 and 125, and screws 127.

[0041] FIG. 2C shows an embodiment in which the board has been further provided with a bump/rib 115 and a corresponding bump/rib 125. In the embodiment of FIG. 2C, the boards are provided with pockets 126, and are assembled so that pockets 126 of the boards are aligned under tongues 114 of an adjacent board. The water channel 140 defined by tongue 114 of the adjacent board is thus positioned above pocket 126. Pocket 126 is provided with heating wire 130. Heating wire 130 provided in one board thus serves to heat channel 140 defined by tongue 114 of the adjacent board. Channel 140 is a groove for carrying rainwater. Heating wire 130 serves to prevent rainwater or melting snow in channel 140 from freezing.

[0042] At the end of a board, the wire 130 may be bent and wrapped around the end of the plank to an adjacent plank. The wire then fits into pocket 126 on the adjacent plank, and travels longitudinally along the adjacent plank. Notches 131 may be provided at the ends of the boards to guide the wire from one plank to another. Heating wire 130 can be a cylindrical wire or a flat or rectangular wire having two opposed major surfaces and two opposed edge surfaces. If a flat wire is used, then the wire should be arranged so that the opposed major surfaces are vertical, i.e., perpendicular to the upper surface of the boards. If the opposed surfaces are horizontal, it is more difficult to bend the wire at the end of the plank.

[0043] Pocket 126 and heating wire 130 may also be installed in the outer edge of tongue 114 or in groove 124. Each of these locations places the heating wire in proximity to channel 140, allowing the heating wire to heat water in the channel.

[0044] In another aspect, a drain system may be provided at the longitudinal end of a deck that is made up of adjacent boards. The drain system may include a main T-downspout piece which collects and directs water to a

leader, and individual adjacent gutter pieces that connect to the T-downspout. These can be mounted at the ends of the boards on the supporting structure.

[0045] FIGS. 3A, 3B, 3C and 3D depict various components of a gutter system. The gutter system can be used with any deck that can direct and shed surface water, including the decking systems described herein. The gutter system generally includes a main T-downspout 210 and adjacent gutter pieces 212. The main T-downspout 210 can connect with a leader downspout 214. The gutter portions 212 may feature an outwardly curved projecting shape 212a which may provide some bumper protection for the end of the overall decking structure and provide a pleasing appearance by hiding the cut edges of the planks and hiding the heater wire that may be installed and running through and between each plank. Such a rounded outward portion may also be provided on the main T-downspout (although not shown) or this feature may be provided by a separate cover 216 that can be mounted along with T-downspout to cover it as shown. FIG. 3 illustrates these components and further illustrates a corner piece 318.

[0046] In another embodiment, the gutter may form a bull nose type extrusion that provides some protection to the end boards when objects come in contact with the end of the deck. This may be particularly useful where the ends of the deck may come in contact with vehicles such as carts or, where the deck is being used as a dock and may come in contact with watercraft. FIG. 4 shows a cross-section of a bull nose structure 400 that can provide a relatively simple gutter and/or bumper item that may be mounted on the edge and the end of a deck system. Alternatively, the lower portion of this type gutter extrusion can be made of various lengths so as to be useful for cutting off and using as a trim board in other areas of the deck as needed.

[0047] In another aspect, a dock board may be in the form of a relatively simple dock board extrusion. FIG. 5 shows a deck board in the form of a relatively simple dock plank. This plank 500 features a relatively flat top surface, tilted sides 512, and upwardly directed recesses 514. The recesses 514 may assist with saving weight by still providing longitudinal bending strength.

[0048] In another aspect, a bull nose structure may be provided that does not provide water gutter features, but rather provides a projecting cushion structure at the end of the deck similar to the bull nose described above. FIG. 6 depicts a bull nose structure that can be used similar to the bull nose of FIG. 4. However, this structure has a different cross-sectional shape with structure 600 has a different cross-sectional shape including a mounting tab 612, and a rounded compressible projection 614 that has a central lap 616.

[0049] Any or all of the various deck boards, dock boards, downspouts, gutters or bumpers and other components can be manufactured from any suitable material. In many embodiments, the various items can be manufactured by extrusion methods. Any suitable extrudable

material may be used. In some embodiments the boards can be manufactured using a compression molding process. In some examples, the items may be manufactured, by extruding or otherwise, from hydrophobic polymers, i.e., PVC or polyolefins, and hydrophobic coconut coir fibers which have been treated to remove coconut coir therefrom. In various embodiments, the composite items may be manufactured without any step chemically modified coconut coir fibers. However, the disclosure herein is not limited to the use of coconut based materials. For example, as an alternative to coir fibers, extruded materials may include ramie or bamboo fibers to reinforce polymeric products. In other embodiments, the materials may simply be extruded or molded from polymeric and/or wood based composite extrudable or moldable materials. Simple plastics may also be used. Further, it may be preferable to manufacture the flashing of a metal such as stainless steel or extruded metals.

[0050] The decking boards may be made by extrusion of a thermoplastic material, i.e., polyester, polyvinyl chloride, or polyolefin, preferably polyethylene or polypropylene. The thermoplastic material may contain a filler, including organic fillers such as wood powders, wood fibers, and coir fibers; inorganic fillers, such as glass fibers, carbon fibers, mineral fibers, silica, alumina, titania, carbon black, nitride compounds, and carbide compounds. The decking boards may be uncoated, or coated with a decorative coating of paint. The decking boards may be coated with a protective coating. The protective coating may be applied by coating a mixture of monomers and/or oligomers on the completed board, and then curing the coating to form a protective coating.

[0051] Coated decking boards may also be made by coextrusion of:

a core layer comprising a thermoplastic material, i.e., polyethylene or polypropylene, containing optional fillers, including organic fillers such as wood powders, wood fibers, and coir fibers; inorganic fillers, such as glass fibers, carbon fibers, mineral fibers, silica, alumina, titania, carbon black, nitride compounds, and carbide compounds; and

a coating layer (such as for example PolyEthylene with additives) of a protective thermoplastic polymer. Suitable protective polymers include polyvinyl chloride; acrylic resins, i.e., poly(ethylene-co-methacrylic acid) (Surlyn®); polyester; polycarbonate; and polystyrene.

[0052] In various embodiments, the coating layer contains UV stabilizers which reduce the likelihood of the core layer undergoing degradation from exposure to ultraviolet light. Such UV stabilizers include organic light stabilizers, such as benzophenone light stabilizers, hindered amine light stabilizers, and benzotriazoles; and inorganic light stabilizers, such as barium metaborate and its hydrates.

[0053] In various embodiments, the coating layer contains antifungal agents which increase resistance of the board to mold and other organisms. The antifungal agents may be incorporated in the coating layer alone, or in both the core and coating layers. Useful antifungal agents for coatings include copper (II) 8-quinolinolate; zinc oxide; zinc-dimethyldithiocarbamate; 2-mercaptobenzothiazole; zinc salt; barium metaborate; tributyl tin benzoate; bis tributyl tin salicylate; tributyl tin oxide; parabens: ethyl parahydroxybenzoate; propyl parahydroxybenzoate; methyl parahydroxybenzoate and butyl parahydroxybenzoate; methylenebis(thiocyanate); 1,2-benzisothiazoline-3-one; 2-mercaptobenzo-thiazole; 5-chloro-2-methyl-3(2H)-isothiazolone; 2-methyl-3(2H)-isothiazolone; zinc 2-pyridinethiol-N-oxide; tetrahydro-3,5-di-methyl-2H-1,3,5-thiadiazine-2-thione; N-trichloromethyl-thio-4-cyclohexene-1,2-dicarboximide; 2-n-octyl-4-isothiazoline-3-one; 2,4,5,6-tetrachloro-isophthalonitrile; 3-iodo-2-propynyl butylcarbamate; diiodomethyl-p-tolylsulfone; N-(trichloromethyl-thio)phthalimide; potassium N-hydroxy-methyl-N-methyl-dithiocarbamate; sodium 2-pyridinethiol-1-oxide; 2-(thiocyanomethylthio)benzothiazole; and 2-4-(thiazolyl)benzimidazole.

[0054] The coating layer may help provide scratch resistance to the decking board surface, either by using a coating with a polymer which is harder than the core layer or through the use of certain additives. Additives which help increase scratch resistance in coatings include lubricants and very hard mineral fillers, including carbide and nitride ceramics.

[0055] The coating layer may also include inorganic pigments, organic pigments, or dyes as colorants. The coating layer may be embossed with a decorative pattern, i.e., wood grain or imitation stone.

[0056] In situations where a coating layer or "capcoat" is applied by coextrusion, the coating layer has a thickness of from about 0.01 to 0.25 inch, preferably from about 0.02 to 0.15 inch, more preferably from about 0.04 to 0.08 inch. The capcoat may cover the entire longitudinal surface of the board; the top and sides of the board, with the bottom surface being uncoated; or the top of the board, with the bottom surface and sides being uncoated.

[0057] As discussed above, at least one flexible member may be added inside the tongue and groove area on the decking planks to align the planks to help withstand expansion and contraction of the planks. Also, a bumper protrusion may be provided on a board which will frictionally engage with a complimentary groove on another board. In various embodiments made by coextrusion of a core material and a capcoat, these flexible members and bumpers may be formed from the same material as the core material, and optionally coated with the capcoat material. In various embodiments made by coextrusion, these flexible members and bumpers may be formed from the capcoat material alone. In certain embodiments, flexible members and bumpers formed from the capcoat material have increased toughness, resistance to break-

age, and flexibility, when compared to embodiments in which flexible members and bumpers are made from the core material, i.e., a wood fiber- or coir fiber-filled polyolefin.

[0058] A further design for a flexible member produced from a capcoat polymer layer can be envisioned to be attached to the outside edge of the tongue portion, i.e., on the outside edge 26 of the tongue 14, or on the outer surface of rain-groove element 40, as seen in FIG. 1A. The flexible member produced from the capcoat polymer can thereby set the assembly gap between planks during installation. Additionally, a flexible member produced from the capcoat polymer and positioned on edge 26 may contact an inner surface of groove 24, when boards are fitted together as in FIG. 1A. This provides a flexible water seal between boards as boards expand with heat and then contract again.

[0059] A further design for a flexible member (not shown in FIG. 1C) produced from a capcoat polymer layer can be envisioned to be attached to the outer edge of the tongue portion 114 or 116, as seen in FIG. 1C, and adapted to contact the interior of groove 124, as seen in FIG. 1C. Contact between flexible members produced from a capcoat polymer layer and groove 124 of FIG. 1C produces a flexible water seal.

[0060] Also, a bumper protrusion may be provided on a board which will frictionally engage with a flexible member made of capcoat material on another board. The cap coat material is a tough resilient polymer, and may be used to produce watertight elements.

[0061] FIG. 8A is a cross-sectional view of a board 800 having a top cap coat 801 and a lower cap coat 802. A male side of the board 814 includes an upwardly projecting bump 816 and a lower pivot bump 817. A female side 820 of the board includes a projecting bump 822 that can snap over and interlock with the projecting bump 816, a flexible tab 832, which can help hold the boards together in alignment, and accommodate for expansion of the boards, and a water drain channel 824. Further, the female end has an open area to the inside of the flexible tab 832 which can be sized and dimensioned to receive a heating wire or cable. FIG. 8A shows the heating element 870 as having a generally vertical rectangular cross-section.

[0062] FIG. 8B shows two of the boards 800 interlocked adjacent to each other.

[0063] FIG. 9A is a cross-sectional view of a board 900 having a top cap coat 901 and a lower cap coat 902. This board is narrower than that of FIG. 8A and thus may be more suitable for use as a porch board in some instances. A male side of the board 914 includes an upwardly projecting bump 916 and a lower pivot bump 917. A female side 920 of the board includes a projecting bump 922 that can snap over and interlock with the projecting bump 916, a flexible tab 932, which can help hold the boards together in alignment, and accommodate for expansion of the boards, and a water drain channel 924. Further, the female end has an open area to the inside of the

flexible tab 932 which can be sized and dimensioned to receive a heating wire or cable. FIG. 9A shows the heating element 970 as having a generally vertical rectangular cross-section.

[0064] FIG. 9B shows two of the boards 900 interlocked adjacent to each other.

[0065] FIG. 10A is a cross-sectional view of a board 1000 having a top cap coat 1001 and a lower cap coat 1002. A male side of the board 1014 includes an upwardly projecting bump 1016 and a lower pivot bump 1017. A female side 1020 of the board includes a projecting bump 1022 that can snap over and interlock with the projecting bump 1016, a flexible tab 1032, which can help hold the boards together in alignment, and accommodate for expansion of the boards, and a water drain channel 1024. Further, the female end has an open area to the inside of the flexible tab 1032 which can be sized and dimensioned to receive a heating wire or cable. FIG. 10A shows the heating element 1070 as having a generally vertical rectangular cross-section.

[0066] FIG. 10B shows two of the boards 1000 interlocked adjacent to each other. In this embodiment, the aperture on the female end is shaped more vertically, so that the heating element can be oriented more vertically.

[0067] FIG. 11A is a cross-sectional view of a board 1100 having a top cap coat 1101 and a lower cap coat 1102. A male side of the board 1114 includes an upwardly projecting bump 1116 and a lower pivot bump 1117. A female side 1120 of the board includes a projecting bump 1122 that can snap over and interlock with the projecting bump 1116, a flexible tab 1132, which can help hold the boards together in alignment, and accommodate for expansion of the boards, and a water drain channel 1124. Further, the female end has an open area to the inside of the flexible tab 1132 which can be sized and dimensioned to receive a heating wire or cable. FIG. 11A shows the heating element 1170 as having a generally vertical rectangular cross-section.

[0068] FIG. 11B shows two of the boards 1100 interlocked adjacent to each other.

[0069] The female sided of the boards of FIGS. 8A through 11D form a partially enclosed conduit for holding the heating element 870, 970, 1070, 1170, etc. When the boards are installed adjacent each other the male sides in some embodiments will substantially enclose the female-side conduit so the heating element is not exposed to water.

[0070] FIGS. 12A-12D show the cross-sectional and other views of a dock board 1200.

[0071] Referring now to FIGS. 13A-13D, there is shown a decking board system 1312 including plural decking boards, in interlocking position. As shown in FIGS. 13A and 13B, the decking board 1300 generally includes a top cap coat 1301 and lower cap coat 1302, as similarly disclosed in previous embodiments. As further shown, the decking board 1300 includes a male side or first longitudinal side 1306 of the decking board, a female side or second longitudinal side 1308, and a main

body 1304 intermediate to the male side 1306 and second side 1308.

[0072] In the decking system 1312, the decking boards 1300 are configured for interlocking engagement with each other. As shown, the male side 1306 of the decking board 1300 is configured for cooperative interlocking engagement with the female side 1308 of an associated decking board 1300. To facilitate this engagement, the male side 1306 generally includes an extension member 1314, which extends generally laterally outward from the male side 1306. The extension member 1314 is configured for insertion into the female side 1308 of an associated decking board 1300 in the system 1312.

[0073] The extension member 1314 generally includes a first surface 1326 and an opposing second surface 1336 defining a notch 1337. As shown, the extension member 1314 further includes a generally upwardly projecting first lip 1316 positioned, proximate to the first surface 1326. The extension member 1314 further defines an opening 1338 configured to receive a tongue 1320 from an associated decking board 1300 therein. The configuration of the male side 1306 in combination with the extension member 1314 provides a u-shaped configuration 1340.

[0074] The female side 1308 of the decking board 1300 generally includes a first portion or tongue 1320 and a second portion 1321 including a second lip 1322 or bump. The first portion 1320 and second portion 1321 have an opening formed therebetween defining a cavity 1362 configured to receive an extension member 1314 of a male side therein.

[0075] As shown in Fig. 13B, the second lip 1322 extends in a generally downward direction from the second portion 1321 and is configured for snapping and/or interlocking engagement with a first lip 1316 provided by an associated decking board 1300. The second portion 1321 further includes a second flexible member 1324, positioned generally adjacent to the second lip 1322, along the inner surface 1330 of the second portion 1321.

[0076] The second flexible member 1324 extends in a generally downward direction from the inner surface 1330 such that when the decking board 1300 is in locking engagement with an associated decking board, the second flexible member 1324 engages the surface 1326 of the extension member 1314. The second flexible member 1324 has at least one prong extending generally downward. As shown in FIG. 13C, the second flexible member 1324 may have a two-prong configuration for engagement with the extension member 1314. The first prong 1333 of the second flexible member 1324 may form a second seal, and the second prong 1331 of the second flexible member 1324 may form a third seal. Notably it is contemplated that the second flexible member 1324 can include more than two prongs 1331, 1333, without departing from the scope of the present invention. It is further contemplated that multiple second flexible members 1324 can be provided on the inner surface 1330 to provide additional seals with the extension member

1314, without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0077] The tongue 1320 extends generally laterally outward from the female side 1308. As shown, the tongue 1320 has a generally sloped inner surface 1332. The female side 1308 of the decking board further includes at least one first flexible member 1328, which extends from the surface 1332 in a generally upward direction. As such, the first flexible member 1328 is configured for engagement with an extension member 1314 of an associated decking board 1300. Notably it is contemplated that the first flexible member 1328 can include multiple prongs or members to provide multiple points of engagement with the extension member 1314. Further it is noted that one or more first flexible members 1328 can be provided on the tongue 1320 to provide multiple seals with the extension member 1314 to further block moisture.

[0078] FIGS. 13A and 13D shows a decking board system 1312 including a first decking board 1300a and a second decking 1300b, configured to be interlocked adjacent to each other. As shown, the extension member 1314a of decking board 1300a is inserted into cavity 1362b of the decking board 1300b. The second flexible member 1324b and first flexible member 1328b cooperatively engage the extension member 1314a. As such, the second flexible member 1324b engages the surface 1326a of the extension member 1314a forming a seal, and the first flexible member 1328b engages the notch or recess 1337a. The first lip 1316a of the extension member 1314a engages the inner surface 1330b of the decking board 1300b. The second lip 1322b of the decking board 1300b engages the inner surface 1326a of the decking board 1300a. Additionally, the tongue 1320b is inserted below the surface 1338a.

[0079] As shown in Fig. 13C, the decking board 1300 provides an opening 1342 for receiving a fastening member or component, such as a bolt or screw. As such, the decking board 1300 may be secured to an adjacent surface. Additionally, FIG. 13C illustrates that when the decking boards are in engagement, channel 1340 is formed between the decking boards 1300a, 1300b to facilitate fluid removal from the decking board surfaces.

[0080] Although the various embodiments have been described in detail, it should be understood that the invention that the invention is capable of other embodiments and its details are capable of modifications in various obvious respects. As is readily apparent to those skilled in the art, variations and modifications can be affected while remaining within the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the foregoing disclosure, description, and figures are for illustrative purposes only and do not in any way limit the invention, which is defined only by the claims.

[0081] According to an aspect of the invention identified as "embodiment 1" a decking board comprises:

- a first body portion,
- a central body portion; and,

a second body portion including a first portion including a first flexible member, and a second portion including a second flexible member, wherein the first flexible member and second flexible member are configured to cooperatively engage an extending member of an associated decking board.

[0082] Embodiment 2. The decking board of embodiment 1, wherein the first portion and second portion provide a cavity therebetween to receive the extending member.

[0083] Embodiment 3. The decking board of embodiment 1, wherein the first flexible member is configured to engage a lower portion of an extending member of an associated decking board.

[0084] Embodiment 4. The decking member of embodiment 1, wherein the second flexible member is configured to engage an upper portion of an associated extending member.

[0085] Embodiment 5. The decking member of embodiment 4, wherein the second flexible member has at least one flexible prong extending generally downward from the first portion.

[0086] Embodiment 6. The decking member of embodiment 4, wherein the second flexible member has two-prongs extending generally downward from the first portion.

[0087] Embodiment 7. The decking member of embodiment 1, wherein first flexible member is a resilient tab.

[0088] Embodiment 8. The decking member of embodiment 1, wherein the first portion provides an opening for receiving a fastening member therein to secure the decking board to an adjacent surface.

Claims

1. A decking board, comprising:

a first longitudinal side having an extension member including a first surface and an opposing second surface, the first surface including a first lip, the second surface having a recess formed therein;

a second longitudinal side including a first portion defining a tongue and a second portion including a second lip, the second longitudinal side further including a first flexible seal member; and,

a main central body disposed intermediate to the first longitudinal side and second side; wherein the first portion and second portion of the second longitudinal side define a cavity therebetween to receive an extension member of an associated decking board therein.

2. The decking board of claim 1, the tongue including a first flexible seal member extending generally up-

ward from the first portion, the second portion including a second flexible seal member extending generally downward from the second portion.

3. The decking board of claim 2, wherein the first flexible seal member is configured to operatively engage the second surface of an associated extension member when the associated extension member is inserted in the cavity.

4. The decking board of claim 2, wherein the second flexible seal member is configured to operatively engage a first surface of an associated extension member when an extension member is inserted in the cavity,

5. The decking board of claim 4, wherein the second flexible seal member has a flexible prong extending generally downward from the second portion of the second longitudinal side.

6. The decking board of claim 5, wherein the second flexible member includes a first prong extending generally downward from the second portion of the second longitudinal side and a second prong defining a third flexible seal member extending generally downward from the second portion of the second longitudinal side.

7. The decking board of claim 1, wherein the first portion of the second longitudinal side includes an opening formed therein to receive a fastening member to secure the decking board to an associated surface.

8. The decking board as in any of claims 1-7, wherein the first flexible member is configured to engage a recess of an associated decking board.

9. The decking board as in any of claims 1-8, wherein the first portion of the second longitudinal side and extension member of the first longitudinal side are configured such that when a first decking board and a second decking board are interlocked, a channel is formed between the first portion of the second decking board and the extension member of the first decking board.

10. The decking board as in any of claims 1-9, wherein the first lip is an upwardly projected abutment.

11. The decking board as in any of claims 1-10, wherein the second lip is a downwardly projected abutment.

12. The decking member as in any of claims 1-11, wherein the second flexible member has two-prongs extending generally downward from the first portion.

13. The decking member of claim 8, wherein first flexible

member is a resilient tab.

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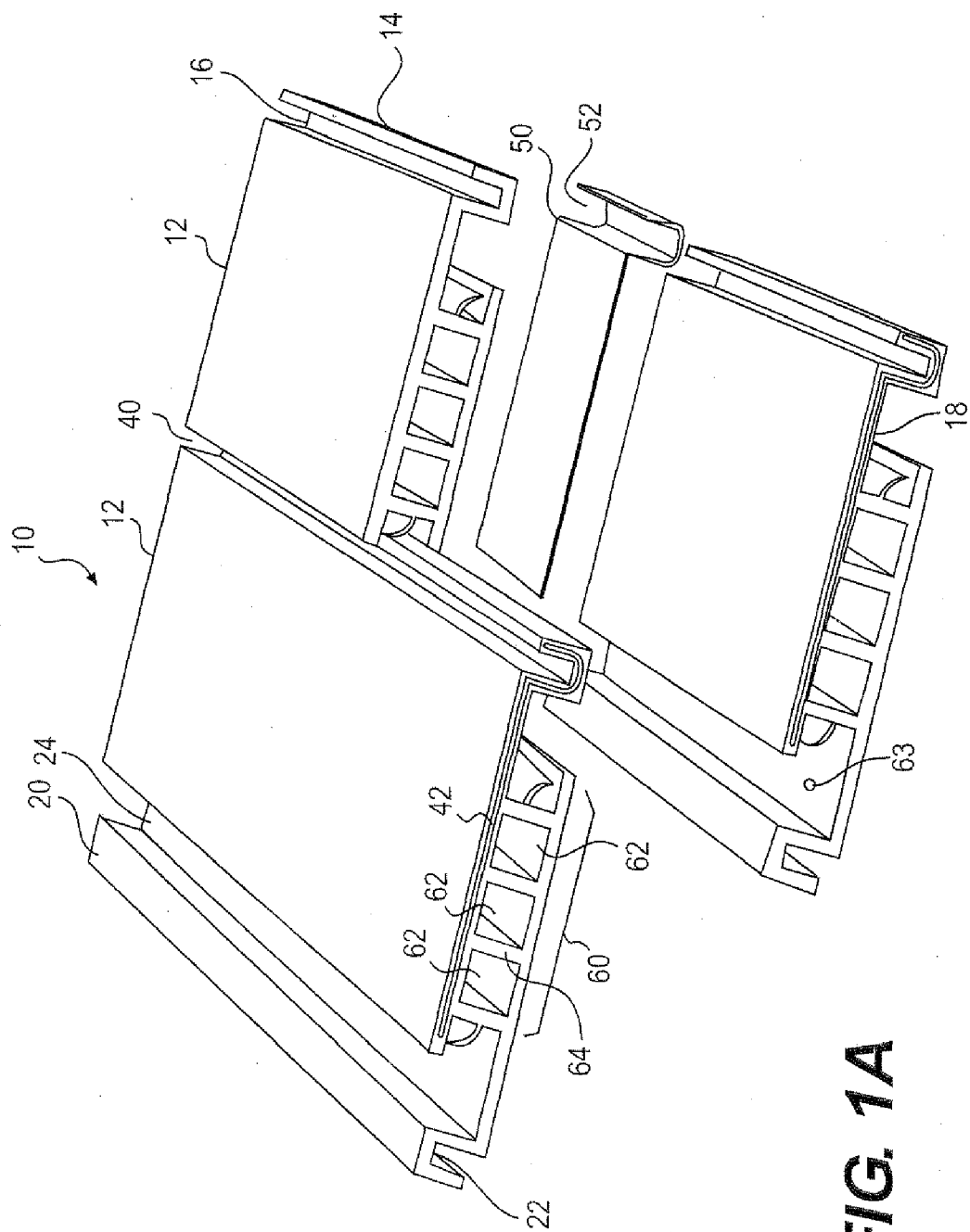


FIG. 1A

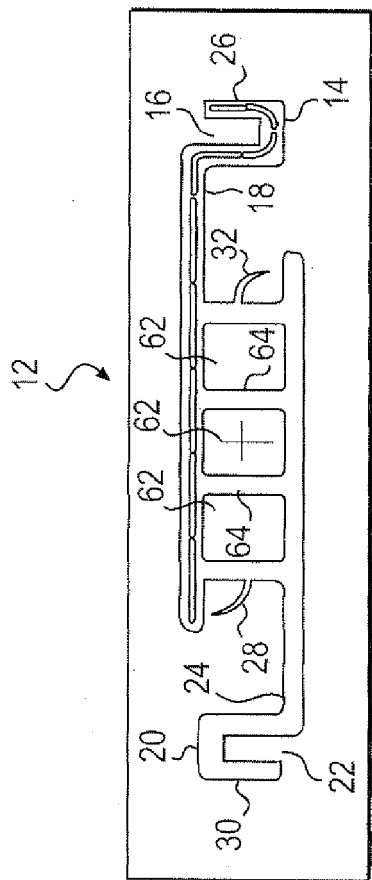


FIG. 1B

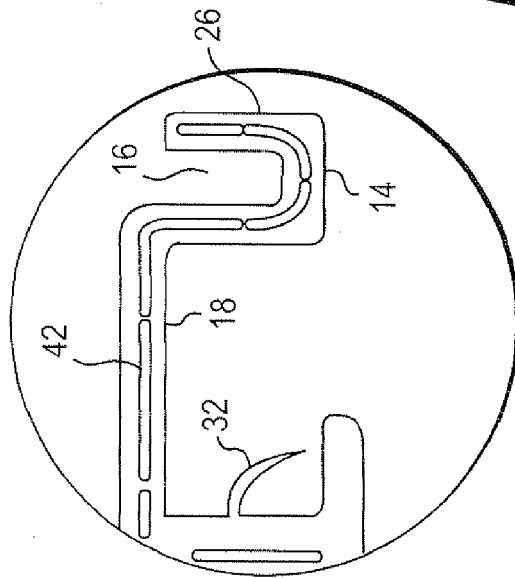


FIG. 1C

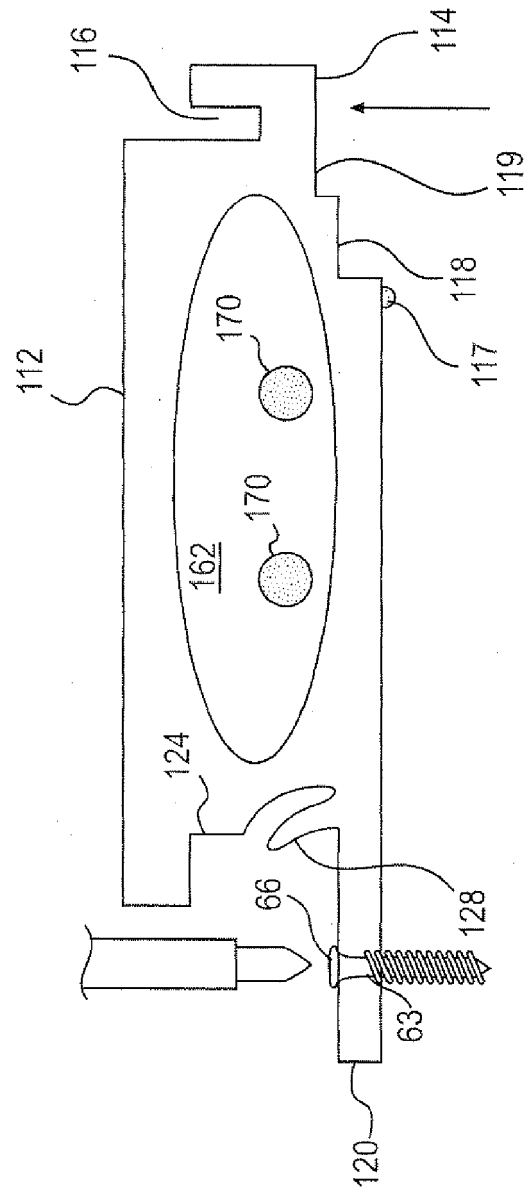


FIG. 1D

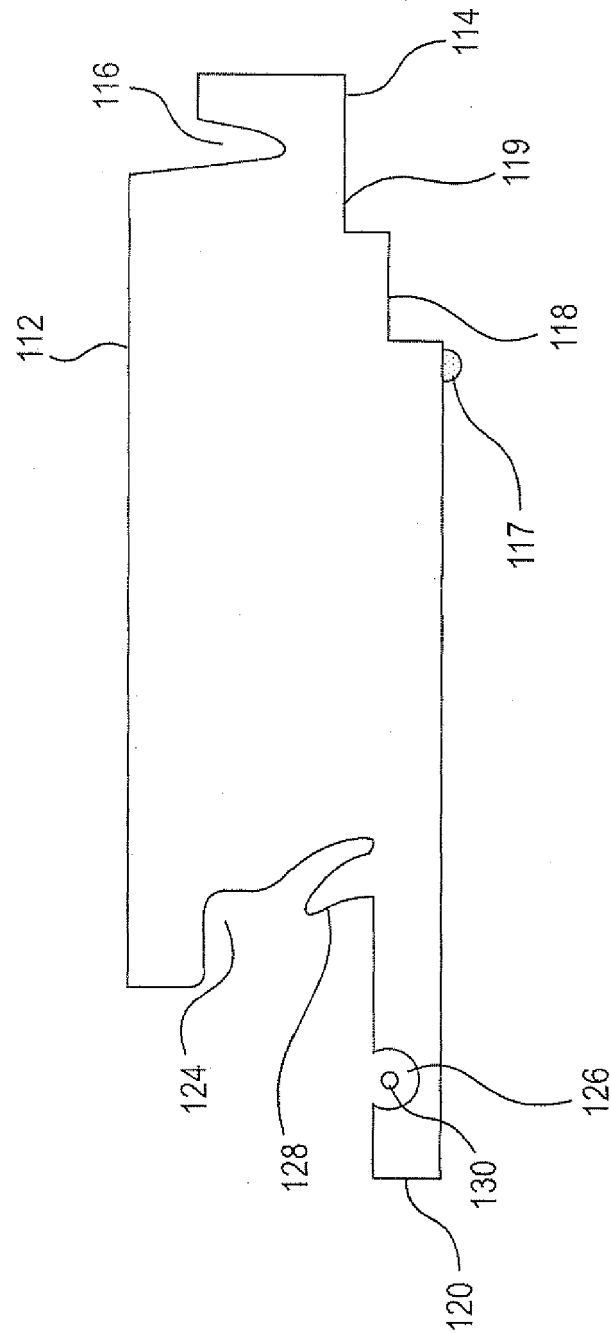


FIG. 1E

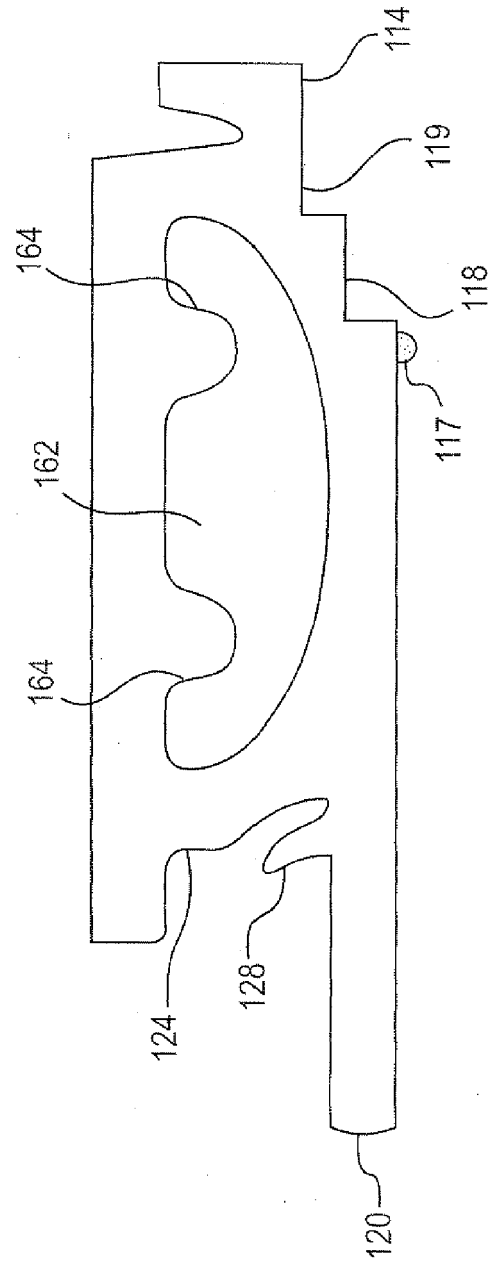


FIG. 1F

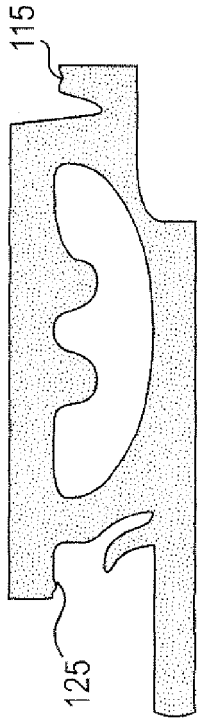


FIG. 2B

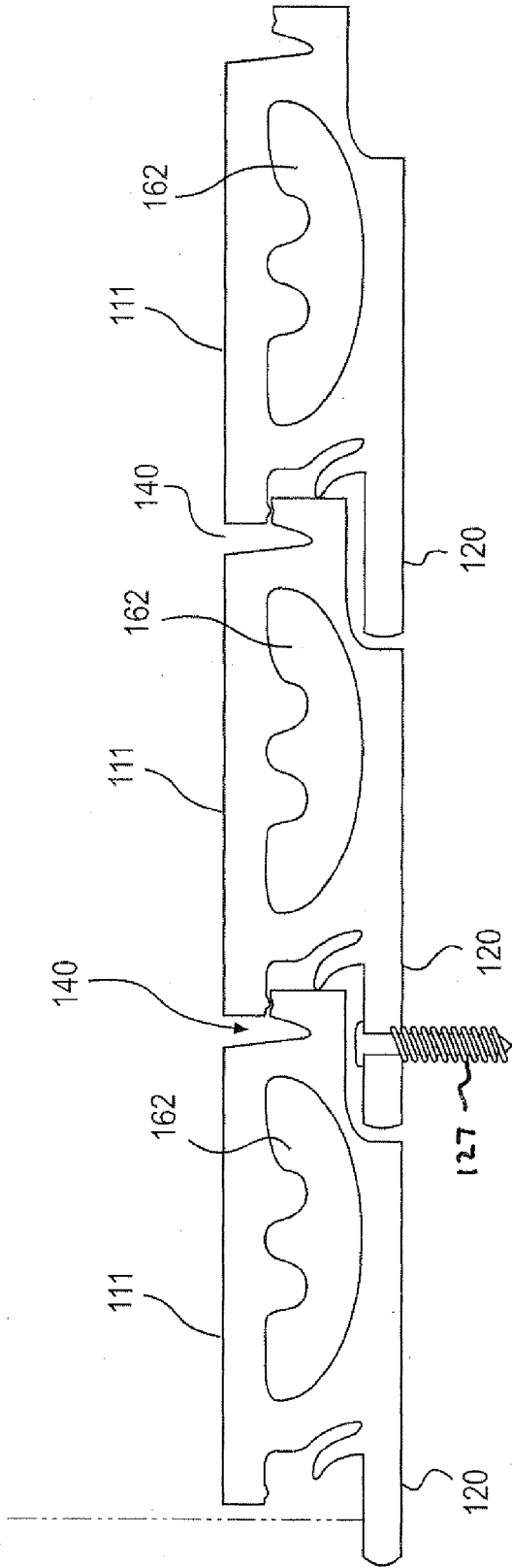


FIG. 2A

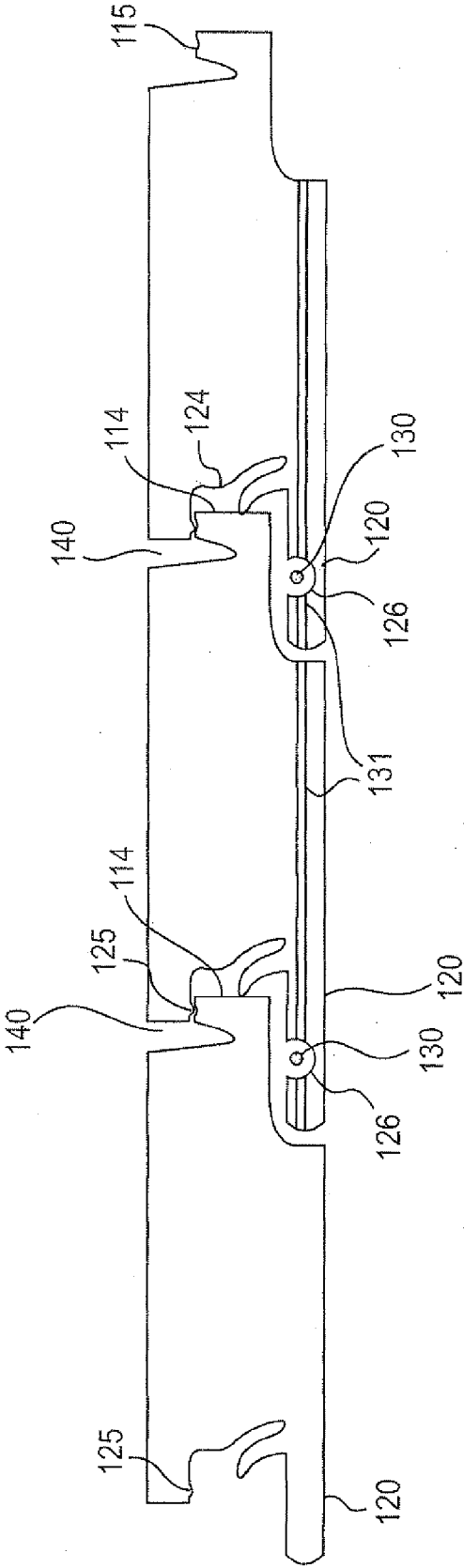


FIG. 2C

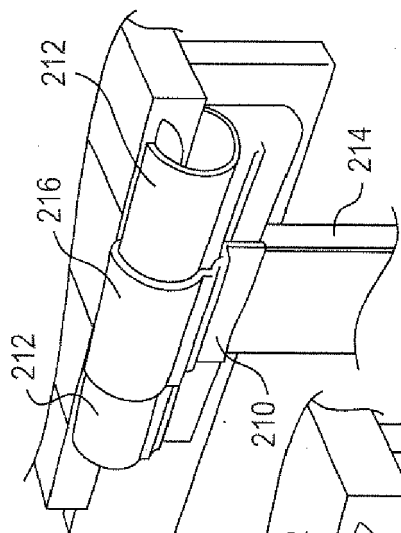


FIG. 3A

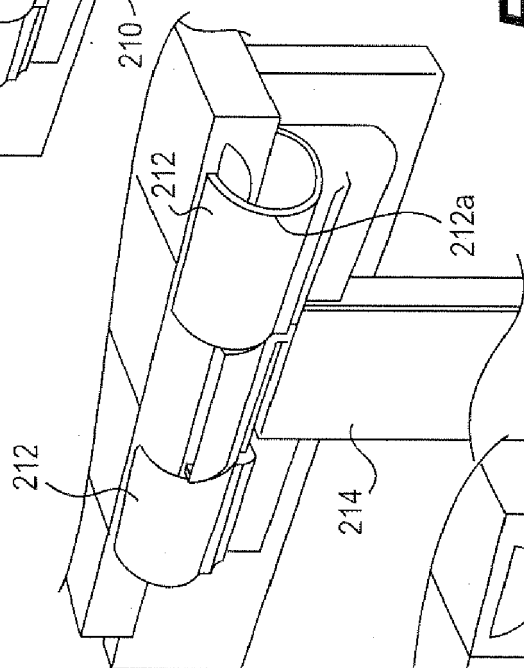


FIG. 3B

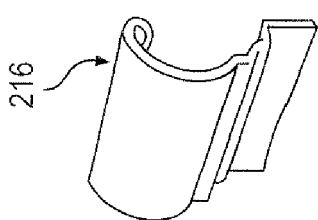
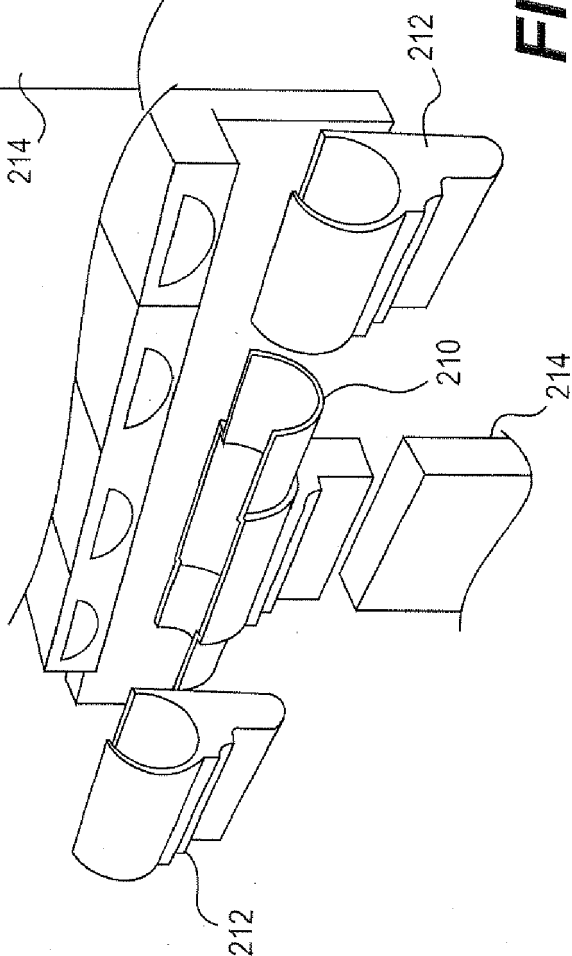


FIG. 3C



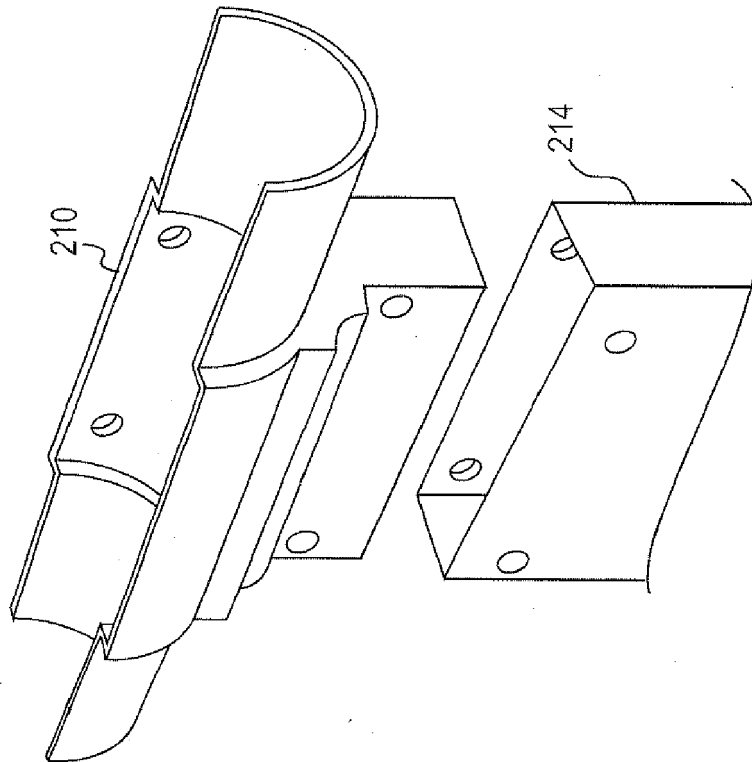


FIG. 3D

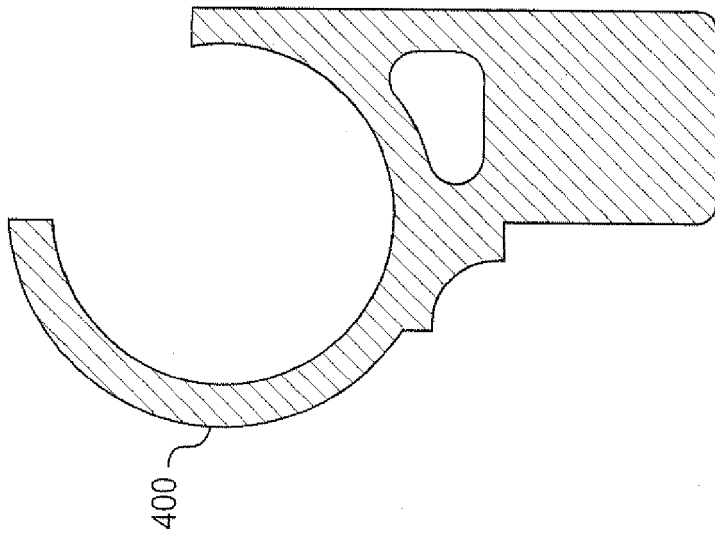


FIG. 4

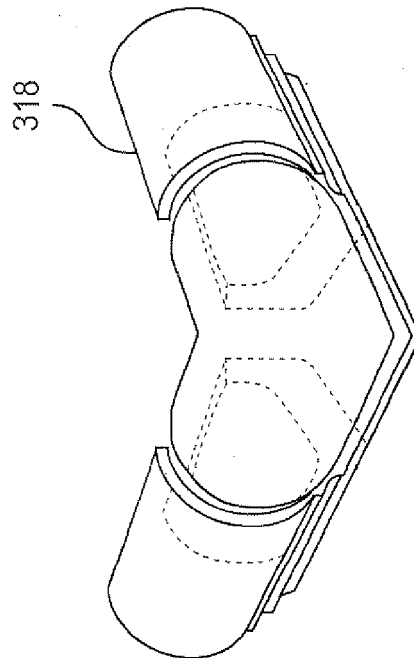


FIG. 3E

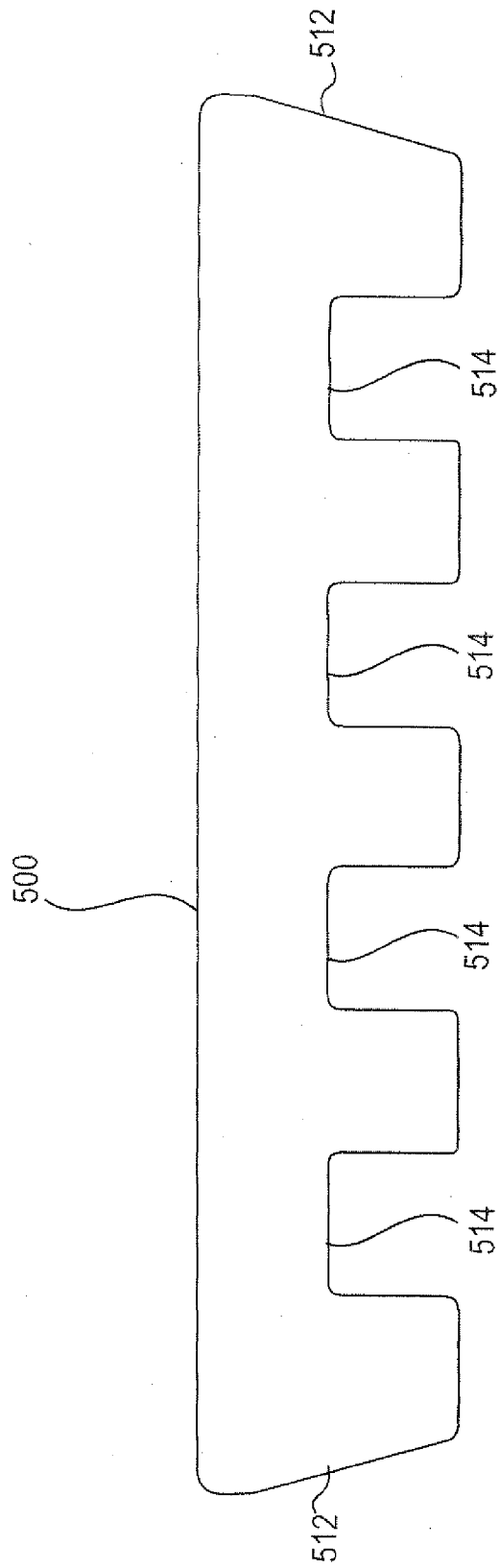


FIG. 5

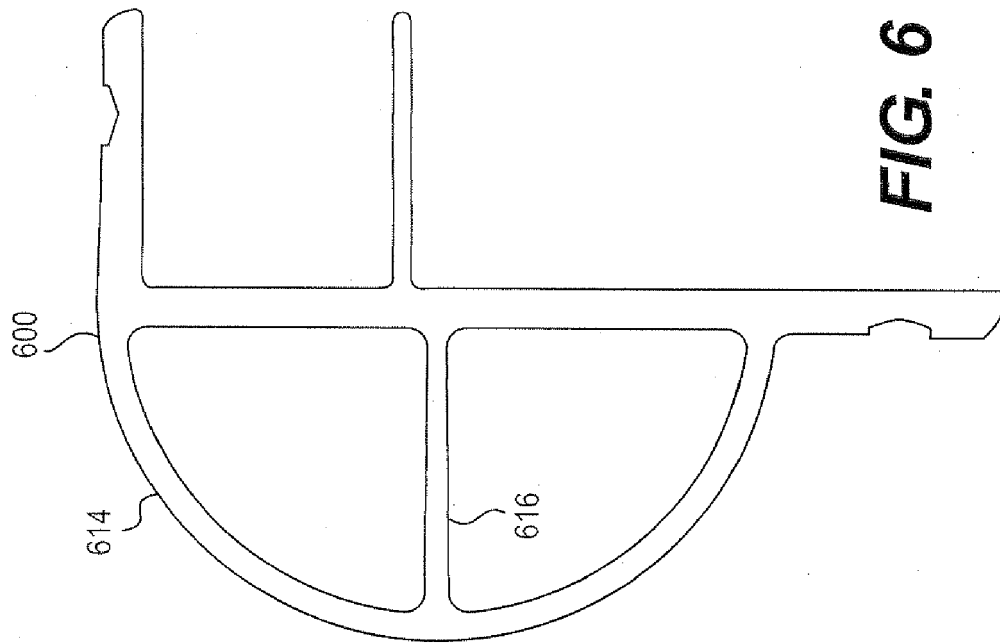
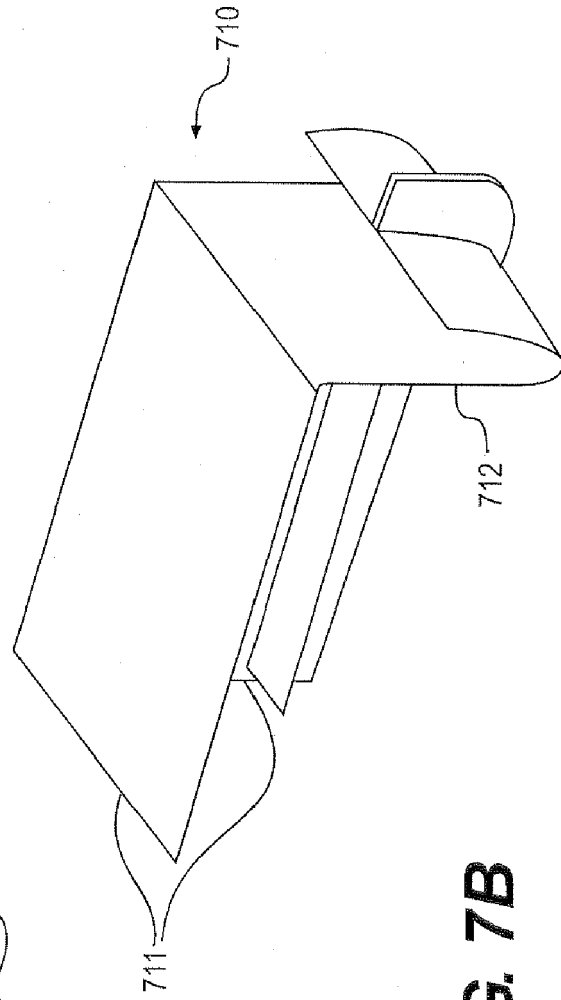
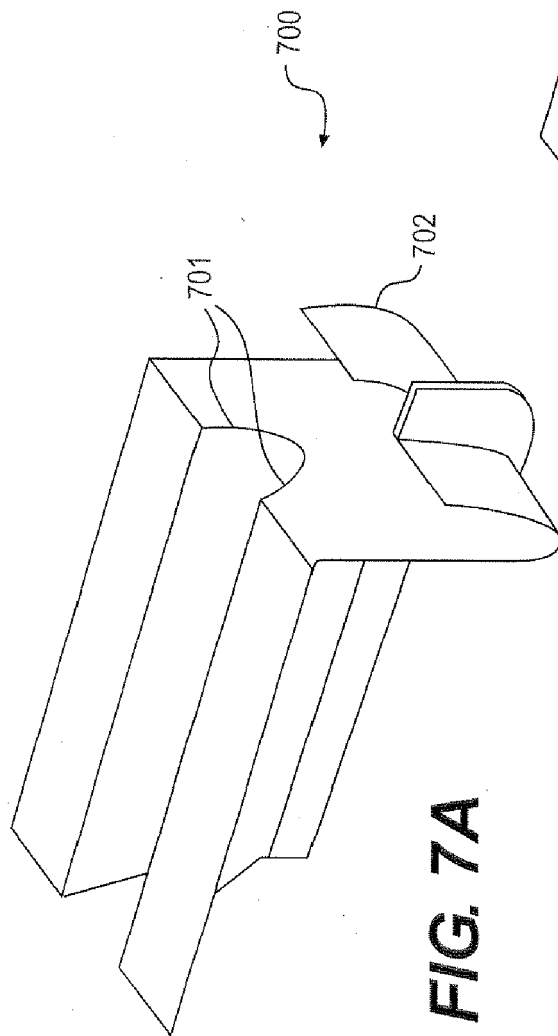


FIG. 6



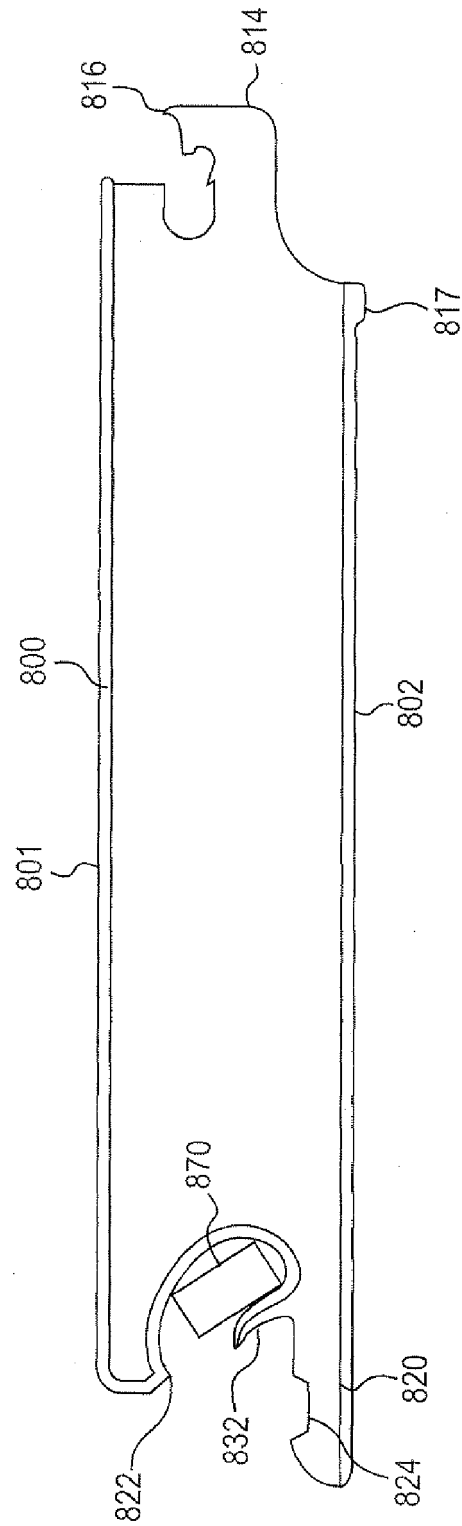


FIG. 8A

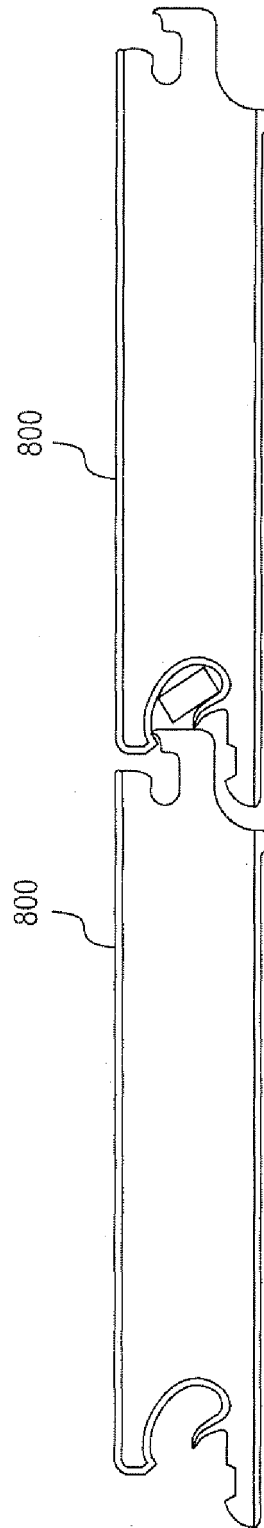


FIG. 8B

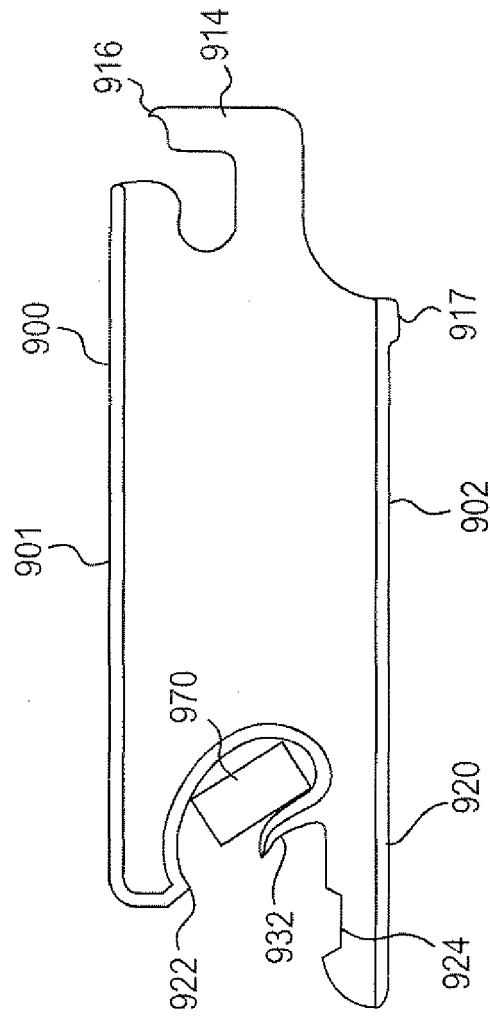


FIG. 9A

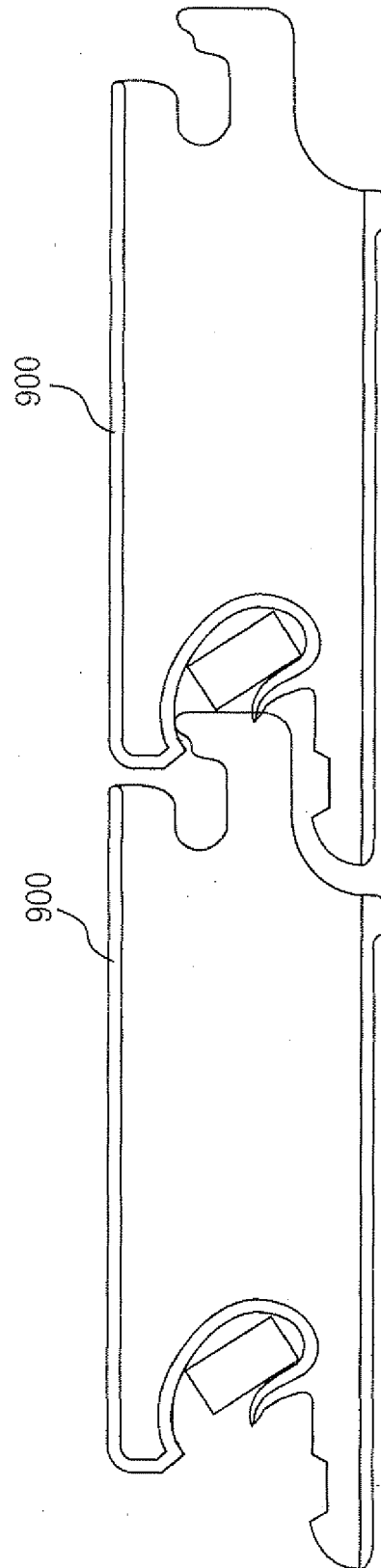


FIG. 9B

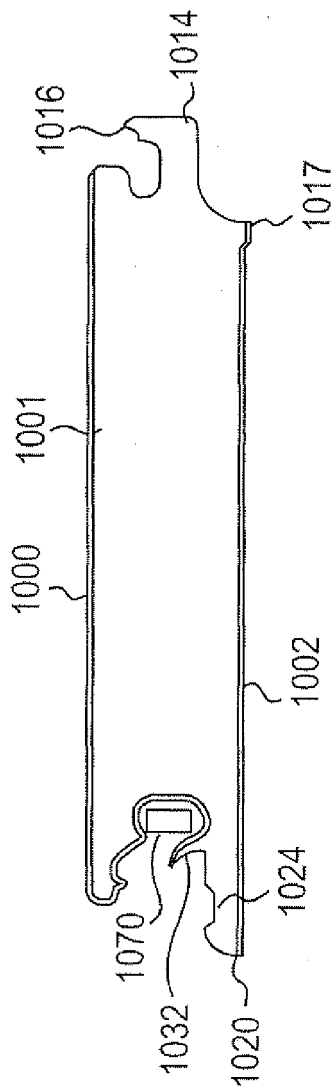


FIG. 10A

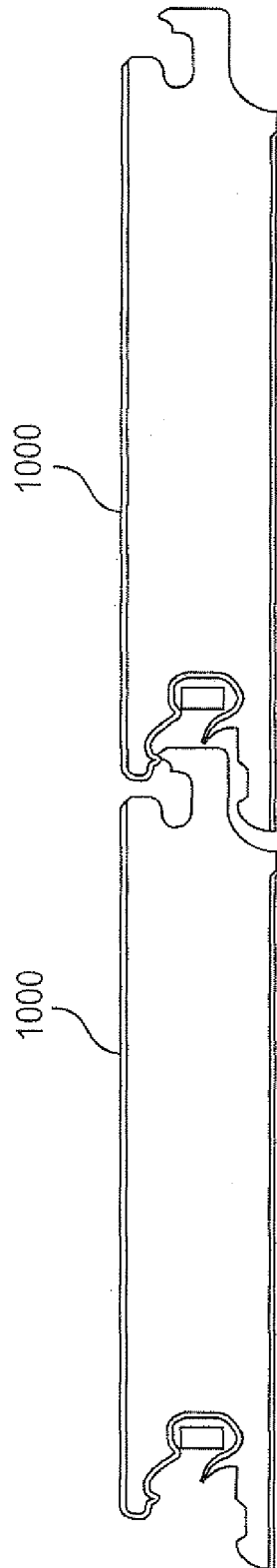


FIG. 10B

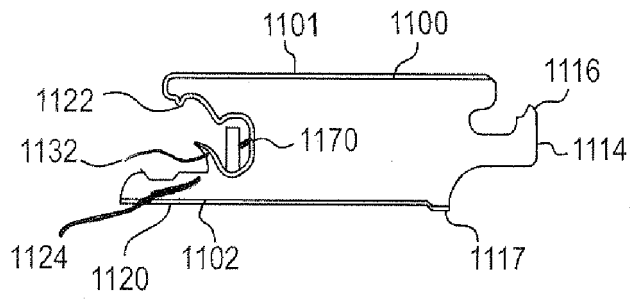


FIG. 11A

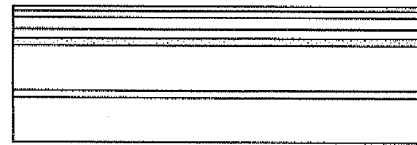


FIG. 11B

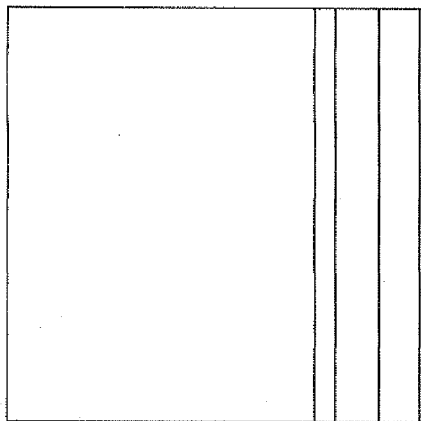


FIG. 11C

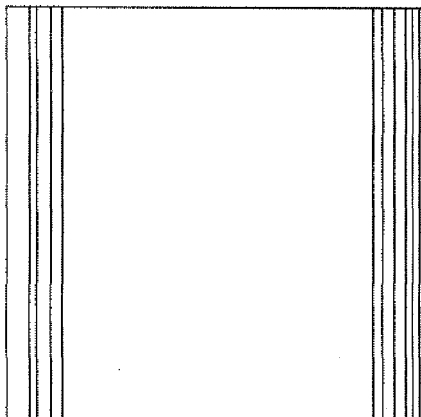


FIG. 11D

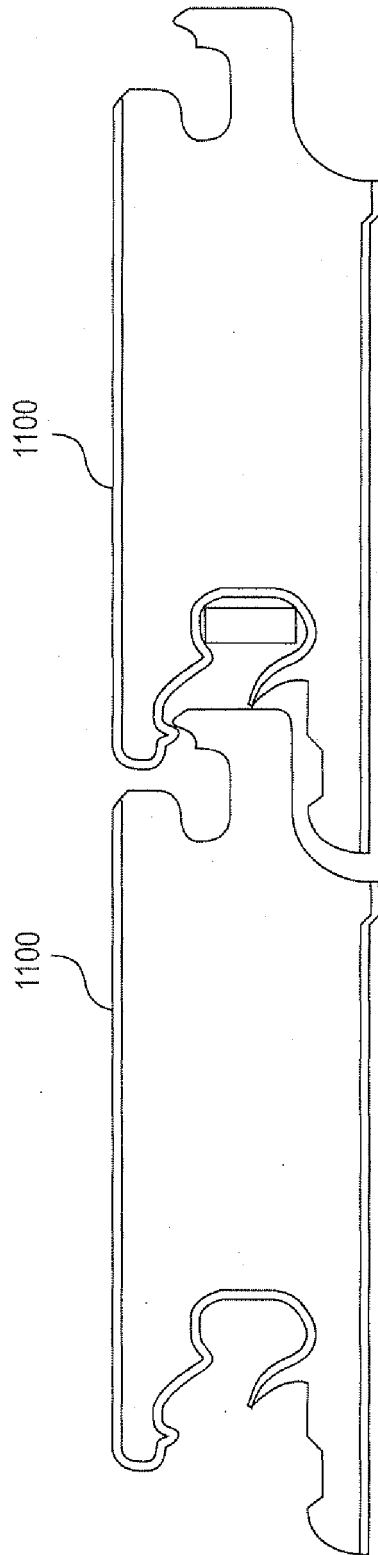


FIG. 11E

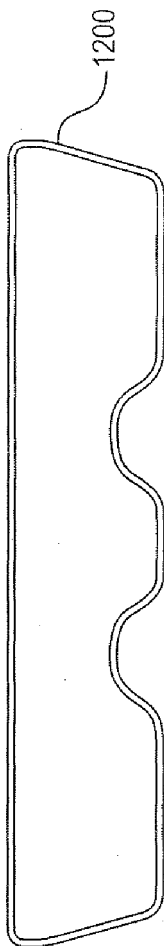


FIG. 12A

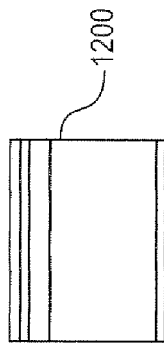


FIG. 12B

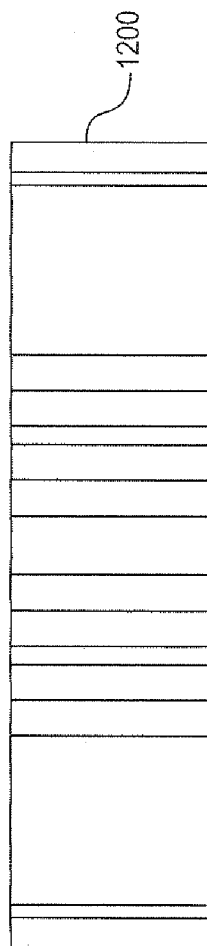


FIG. 12C

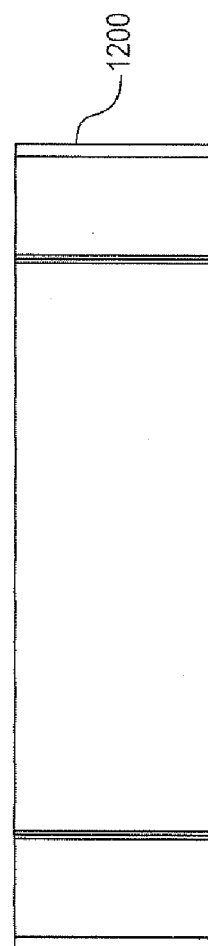


FIG. 12D

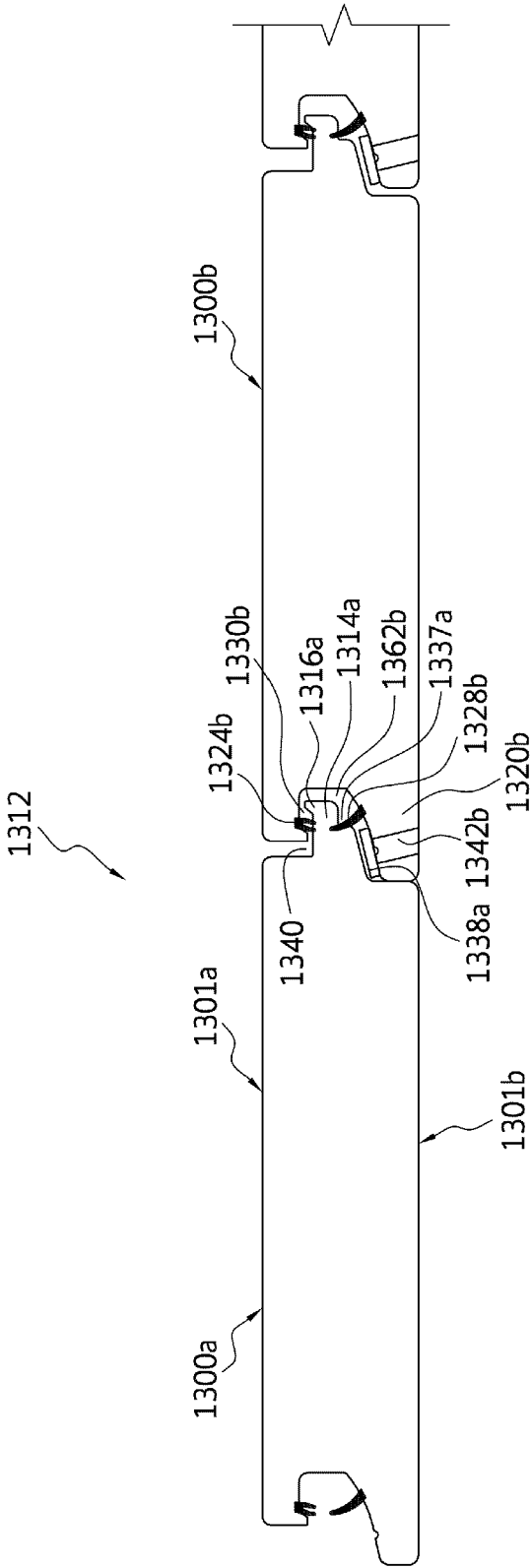
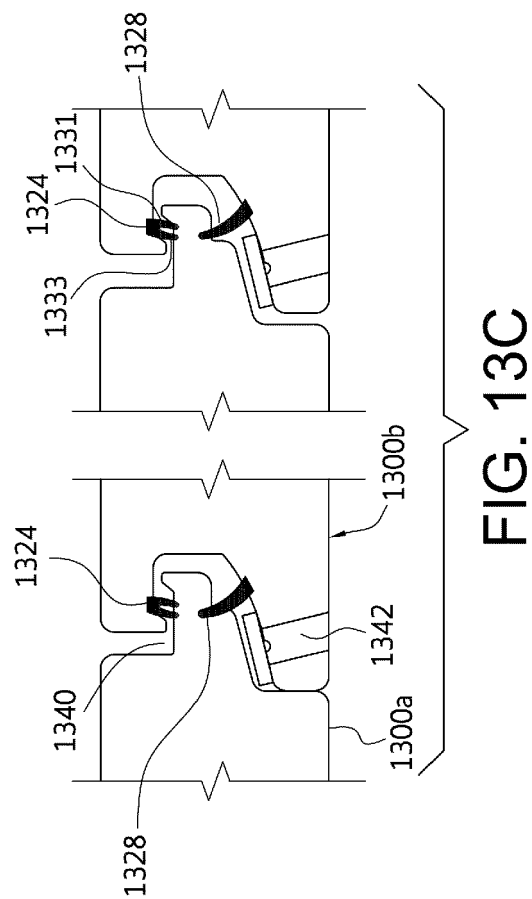
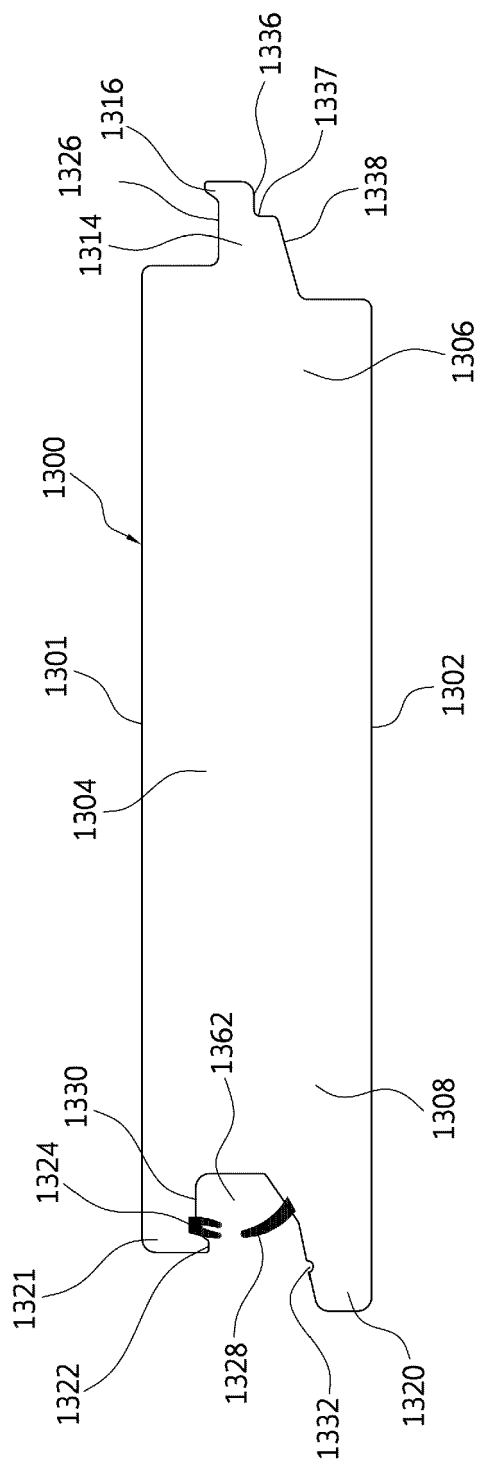


FIG. 13A



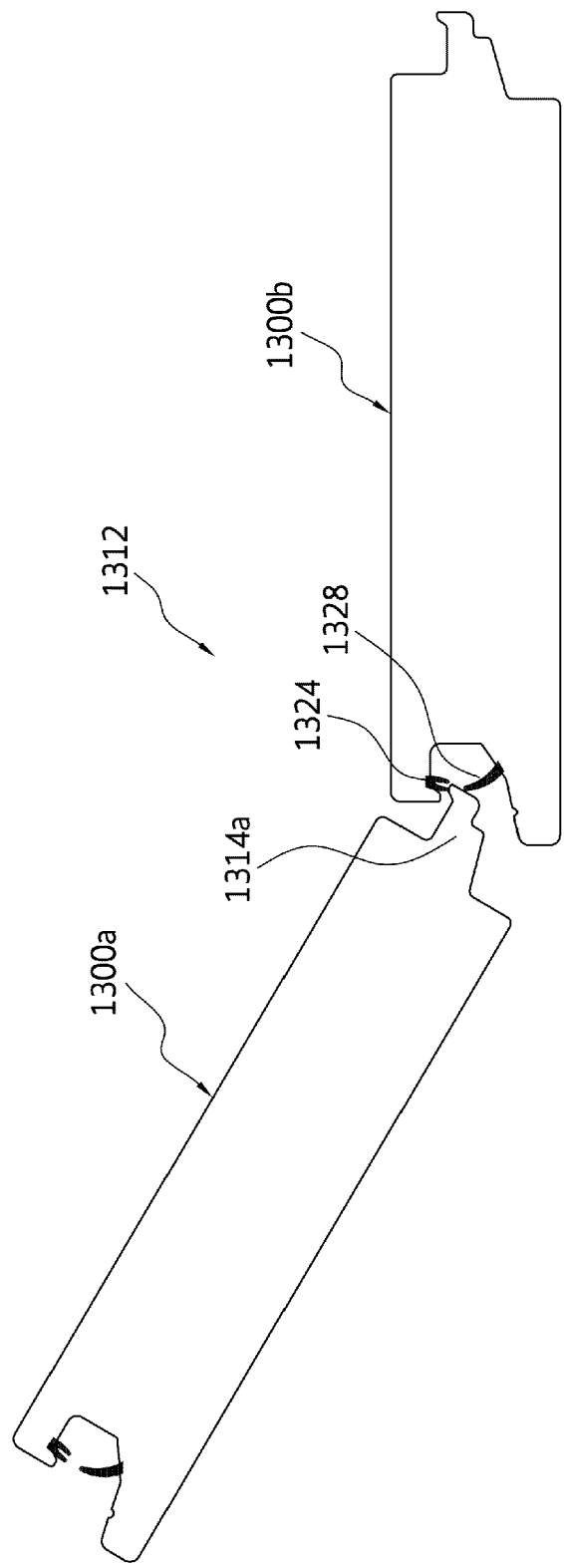


FIG. 13D



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 15 16 7391

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
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