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Barcode reader with off-platter detection assembly

Abstract

Barcode readers with off-platter detection assemblies are disclosed herein. An example barcode reader includes a weigh platter and an off-platter detection assembly including a light emission assembly, a light detection assembly, and a controller. The light emission assembly emits a light along a first lateral edge of the weigh platter and the light detection assembly detects at least a portion of the light from the light emission assembly. The controller is configured to: receive a light detection signal from the light detection assembly; compare the light detection signal to a first signal threshold and a second signal threshold range; execute a first event if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, indicating an off-platter event; and execute a second event if the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for a predetermined period of time, indicating a maintenance event.

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Background/Summary

BACKGROUND
(1) Barcode readers, especially bioptic barcode readers used in retail environments, have the potential to become very dirty during use. For example, skins and other flaking components from produce can generate dust very quickly, liquid spills can cover, cloud, or cake on windows and optical surfaces, and users can smudge windows and optical surfaces with fingerprints. This is in addition to normal dust buildup as the barcode reader sits in a counter for years. Barcode readers can also be damaged during use as items are dragged and passed across the barcode reader or if items are dropped onto barcode reader.
(2) Barcode readers that have off-platter detection systems are at risk for reduced performance or complete failure if the optical components associated with the off-platter detection systems become dirty or damaged. Therefore, it would be beneficial to have a barcode reader with an off-platter detection system that could detect when dirty conditions or damage are inhibiting performance of

the off-platter detection system.

SUMMARY

(3) In an embodiment, the present invention is a barcode reader configured to be supported by a workstation. The barcode reader comprises a weigh platter configured to measure a weight of an object placed on the weigh platter and an off-platter detection assembly. The off-platter detection assembly comprises a light emission assembly, a light detection assembly, and a controller in communication with the light emission assembly and the light detection assembly. The light emission assembly has a light source and is configured to emit a light along a first lateral edge of the weigh platter and the light detection assembly has a light sensor and is configured to detect at least a portion of the light from the light emission assembly. The controller is configured to: receive a light detection signal from the light detection assembly; compare the light detection signal to a first signal threshold and a second signal threshold range; execute a first event if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, indicating an off-platter event; and execute a second event if the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for a predetermined period of time, indicating a maintenance event, wherein a lowest value of the second signal threshold range is greater than the first signal threshold.

(4) In another embodiment, the present invention is a method of monitoring a performance of an off-platter detection assembly, comprising the steps of: emitting a light along a first lateral edge of a weigh platter of the barcode reader with a light emission assembly; receiving a light detection signal from a light detection assembly of the barcode reader at a controller of the barcode reader; comparing, with the controller, the light detection signal to a first signal threshold and a second signal threshold range; executing, with the controller, a first event if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, indicating an off-platter event; and executing, with the controller, a second event if the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for a predetermined period of time, indicating a maintenance event, wherein a lowest value of the second signal threshold range is greater than the first signal threshold.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

(1) The accompanying figures, where like reference numerals refer to identical or functionally similar elements throughout the separate views, together with the detailed description below, are incorporated in and form part of the specification, and serve to further illustrate embodiments of concepts that include the claimed invention, and explain various principles and advantages of those embodiments.

(2) FIG. **1** illustrates a front perspective view of an example barcode reader is shown;

(3) FIG. **2** illustrates a front perspective view of the barcode reader of FIG. **1** with a first example off-platter detection assembly;

(4) FIG. **3** illustrates a top view of the barcode reader of FIG. **2**;

(5) FIG. **4** illustrates a front perspective view of the barcode reader of FIG. **1** with a second example off-platter detection assembly;

(6) FIG. **5** illustrates a side view of the barcode reader of FIG. **4**;

(7) FIG. **6** illustrates a front perspective view of the barcode reader of FIG. **1** with a third example off-platter detection assembly; and

(8) FIG. **7** illustrates a side view of the barcode reader of FIG. **6**.

(9) Skilled artisans will appreciate that elements in the figures are illustrated for simplicity and clarity and have not necessarily been drawn to scale. For example, the dimensions of some of the elements in the figures may be exaggerated relative to other elements to help to improve understanding of embodiments of the present invention.

(10) The apparatus and method components have been represented where appropriate by conventional symbols in the drawings, showing only those specific details that are pertinent to understanding the embodiments of the present invention so as not to obscure the disclosure with details that will be readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art having the benefit of the description herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

(11) The example barcode readers disclosed herein have off-platter detection assemblies that can detect when a portion of the off-platter detection assembly may need to be cleaned or repaired. As described herein, this can be done by setting one or more thresholds that indicate that maintenance or repair is required and, if a light detection signal is within the thresholds for a predetermined time, or during periods when product scanning is not taking place, triggering an event to alert a user of the maintenance or repair event.

(12) Referring to FIG. **1**, an example barcode reader **10**, such as the Zebra® MP7000 bioptic barcode reader, is shown and can be configured to be supported by a workstation **50**, such as a checkout counter at a point-of-sale (POS) of a retail store. Barcode reader **10** has a housing **15** that houses a weigh platter assembly **100** and includes a lower housing **20** and an upper housing **30** that extends above lower housing **20**. Upper housing **30** includes a generally vertical window **35** to allow a first set of optical components positioned within housing **15** to direct a first field-of-view through vertical window **35**. In addition, if barcode reader **10** is a bioptic barcode reader, barcode reader **10** will include a generally horizontal window **25**, which in the example shown is positioned in a weigh platter **105** of weigh platter assembly **100** to allow a second set of optical components positioned within housing **15** to direct a second field of view through horizontal window **25**. The first and second fields of view intersect to define a product scanning region **40** of barcode reader **10** where a product can be scanned for sale at the POS.

(13) Weigh platter assembly **100** of barcode reader **10** includes a weigh platter **105** and is configured to measure the weight of an object placed on weigh platter **105**. Weigh platter **105** has surface **110** that is generally parallel to a top surface of workstation **50** and extends in a first transverse plane, a proximal edge **115**, a distal edge **120**, a first lateral edge **125**, and a second lateral edge **130**. In the example shown, proximal edge **115** is adjacent upper housing **30** and would be the edge furthest from a user of weigh platter assembly **100** and/or barcode reader **10**. First and second lateral edges **125**, **130** extend non-parallel to proximal edge **115**. Distal edge **120** is opposite proximal edge **115**, would be the edge closest to the user, and extends non-parallel to first and second lateral edges **125**, **130**. In the example shown, weigh platter **105** is generally rectangular and first and second lateral edges **125**, **130** are perpendicular to proximal edge **115** and distal edge **120** is perpendicular to first and second lateral edges **125**, **130** and parallel to proximal edge **115**.

(14) Referring to FIGS. **2-3**, barcode reader **10** is illustrated with a first example off-platter detection assembly **200**A. Off-platter detection assembly **200**A generally includes a light emission assembly **205**, light detection assembly **250**, a controller **290** in communication with light emission assembly **205** and light detection assembly **250**, and a retroreflector **295** positioned at distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105**, opposite light emission assembly **205**. For simplicity, only a single light emission assembly **205**, light detection assembly **250**, and retroreflector **295** along first lateral edge **125** are described herein, however, it will be understood that off-platter detection assembly **200**A can also include a second light emission assembly, a second light detection assembly, and a second retroreflector aligned along second lateral edge **130** of weigh platter **105** to detect objects that extend over second lateral edge **130**, opposite first lateral edge **125**.

(15) In the example shown in FIGS. **2-3**, light emission assembly **205** is located within upper housing **30** of housing **15**, has a light source **210**, and is configured to emit a light **215** through a window **220** and away from proximal edge **115**, towards distal edge **120** and retroreflector **295**, and along first lateral edge **125** of weigh platter **105**. Light source **210** could be an LED that is focused into a narrow beam, similar to an aiming dot used in scanners, a focused laser beam, etc., and light

215 could be pulses of light (such as in a light imaging, detection, and ranging (LI DAR) system) or a continuous light beam and could be on the infrared wavelength, visible light wavelength, or any wavelength desired. Retroreflector **295** can be made of a material and/or color that reflects a wavelength of light **215** back towards proximal edge **115** of weigh platter **105**.

(16) Light detection assembly **250** can also be located within housing **15**, behind window **220**, and has a field-of-view **255** that extends from proximal edge **115** to at least distal edge **120** and along first lateral edge **125**. Light detection assembly **250** has a light sensor **265** and is configured to detect light **215**, from one or more pulses of light or a continuous infrared light beam from light emission assembly **205**, that is reflected from retroreflector **295** or from an object that extends across light **215**, and therefore off weigh platter **105**, towards proximal edge **115** and within field-of-view **255**. Light sensor **265** can be positioned below or beside light source **210** and could also be located on the same printed circuit board as light sensor **265**.

(17) Controller **290** is in communication with light source **210** of light emission assembly **205** and light sensor **265** of light detection assembly **250** and is configured to receive a light detection signal from light detection assembly **250**.

(18) If light emission assembly **205** is configured to emit a continuous light beam, such as a continuous infrared light beam, from light source **210**, the light detection signal from light detection assembly **250** could be a signal strength of the reflected light from retroreflector **295** or object that is detected by light sensor **265**. Controller **290** can then be configured to determine if an object extends across first lateral edge **125** and off of weigh platter **105** by comparing the light detection signal to a first signal threshold and determining if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold. For example, the first signal threshold could be 10 percent of a calibration signal, which would be the signal strength of the light reflected from retroreflector **295** detected by light detection assembly **250** without anything (i.e., an object, dirt, debris, etc.) impeding the path of light **215** from light source **210** to retroreflector **295** and from retroreflector **295** to light sensor **265**. The calibration signal can be set at the factory or on-site during calibration of barcode reader **10**. If the light detection signal is greater than the first signal threshold, this indicates that there is no object extending across first lateral edge **125** between proximal edge **115** and distal edge **120**. If the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, this indicates that there is an object extending across first lateral edge **125** between proximal edge **115** and distal edge **120** and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is equal to or less than the first signal threshold, controller **290** can be configured to execute a first event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(19) Controller **290** can also be configured to determine if a maintenance event is required by determining if the light detection signal is within a second signal threshold range for a predetermined period of time. A maintenance event could be an indication that retroreflector **295** or window **220** need to be cleaned, that dirt or debris needs to be removed from the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265**, etc. The second signal threshold range has a lowest value that is greater than the first signal threshold and could be between 70 percent and 90 percent of the calibration signal and the predetermined time could be at least 60 second. The light detection signal is monitored for the predetermined period of time to avoid off-platter detection assembly **200**A thinking that a maintenance event is required based on reductions in the light detection signal that can occur during normal operations of barcode reader **10**, for example, a user scanning a product. If the light detection signal is greater than the highest value of the second signal threshold range, this indicates that the retroreflector **295** and window **220** are sufficiently clean for acceptable operation and there is no dirt or debris if the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265**. If the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for longer than the predetermined time, this indicates that there is something impeding the path of light **215**

between light source **210** and light sensor **265** (i.e., dirt on retroreflector **295** or window **220**) and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** can be configured to execute a second event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(20) Controller **290** can also be configured to determine if a repair event is required by determining if the light detection signal is within a third signal threshold range for the predetermined period of time. A repair event could be an indication that retroreflector **295** or window **220** is damage or missing and needs to be repaired or replaced. The third signal threshold range has a lowest value that is greater than the first signal threshold and a highest value that is less than or equal to the lowest value of the second signal threshold range and could be between 50 percent and 70 percent of the calibration signal. If the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for longer than the predetermined time, this indicates that there could be something wrong with retroreflector **295** and/or window **220** and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** can be configured to execute a third event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system. If off-platter detection assembly **200**A is configured to monitor for both maintenance and repair events, the second event (indicating a maintenance event could be required) could be providing a providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system and the third event (indicating that a repair event could be required) could be preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(21) If light emission assembly **205** is configured to emit one or more pulses of light from light source **210**, the light detection signal from light detection assembly **250** could be a time-of-flight (TOF) of the reflected light from retroreflector **295** or object and a signal strength of the detected light that is detected by light sensor **265**. The TOF is the time elapsed from when the pulse of light is emitted by light emission assembly **205** to when at least a portion of the pulse of light is reflected back to and detected by light detection assembly **250**. Controller **290** can then be configured to determine if an object extends across first lateral edge **125** and off of weigh platter **105** by determining if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold. For example, the first signal threshold could be a calibration TOF, which would be the TOF without anything (i.e., an object, dirt, debris, etc.) impeding the path of light **215** from light source **210** to retroreflector **295** and from retroreflector **295** to light sensor **265**. The calibration TOF can be set at the factory or on-site during calibration of barcode reader **10**. If TOF of the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold (the calibration TOF), this indicates that there is an object extending across first lateral edge **125** between proximal edge **115** and distal edge **120** and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, controller **290** can be configured to execute a first event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(22) Controller **290** can also be configured to determine if a maintenance event is required by determining if the signal strength portion of the light detection signal for a given TOF is within a second signal threshold range, which has a lowest value that is greater than the first signal threshold, fora predetermined period of time. For example, if the TOF portion of the light detection

signal is equal to the calibration TOF, but the signal strength portion of the light detection signal is less than a calibration signal strength for the predetermined time, this can indicate that there is something impeding the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265** (i.e., dirt on retroreflector **295** or window **220**) and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** can be configured to execute a second event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(23) Controller **290** can also be configured to determine if a repair event is required by determining if the signal strength portion of the light detection signal for a given TOF is within a third signal threshold range for the predetermined period of time. A repair event could be an indication that retroreflector **295** or window **220** is damage or missing and needs to be repaired or replaced. The third signal threshold range has a lowest value that is greater than the first signal threshold and a highest value that is less than or equal to the lowest value of the second signal threshold range and could be between 50 percent and 70 percent of the calibration signal. If the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for longer than the predetermined time, this indicates that there could be something wrong with retroreflector **295** and/or window **220** and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** can be configured to execute a third event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system. If off-platter detection assembly **200**A is configured to monitor for both maintenance and repair events, the second event (indicating a maintenance event could be required) could be providing a providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system and the third event (indicating that a repair event could be required) could be preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(24) Alternatively, barcode reader **10** can also include an imaging device **300**, such as a color camera, positioned within housing **15**, preferably within upper housing **30** and proximate a top portion of vertical window **35**, and in communication with controller **290**. Imaging device **300** can have a FOV **305** that encompasses distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105** and retroreflector **295** and controller **290** can be configured to analyze images captured by imaging device **300** and determine if retroreflector **295** is damaged or missing or if there is dirt or debris covering retroreflector **295**.

(25) In operation, light emission assembly **205** of off-platter detection assembly **200**A emits light **215** from light source **210** along first lateral edge **125** of weigh platter **105** and towards retroreflector **295**. Light **215** is then reflected from retroreflector **295** back towards light detection assembly **250**, which sends the light detection signal to controller **290**. Controller **290** receives the light detection signal from light detection assembly **250** and compares the light detection signal to the first signal threshold and the second signal threshold range. Controller **290** can also compare the light detection signal to the third signal threshold range if configured in this manner. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, controller **290** executes a first event to indicate an off-platter event. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** executes a second event to indicate a maintenance event. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** executes a third event to indicate a repair event. If barcode reader **10** includes imaging device **300**, controller **290** can also receive an image capture from

imaging device **300** and analyze the image capture to determine if retroreflector **295** is damaged or missing or if there is dirt or debris covering retroreflector **295** or if there is any other maintenance type event.

(26) Referring to FIGS. **4-5**, barcode reader **10** is illustrated with a second example off-platter detection assembly **200**B, where light emission assembly **205** and light detection assembly **250** are located at opposite edges of weigh platter **105**, rather than the same side of weigh platter **105**. Like off-platter detection assembly **200**A, off-platter detection assembly **200**B generally includes light emission assembly **205**, light detection assembly **250**, and controller **290** in communication with light emission assembly **205** and light detection assembly **250**. However, in off-platter detection assembly **200**B, light emission assembly **205** is located at distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105**, light detection assembly **250** is located at proximal edge **115** of weigh platter **105**, and light emission assembly **205** emits light **215** from distal edge **120** and towards proximal edge **115** and light detection assembly **250**. Alternatively, the locations of light emission assembly **205** and light detection assembly **250** could also be reversed, with light emission assembly **205** being located at proximal edge **115** and light detection assembly **250** being located at distal edge **120**. For simplicity, only a single light emission assembly **205** and light detection assembly **250** along first lateral edge **125** are described herein, however, it will be understood that off-platter detection assembly **200**B can also include a second light emission assembly and a second light detection assembly aligned along second lateral edge **130** of weigh platter **105** to detect objects that extend over second lateral edge **130**, opposite first lateral edge **125**.

(27) In the example shown in FIGS. **4-5**, light emission assembly **205** is located within a distal housing **225** located at distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105**, has light source **210**, and is configured to emit light **215** through a window **230** in distal housing **225**, towards proximal edge **115**, and along first lateral edge **125** of weigh platter **105**. In this example, light source **210** could be an LED that is focused into a narrow beam, similar to an aiming dot used in scanners, a focused laser beam, etc., and light **215** could be a continuous light beam that could be on the infrared wavelength, visible light wavelength, or any wavelength desired.

(28) Light detection assembly **250** is located at proximal edge **115** of weigh platter **105** within housing **15**, behind window **220**, and has field-of-view **255** that extends from proximal edge **115** to at least distal edge **120** and along first lateral edge **125**. Light detection assembly **250** has light sensor **265** and is configured to detect light **215** from light emission assembly **205** within field-of-view **255**.

(29) Controller **290** is in communication with light source **210** of light emission assembly **205** and light sensor **265** of light detection assembly **250** and is configured to receive a light detection signal from light detection assembly **250**.

(30) The light detection signal from light detection assembly **250** could be a signal strength of light **215** that is detected by light sensor **265**. Controller **290** can then be configured to determine if an object extends across first lateral edge **125** and off of weigh platter **105** by comparing the light detection signal to a first signal threshold and determining if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold. For example, the first signal threshold could be 10 percent of a calibration signal, which would be the signal strength of light **215** from light emission assembly **205** and detected by light detection assembly **250** without anything (i.e., an object, dirt, debris, etc.) impeding the path of light **215** from light source **210** to light sensor **265**. The calibration signal can be set at the factory or on-site during calibration of barcode reader **10**. If the light detection signal is greater than the first signal threshold, this indicates that there is no object extending across first lateral edge **125** between proximal edge **115** and distal edge **120**. If the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, this indicates that there is an object extending across first lateral edge **125** between proximal edge **115** and distal edge **120** and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is equal to or less than the first signal threshold, controller **290** can be configured to execute a first event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or

through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(31) Controller **290** can also be configured to determine if a maintenance event is required by determining if the light detection signal is within a second signal threshold range for a predetermined period of time. A maintenance event could be an indication that window **220** or window **230** need to be cleaned, that dirt or debris needs to be removed from the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265**, etc. The second signal threshold range has a lowest value that is greater than the first signal threshold and could be between 70 percent and 90 percent of the calibration signal and the predetermined time could be at least 60 second. The light detection signal is monitored for the predetermined period of time to avoid off-platter detection assembly **200**B thinking that a maintenance event is required based on reductions in the light detection signal that can occur during normal operations of barcode reader **10**, for example, a user scanning a product. If the light detection signal is greater than the highest value of the second signal threshold range, this indicates that window **220** and window **230** are sufficiently clean for acceptable operation and there is no dirt or debris if the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265**. If the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for longer than the predetermined time, this indicates that there is something impeding the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265** (i.e., dirt on window **220** or window **230**) and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** can be configured to execute a second event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(32) Controller **290** can also be configured to determine if a repair event is required by determining if the light detection signal is within a third signal threshold range for the predetermined period of time. A repair event could be an indication that window **220** and/or window **230** are damage or missing and need to be repaired or replaced. The third signal threshold range has a lowest value that is greater than the first signal threshold and a highest value that is less than or equal to the lowest value of the second signal threshold range and could be between 50 percent and 70 percent of the calibration signal. If the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for longer than the predetermined time, this indicates that there could be something wrong with window **220** and/or window **230** and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** can be configured to execute a third event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system. If off-platter detection assembly **200**B is configured to monitor for both maintenance and repair events, the second event (indicating a maintenance event could be required) could be providing a providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system and the third event (indicating that a repair event could be required) could be preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(33) Alternatively, barcode reader **10** can also include an imaging device **300**, such as a color camera, positioned within housing **15**, preferably within upper housing **30** and proximate a top portion of vertical window **35**, and in communication with controller **290**. Imaging device **300** can have a FOV **305** that encompasses distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105**, distal housing **225**, and window **230** and controller **290** can be configured to analyze images captured by imaging device

300 and determine if distal housing **225** and/or window **230** is damaged or missing or if there is dirt or debris covering window **230**.

(34) In operation, light emission assembly **205** of off-platter detection assembly **200**B emits light **215** from light source **210** along first lateral edge **125** of weigh platter **105** from distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105** and towards proximal edge **115**. Light **215** is then detected by light detection assembly **250**, which sends the light detection signal to controller **290**. Controller **290** receives the light detection signal from light detection assembly **250** and compares the light detection signal to the first signal threshold and the second signal threshold range. Controller **290** can also compare the light detection signal to the third signal threshold range if configured in this manner. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, controller **290** executes a first event to indicate an off-platter event. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** executes a second event to indicate a maintenance event. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** executes a third event to indicate a repair event. If barcode reader **10** includes imaging device **300**, controller **290** can also receive an image capture from imaging device **300** and analyze the image capture to determine if distal housing **225** and/or window **230** are damaged or missing or if there is dirt or debris covering window **230** or if there is any other maintenance type event.

(35) Referring to FIGS. **6-7**, barcode reader **10** is illustrated with a third example off-platter detection assembly **200**C, where light emission assembly **205** and light detection assembly **250** are both located at proximal edge **115** of weigh platter **105** and light **215** is emitted from distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105** via a light pipe **400**. Like off-platter detection assembly **200**A, off-platter detection assembly **200**B generally includes light emission assembly **205**, light detection assembly **250**, and controller **290** in communication with light emission assembly **205** and light detection assembly **250**. However, in off-platter detection assembly **200**C, light emission assembly **205** emits light **215** from distal edge **120** and towards proximal edge **115** and light detection assembly **250** via a light pipe **400**. For simplicity, only a single light emission assembly **205** and light detection assembly **250** along first lateral edge **125** are described herein, however, it will be understood that off-platter detection assembly **200**C can also include a second light emission assembly and a second light detection assembly aligned along second lateral edge **130** of weigh platter **105** to detect objects that extend over second lateral edge **130**, opposite first lateral edge **125**.

(36) In the example shown in FIGS. **6-7**, light emission assembly **205** is located within housing **15** at proximal edge **115** of weigh platter **105**, has light source **210**, and is configured to direct light **215** through a light pipe **400** and out a window **405** at the end of light pipe **400**, which is located at distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105**. Light pipe **400** extends along the length of weigh platter **105** and includes a number of reflective surfaces to direct light **215** from light source **210** through light pipe **400** and out of window **405** so that light **215** is directed from distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105**, towards proximal edge **115**, and along first lateral edge **125**. In this example, light source **210** could be an LED that is focused into a narrow beam, similar to an aiming dot used in scanners, a focused laser beam, etc., and light **215** could be a continuous light beam that could be on the infrared wavelength, visible light wavelength, or any wavelength desired.

(37) Light detection assembly **250** is also located at proximal edge **115** of weigh platter **105** within housing **15**, behind window **220**, and has field-of-view **255** that extends from proximal edge **115** to at least distal edge **120** and along first lateral edge **125**. Light detection assembly **250** has light sensor **265** and is configured to detect light **215** from light emission assembly **205** directed through window **405** and towards proximal edge **115** and light detection assembly **250**, within field-of-view **255**.

(38) Controller **290** is in communication with light source **210** of light emission assembly **205** and light sensor **265** of light detection assembly **250** and is configured to receive a light detection signal

from light detection assembly **250**.

(39) The light detection signal from light detection assembly **250** could be a signal strength of light **215** that is detected by light sensor **265**. Controller **290** can then be configured to determine if an object extends across first lateral edge **125** and off of weigh platter **105** by comparing the light detection signal to a first signal threshold and determining if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold. For example, the first signal threshold could be 10 percent of a calibration signal, which would be the signal strength of light **215** from light emission assembly **205** and detected by light detection assembly **250** without anything (i.e., an object, dirt, debris, etc.) impeding the path of light **215** from light source **210** to light sensor **265**. The calibration signal can be set at the factory or on-site during calibration of barcode reader **10**. If the light detection signal is greater than the first signal threshold, this indicates that there is no object extending across first lateral edge **125** between proximal edge **115** and distal edge **120**. If the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, this indicates that there is an object extending across first lateral edge **125** between proximal edge **115** and distal edge **120** and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is equal to or less than the first signal threshold, controller **290** can be configured to execute a first event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(40) Controller **290** can also be configured to determine if a maintenance event is required by determining if the light detection signal is within a second signal threshold range for a predetermined period of time. A maintenance event could be an indication that window **220**, window **405**, or light pipe **400** need to be cleaned, that dirt or debris needs to be removed from the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265**, etc. The second signal threshold range has a lowest value that is greater than the first signal threshold and could be between 70 percent and 90 percent of the calibration signal and the predetermined time could be at least 60 second. The light detection signal is monitored for the predetermined period of time to avoid off-platter detection assembly **200**C thinking that a maintenance event is required based on reductions in the light detection signal that can occur during normal operations of barcode reader **10**, for example, a user scanning a product. If the light detection signal is greater than the highest value of the second signal threshold range, this indicates that window **220**, window **405**, and light pipe **400** are sufficiently clean for acceptable operation and there is no dirt or debris if the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265**. If the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for longer than the predetermined time, this indicates that there is something impeding the path of light **215** between light source **210** and light sensor **265** (i.e., dirt on window **220** or window **405**, dirt or debris within light pipe **400**, etc.) and, if controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** can be configured to execute a second event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(41) Controller **290** can also be configured to determine if a repair event is required by determining if the light detection signal is within a third signal threshold range for the predetermined period of time. A repair event could be an indication that window **220**, window **405**, and/or light pipe **400** are damage or missing and need to be repaired or replaced. The third signal threshold range has a lowest value that is greater than the first signal threshold and a highest value that is less than or equal to the lowest value of the second signal threshold range could be between 50 percent and 70 percent of the calibration signal. If the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for longer than the predetermined time, this indicates that there could be something wrong with window **220**, window **405**, and/or light pipe **400** and, if controller **290** determines that the

light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** can be configured to execute a third event, such as providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system, preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system. If off-platter detection assembly **200**C is configured to monitor for both maintenance and repair events, the second event (indicating a maintenance event could be required) could be providing a providing a visual and/or audio alert through barcode reader **10** or through the POS system and the third event (indicating that a repair event could be required) could be preventing weigh platter assembly **100** from measuring a weight of object placed on weigh platter **105**, and/or preventing communication of the weight measured by weigh platter assembly **100** with the POS system.

(42) Alternatively, barcode reader **10** can also include an imaging device **300**, such as a color camera, positioned within housing **15**, preferably within upper housing **30** and proximate a top portion of vertical window **35**, and in communication with controller **290**. Imaging device **300** can have a FOV **305** that encompasses distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105** and window **405** and controller **290** can be configured to analyze images captured by imaging device **300** and determine if window **405** is damaged or missing or if there is dirt or debris covering window **405**.

(43) In operation, light emission assembly **205** of off-platter detection assembly **200**C emits light **215** from light source **210** through light pipe **400**, which directs light **215** along first lateral edge **125** of weigh platter **105** from distal edge **120** of weigh platter **105** and towards proximal edge **115**. Light **215** is then detected by light detection assembly **250**, which sends the light detection signal to controller **290**. Controller **290** receives the light detection signal from light detection assembly **250** and compares the light detection signal to the first signal threshold and the second signal threshold range. Controller **290** can also compare the light detection signal to the third signal threshold range if configured in this manner. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, controller **290** executes a first event to indicate an off-platter event. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** executes a second event to indicate a maintenance event. If controller **290** determines that the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined time, controller **290** executes a third event to indicate a repair event. If barcode reader **10** includes imaging device **300**, controller **290** can also receive an image capture from imaging device **300** and analyze the image capture to determine if window **405** is damaged or missing or if there is dirt or debris covering window **405** or if there is any other maintenance type event.

(44) In the foregoing specification, specific embodiments have been described. However, one of ordinary skill in the art appreciates that various modifications and changes can be made without departing from the scope of the invention as set forth in the claims below. Accordingly, the specification and figures are to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense, and all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of present teachings. Additionally, the described embodiments/examples/implementations should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive, and should instead be understood as potentially combinable if such combinations are permissive in any way. In other words, any feature disclosed in any of the aforementioned embodiments/examples/implementations may be included in any of the other aforementioned embodiments/examples/implementations.

(45) The benefits, advantages, solutions to problems, and any element(s) that may cause any benefit, advantage, or solution to occur or become more pronounced are not to be construed as a critical, required, or essential features or elements of any or all the claims. The claimed invention is defined solely by the appended claims including any amendments made during the pendency of this application and all equivalents of those claims as issued.

(46) Moreover in this document, relational terms such as first and second, top and bottom, and the

like may be used solely to distinguish one entity or action from another entity or action without necessarily requiring or implying any actual such relationship or order between such entities or actions. The terms "comprises," "comprising," "has", "having," "includes", "including," "contains", "containing" or any other variation thereof, are intended to cover a non-exclusive inclusion, such that a process, method, article, or apparatus that comprises, has, includes, contains a list of elements does not include only those elements but may include other elements not expressly listed or inherent to such process, method, article, or apparatus. An element proceeded by "comprises . . . a", "has . . . a", "includes . . . a", "contains . . . a" does not, without more constraints, preclude the existence of additional identical elements in the process, method, article, or apparatus that comprises, has, includes, contains the element. The terms "a" and "an" are defined as one or more unless explicitly stated otherwise herein. The terms "substantially", "essentially", "approximately", "about" or any other version thereof, are defined as being close to as understood by one of ordinary skill in the art, and in one non-limiting embodiment the term is defined to be within 10%, in another embodiment within 5%, in another embodiment within 1% and in another embodiment within 0.5%. The term "coupled" as used herein is defined as connected, although not necessarily directly and not necessarily mechanically. A device or structure that is "configured" in a certain way is configured in at least that way, but may also be configured in ways that are not listed.

(47) The Abstract of the Disclosure is provided to allow the reader to quickly ascertain the nature of the technical disclosure. It is submitted with the understanding that it will not be used to interpret or limit the scope or meaning of the claims. In addition, in the foregoing Detailed Description, it can be seen that various features are grouped together in various embodiments for the purpose of streamlining the disclosure. This method of disclosure is not to be interpreted as reflecting an intention that the claimed embodiments require more features than are expressly recited in each claim. Rather, as the following claims reflect, inventive subject matter may lie in less than all features of a single disclosed embodiment. Thus, the following claims are hereby incorporated into the Detailed Description, with each claim standing on its own as a separately claimed subject matter.

Claims

1. A barcode reader configured to be supported by a workstation, the barcode reader comprising: a weigh platter assembly having a weigh platter, the weigh platter assembly configured to measure a weight of an object placed on the weigh platter; and an off-platter detection assembly comprising: a light emission assembly having a light source, the light emission assembly configured to emit a light along a first lateral edge of the weigh platter; a light detection assembly having a light sensor, the light detection assembly configured to detect at least a portion of the light from the light emission assembly; and a controller in communication with the light emission assembly and the light detection assembly, the controller configured to: receive a light detection signal from the light detection assembly; compare the light detection signal to a first signal threshold and a second signal threshold range; execute a first event if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, indicating an off-platter event; and execute a second event if the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for a predetermined period of time, indicating a maintenance event, wherein a lowest value of the second signal threshold range is greater than the first signal threshold.

2. The barcode reader of claim 1, comprising a retroreflector positioned at a distal edge of the weigh platter, wherein the light emission assembly emits the light from a proximal edge of the weigh platter towards the retroreflector and the light detection assembly detects the light reflected from the retroreflector.

3. The barcode reader of claim 2, comprising an imaging device having a field-of-view that

encompasses the retroreflector, wherein the controller is configured to analyze an image captured by the imaging device and determine if the retroreflector is damaged or missing or if there is dirt or debris covering the retroreflector.

4. The barcode reader of claim 1, comprising an imaging device having a field-of-view that encompasses a distal edge of the weigh platter.

5. The barcode reader of claim 1, wherein the light emission assembly emits the light from a distal edge of the weigh platter towards a proximal edge of the weigh platter and towards the light detection assembly.

6. The barcode reader of claim 1, wherein the light detection signal comprises a time-of-flight (TOF) of reflected light, the TOF of reflected light comprising the time one or more pulses of light are emitted by the light emission assembly to the time the at least a portion of the one or more pulses of light are reflected back to and detected by the light detection assembly, and a signal strength of reflected light, the first signal threshold comprises a calibration TOF for detecting an off-platter event and the second signal threshold range comprises a minimum signal strength for a corresponding TOF for detecting a maintenance event.

7. The barcode reader of claim 1, wherein the second signal threshold range is between 70% and 90% of a calibration signal.

8. The barcode reader of claim 1, wherein the predetermine period of time is at least 60 seconds.

9. The barcode reader of claim 1, wherein the second event comprises one or more of: providing a visual and/or audio alert, preventing the weigh platter from measuring a weight of an object placed on the weigh platter, and/or preventing communication with a point-of-sale station associated with the barcode reader.

10. The barcode reader of claim 1, wherein the controller is configured to: compare the light detection signal to a third signal threshold range; and execute a third event if the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined period of time, indicating a repair event, wherein a lowest value of the third signal threshold range is greater than the first signal threshold and a highest value of the third signal threshold is less than or equal to a lowest value of the second signal threshold range.

11. The barcode reader of claim 10, wherein the second event comprises providing a visual and/or audio alert and the third event comprises one or more of: preventing the weigh platter from measuring a weight of an object placed on the weigh platter, and/or preventing communication with a point-of-sale station associated with the barcode reader.

12. The barcode reader of claim 10, wherein the second signal threshold range is between 70% and 90% of a calibration signal and the third signal threshold range is between 50% and 70% of the calibration signal.

13. A method of monitoring a performance of an off-platter detection assembly of a barcode reader, comprising the steps of: emitting a light along a first lateral edge of a weigh platter of the barcode reader with a light emission assembly; receiving a light detection signal from a light detection assembly of the barcode reader at a controller of the barcode reader; comparing, with the controller, the light detection signal to a first signal threshold and a second signal threshold range; executing, with the controller, a first event if the light detection signal is less than the first signal threshold, indicating an off-platter event; and executing, with the controller, a second event if the light detection signal is within the second signal threshold range for a predetermined period of time, indicating a maintenance event, wherein a lowest value of the second signal threshold range is greater than the first signal threshold.

14. The method of claim 13, comprising the step of positioning a retroreflector at a distal edge of the weigh platter, wherein the light is emitted from a proximal edge of weigh platter towards the retroreflector and the light detection assembly detects the light reflected from the retroreflector.

15. The method of claim 14, comprising the steps of: receiving at the controller an image capture from an imaging device of the barcode reader, the imaging device having a field-of-view that

encompasses the retroreflector; and analyzing, with the controller, the image capture to determine if the retroreflector is damaged or missing or if there is dirt or debris covering the retroreflector.

16. The method of claim 13, comprising the steps of: receiving at the controller an image capture from an imaging device of the barcode reader, the imaging device having a field-of-view that encompasses a distal edge of the weigh platter; and analyzing, with the controller, the image capture to determine if there is a maintenance event.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein the light is emitted from a distal edge of the weigh platter towards a proximal edge of the weigh platter and the light detection assembly.

18. The method of claim 13, wherein the light detection signal comprises a time-of-flight (TOF) of reflected light, the TOF of reflected light comprising the time one or more pulses of light are emitted by the light emission assembly to the time the at least a portion of the one or more pulses of light are reflected back to and detected by the light detection assembly, and a signal strength of reflected light, the first signal threshold comprises a calibration TOF for detecting an off-platter event and the second signal threshold range comprises a minimum signal strength for a corresponding TOF for detecting a maintenance event.

19. The method of claim 13, wherein the second signal threshold range is between 70% and 90% of a calibration signal.

20. The method of claim 13, wherein the predetermine period of time is at least 60 seconds.

21. The method of claim 13, wherein the second event comprises one or more of: providing a visual and/or audio alert, preventing the weigh platter from measuring a weight of an object placed on the weigh platter, and/or preventing communication with a point-of-sale station associated with the barcode reader.

22. The method of claim 13, comprising the steps of: comparing, with the controller, the light detection signal to a third signal threshold range; and executing, with the controller, a third event if the light detection signal is within the third signal threshold range for the predetermined period of time, indicating a repair event, wherein a lowest value of the third signal threshold range is greater than the first signal threshold and a highest value of the third signal threshold is less than or equal to a lowest value of the second signal threshold range.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the second event comprises providing a visual and/or audio alert and the third event comprises one or more of: preventing the weigh platter from measuring a weight of an object placed on the weigh platter, and/or preventing communication with a point-of-sale station associated with the barcode reader.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein the second signal threshold range is between 70% and 90% of a calibration signal and the third signal threshold range is between 50% and 70% of the calibration signal.