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In line air filtration and purification apparatus

Abstract

A method and apparatus for an inline air purification system including a housing, a high-velocity air flow guide, a filter assembly, and a fan.

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Background/Summary

PRIORITY OF INVENTION (1) This application is a continuation of and claims priority to application Ser. No. 16/813,067, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,674,703 which is a continuation of application Ser. No. 15/633,370, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 10,584,885 on Mar. 10, 2020 which is a Continuation of and claims priority to application Ser. No. 13/836,401, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 9,689,580 on Jun. 27, 2017, and is further a Continuation in Part and claims priority of application Ser. No. 11/098,202, filed Apr. 4, 2005, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 8,123,836 on Feb. 28, 2012.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

(1) The present disclosure relates generally to inline air filtration and purification, and more particularly, to a method and apparatus for processing air moving in a duct of an HVAC system. (2) Although certain example methods and apparatuses have been described herein, the scope of coverage of this patent is not limited thereto. On the contrary, this patent covers all embodiments and modifications falling within the scope of the appended claims either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION AND PRIOR ART

(3) Concern over air quality has triggered some developments in the area of indoor air quality improvement and/or control. Such developments have typically resulted in the production of various types of air processing systems including air filtration systems. Air filtration systems are

sometimes differentiated according to air filtering capabilities and may include air filtration devices designed to be integrated within a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, or local or unitary air filtration devices. Air may include air filtration devices designed to be integrated within a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, or local or unitary air filtration devices. Air filtration devices configured to be integrated with HVAC systems (i.e., integrated air filtration devices) are typically capable of filtering large amounts of ambient air such as, for example, an amount of ambient air that fills a warehouse, an office building, an apartment building, a house, an entertainment hall, etc. In contrast, local or unitary air filtration devices are typically configured to filter an amount of ambient air associated with a local area such as, for example, an office, a bedroom, a bathroom, etc. The equipment described here is for use in an HVAC system.

(4) Air filters in existing air filtration devices maybe inefficiently used because of the angle at which ambient air enters and is drawn through the air filters. In particular, in some cases only a relatively small area or space of an air filter is used effectively to trap particles while the rest of the air filter remains unused. As a result, the maintenance cost of air filtration devices may increase because air filters may be prematurely replaced and/or air flow throughput may decrease because the air filtration devices may be frequently turned off for cleaning of the air filters.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- (1) FIG. 1 depicts an example air processing system configured in an existing system.
- (2) FIG. 2 depicts a front view of a receiving surface of a filter assembly of the example air processing system of FIG. 1.
- (3) FIG. 3 depicts an example of a high-velocity air processing system configured in accordance with the teachings disclosed herein.
- (4) FIG. 4 depicts a front view of a receiving surface of a filter assembly of the example high-velocity air processing system of FIG. 3.
- (5) FIG. 5 is a block diagram of an exemplary processor system that may be used to implement the method and apparatus described herein.
- (6) FIG. 6 depicts an example of a high-velocity air processing system incorporated into an HVAC duct in accordance with the teachings disclosed herein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

(7) In general, a method and apparatus for processing air flowing in an HVAC system are disclosed herein. An example apparatus for processing air includes a duct, a housing, a filter assembly, a fan, and a high-velocity air flow guide. The filter assembly includes one or more filtering elements configured to generate filtered air based on ambient air in a chamber of the housing. The fan is configured to draw part of the air flowing through the duct into a chamber and through the filter assembly to generate processed air. The high-velocity air flow guide includes an upstanding portion and a support portion having a first portion and a second portion. In particular, the first portion is configured to form a passage within the housing, and the second portion is configured to divert the ambient air from the passage to the chamber. The second portion is configured to accelerate the air flow from a first speed to a second speed into the chamber prior to the fan drawing the ambient air from the chamber through the filter assembly. Thus, a cross section view of the air flow from the chamber is substantially the same as the surface area of the receiving portion of the filter assembly. By distributing a volume of ambient air over a greater portion of the front of the filter assembly, the air filters of the filter assembly are used in a relatively efficient manner, and the maintenance cost of the filter assembly may be reduced.

(8) Only a part of the air flow in the duct is processed. The remainder of the air flow bypasses the housing, guide, chamber, filter, and fan. This bypass air flows directly to the primary fan or blower

in the HVAC system. The processed air rejoins and mixes with the by passed air. Because the air mixes, substantially all of the air in the HVAC system is ultimately processed through the filtration system as the air in the system recirculates. Because only a part of the airflow is processed, the primary fan is not starved of air. The two flows can be balanced to optimize filtration while insuring that problems that might result from starving the primary fan or blower are avoided. For example, a combustion or cooling unit in the HVAC will be supplied with adequate flow to avoid over heating or a reduction in cooling.

(9) Referring to FIG. 1, an air processing system **100** configured in a known manner typically includes a housing **110**, an air flow guide **120**, a filter assembly **130**, and a fan **140**. In general, the air processing system **100** receives ambient air from an intake vent **150** of the housing **110** into a passage **160**. The air flow guide **120** is configured to divert or guide the ambient air through the passage **160** and into a chamber **170** of the housing **110**. The filter assembly **130** includes one or more air filters **122**, **124**, and **126**, to filter the ambient air from the chamber **170**. The fan **140** draws the ambient air from the chamber **170** into the filter assembly **130** via a receiving surface **180** of the filter assembly **130**. Typically, the fan **140** immediately draws the ambient air from the passage **160** into the filter assembly **130** in a direction generally indicated by arrows **190**. The air flow indicated by the arrows **190** does not permit the chamber **170** fill with ambient air prior to the fan **140** drawing the ambient air through the filter assembly **130**.

(10) Turning to FIG. 2 as an example, the ambient air is substantially filtered through a lower-center portion **210** of the receiving surface **180** of the filter assembly **130**. The upper, left, and right portions, generally shown as **220**, **230**, and **240**, respectively, of the receiving surface **180** are substantially unused. Thus, each of the one or more filters of the filter assembly **130** traps contaminants and, thus, becomes clogged in the lower-center portion **210**.

(11) Turning now to FIG. 3, a high velocity air processing system **300** configured in accordance with the teachings of the present disclosure is illustrated. The high-velocity air processing system **300** includes a housing **310**, a high-velocity air flow guide **320**, a filter assembly **330**, and a fan **340**. In general, the high-velocity air processing system **300** receives ambient air from an intake vent **350** of the housing **310** via a passage **360**. The intake vent **350** may be configured to operate in combination with the high-velocity air flow guide **320** as described in detail below by enabling ambient air to flow into a chamber **370** of the housing **310** in a direction generally indicated by arrows **990**. The intake vent **350** may include a grate, a screen, and/or a large particle filter (none of which are shown). In one implementation, a layered configuration for the intake vent **350** may include the grate as the outermost layer followed by the screen, and the large particular filter as the innermost layer. The grate may be impact resistant to prevent damage to the screen, the large particle filter, and the portions of the high-velocity air processing system **300** located within the housing **310**. The screen may be configured to prevent relatively large objects (e.g., paper, coins, food, etc.) from entering into the housing **310**. The large particle filter may be configured to prevent relatively large particles (e.g., dust, hair, lint, liquid, etc.) from entering the housing **310**.

(12) Although the housing **310** is shown as having a relatively cubical structure, any other geometry or structure may be used to implement the housing **310** including, for example, a pyramidal structure, a cylindrical structure, a trapezoidal structure, etc. In the illustrated example, however, the housing **310** is cubical in shape and includes a bottom panel **311A**, a plurality of upstanding side panels **311B**, and a top panel **311C**. The intake vent **350** is approximately centrally located in the bottom panel **311A**, thereby enabling air to be drawn into the chamber **370** through the bottom of the housing **310**. The housing **310** may include at least one vertical riser (not shown) upon which the housing **310** sits, such that the intake vent **350** is elevated above a support structure of the housing (e.g. a floor), to allow air to flow into the chamber **370** through the intake vent **350**.

(13) The high-velocity air flow guide **320** includes an upstanding portion **320A** extending upward from the bottom panel **311A**, and a support portion **320B** extending over and generally parallel to the face of the vent **350**. The support portion **320B** is adapted to support the filter assembly **330**. As

shown, the filter assembly **330** is centrally located in the housing **310** and rests upon the support portion **320B** of the high-velocity air flow guide **320**. While the filter assembly **330** is shown as extending less than the distance between the support portion **320B** and the top panel **311C**, the filter assembly **330** and each individual filter within the assembly **330** may extend any amount between the support portion **320B** and the top panel **311C**.

(14) Also located with the housing **310** is the fan **340**. The fan **340** is located to a side of the filter assembly **330** opposite the chamber **370**. The fan **340** includes an output vent **342** located in the top panel **311C**. The output vent **342** allows the fan **340** to draw air from the chamber **370** through the filter assembly **330** and exhaust out the vent **342**.

(15) The housing **310** may also include an access panel and/or a control panel (neither of which are shown). The access panel may be configured to enable access to the filter assembly **330** and/or the fan **340** within the housing **310** for maintenance, inspection, and/or any other purpose. The control panel may be mechanically and/or electrically coupled to the housing **310** and configured to provide data input and output capabilities for controlling and/or monitoring any aspect of the high-velocity air processing system **300**. For example, the control panel may be used to control operational states of the high-velocity air processing system **300**. In addition, the control panel may be used to access status information associated with operations and/or status of the high-velocity air processing system **300**.

(16) The support portion **320B** of the high-velocity air flow guide **320** (e.g., an air flow guide) includes a first portion **322** and a second portion **324**. The high-velocity air flow guide **320** may be implemented using plastic, metal, and/or other suitable material. The first portion **322** is configured to receive ambient air from the intake vent **350** (i.e., an intake structure) and form the passage **360** in conjunction with the intake vent **350**. The second portion **324** is configured to accelerate the ambient air from the passage **360** into a chamber **370** of the housing **310** to generate a high-velocity air flow in a direction generally indicated by the arrows **990**. In particular, the second portion **324** diverts or guides the ambient air into the chamber **370** so that the ambient air is generally evenly distributed relative to a receiving surface **380** of the filter assembly **330** as the fan **340** draws the ambient air from the chamber **370** through the filter assembly **330**. The second portion **324** may be, for example, a radial portion or curved lip to accelerate the ambient air into the chamber **370** in the manner shown and described. For example, the air traveling through the passage **360** may accelerate over the radial second portion **324** so that the speed of the air after the radial second portion **324** is greater than the speed of the air in the passage **360**.

(17) Referring now to FIG. 4, in this example, the second portion **324** diverts or guides the ambient from the passage **360** into the chamber **370** so that more area of the receiving surface **380** of the filter assembly **330** is used. By distributing the ambient air more evenly throughout the receiving surface **380**, the second portion **324** increases air flow throughput. In contrast to the receiving surface **180** shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 for example, the second portion **324** diverts ambient air from the passage **360** and accelerates air flow of the ambient air into the chamber **370** prior to the fan **340** drawing the ambient air through the filter assembly **330**. Thus, the time between filter replacements or cleanings may be extended. For example, the filter assembly **330** may be rated for operation based on an amount of time or a volume of air that is processed. In particular, the filter assembly **330** may be rated to operate for a predetermined amount of time (at a constant flow) before needing to be replaced or cleaned. Alternatively, the filter assembly **330** may be rated to operate for a predetermined total volume of air before needing to be replaced or cleaned. By increasing the life of the filter assembly **330**, maintenance costs may be reduced.

(18) Although the high-velocity air flow guide **320** is depicted in FIG. 3 as a single, integrated structure, the upstanding portion **320A** and the support portion **320B** including the first portion **322** and the second portion **324** may be separate structures operatively coupled to each other. For example, the second portion **324** may be a separate structure, adjustably coupled to the first portion **322** so that the second portion **324** may be adjusted to increase/decrease the second air flow speed.

For instance, the second portion **324** may be flexibly or pivotally attached to the first portion **322**.

(19) The filter assembly **330** may include a plurality of air filter elements, generally shown as a first filter **332**, a second filter **334**, and a third filter **336** to process the ambient air from the chamber **370**. For example, the first filter **332** may be a pre-filter, the second filter **334** may be a High Efficiency Particulate Accumulator (HEPA) filter, and the third filter **336** may be a charcoal filter. In particular, the first filter **332** may be an electrostatic filter or a pleated filter having antimicrobial properties. The first filter **332** may be used to pre-filter the ambient air that is drawn into the housing **310** via the intake vent **350** to remove relatively large pollutants or particles (e.g., dust, lint, etc.) from the ambient air. The HEPA filter used to implement the second filter **334** may be used to capture many bacteria, viruses, allergens (e.g., pollens, spores, smoke, etc.), and other relatively small organisms or particles that may be found in ambient air. The charcoal filter used to implement the third filter **336** may be used to remove volatile organic compounds (VOC)(e.g., certain chemicals, gases, etc.) and odors from the ambient air.

(20) Although the filter assembly **330** is depicted in FIG. **3** to include three filters, the filter assembly **330** may include more or fewer filters. Further, the illustrated filter assembly **330** is positioned so that the receiving surface **380** of the filter assembly **330** is substantially perpendicular relative to the intake vent **350**. That is, the receiving surface **380** is parallel to a plane that is substantially perpendicular to the intake vent **350**, in this manner, the ambient air is drawn into the housing **310** by the fan **340** via the intake vent **350** in a direction generally indicated by arrows **990**. Alternatively, the filter assembly **330** may be skewed at an angle relative to the intake vent **350**. For example, the receiving surface **380** may be parallel to a plane that intersects the intake vent **350** at an angle other than perpendicular. Further, one filter of the filter assembly **320** may be disposed in a first position relative to the intake vent **350** and another filter of the filter assembly **330** may be disposed in a second position relative to the intake vent **350**.

(21) For example, the first filter **332** may be skewed at an angle relative to the intake vent **350**, whereas the second filter **334** may be substantially perpendicular relative to the intake vent **350**.

(22) The fan **340** may be a squirrel cage fan, or any other type of fan configured to draw ambient air from the intake vent **350** into the housing **310** through the filter assembly **330** and push or exhaust processed air out of the housing **310** through the vent **342**. The fan **340** may be a variable speed fan communicatively coupled to and controlled by an information processing system **390** via a link **392**. For example, the speed of the fan **340** may be controlled based on information received by the information processing system **390**.

(23) The information processing system **390** may be implemented using any processing system, including, by way of example, a computer, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a processor system or other suitable device. In this example, the information processing system **390** is a processor system **2000** illustrated in FIG. **5** and configured to control and/or monitor operations of the high-velocity air processing system **300**. The information processing system **390** may be communicatively coupled to the control panel (not shown) and configured to receive commands entered via the control panel by a person, in addition, the information processing system **390** may be configured to display information via the control panel, or other suitable display.

(24) The method and apparatus disclosed herein may be integrated within devices such as, for example, a kiosk, an information booth, an automated teller machine, a public telephone, an advertisement apparatus, a computer terminal, etc. to process ambient air.

(25) FIG. **5** is a block diagram of an example processor system **2000** adapted to be implemented as the information processing system **390**. The processor system **2000** may be, for example, a desktop computer, a personal computer, a dedicated computer, a laptop computer, a notebook computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a server, an Internet appliance or any other type of computing device.

(26) In this example, the processor system **2000** illustrated in FIG. **5** includes a chipset **2010**, which includes a memory controller **2012** and an input/output (I/O) controller **2014**. As is well known, a

chipset typically provides memory and I/O management functions, as well as a plurality of general purpose and/or special purpose registers, timers, etc. that are accessible or used by a processor **2020**. The processor **2020** is implemented using one or more processors. The processor **2020** includes a cache **2022**, which may be implemented using a first-level unified cache (L1), a second-level unified cache (L2), a third-level unified cache (L3), and/or any other suitable structures to store data.

(27) As is conventional, the memory controller **2012** performs functions that enable the processor **2020** to access and communicate with a main memory **2030** including a volatile memory **2032** and a non-volatile memory **2034** via a bus **2040**. The volatile memory **2032** may be implemented by Synchronous Dynamic Random Access Memory (SDRAM). Dynamic Random Access Memory (DRAM), RAMBUS Dynamic Random Access Memory (RDRAM), and/or any other type of random access memory device. The non-volatile memory **2034** may be implemented using flash memory, Read Only Memory (ROM), Electrically Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory (EEPROM), and/or any other desired type of memory device.

(28) The processor system **2000** also includes an interface circuit **2050** that is coupled to the bus **2040**. The interface circuit **2050** may be implemented using any type of well known interface standard such as an Ethernet interface, a universal serial bus (USB), a third generation input/output interface (**3010**) interface, and/or any other suitable type of interface. Additionally, the interface **2050** may couple the processing system to the fan **240** via the link **392**.

(29) One or more input devices **2060** are connected to the interface circuit **2050**. The input device(s) **2060** permit a user to enter data and commands into the processor **2020**. For example, the input device(s) **2060** may be implemented by a keyboard, a mouse, a touch-sensitive display, a track pad, a track ball, an isopoint, and/or a voice recognition system.

(30) One or more output devices **2070** are also connected to the interface circuit **2050**. For example, the output device(s) **2070** may be implemented by display devices (e.g., a light emitting display (LED), a liquid crystal display (LCD), a cathode ray tube (CRT) display, a printer and/or speakers). The interface circuit **2050**, thus, typically includes, among other things, a graphics driver card.

(31) The processor system **2000** also includes one or more mass storage devices **2080** to store software and/or data. Examples of such mass storage device(s) **2080** include floppy disks and drives, hard disk drives, compact disks and drives, and digital versatile disks (DVD) and drives.

(32) The interface circuit **2050** also includes a communication device such as a modem or a network interface card to facilitate exchange of data with external computers via a network. The communication link between the processor system **2000** and the network may be any type of network connection such as an Ethernet connection, a digital subscriber line (DSL), a telephone line, a cellular telephone system, a coaxial cable, etc.

(33) Access to the input device(s) **2060**, the output device(s) **2070**, the mass storage device(s) **2080** and/or the network is typically controlled by the I/O controller **2014** in a conventional manner. In particular, the I/O controller **2014** performs functions that enable the processor **2020** to communicate with the input device(s) **2060**, the output device(s) **2070**, the mass storage device(s) **2080** and/or the network via the bus **2040** and the interface circuit **2050**.

(34) While the components shown in FIG. 5 are depicted as separate blocks within the processor system **2000**, the functions performed by some of these blocks may be integrated within a single semiconductor circuit or may be implemented using two or more separate integrated circuits. For example, although the memory controller **2012** and the I/O controller **2014** are depicted as separate blocks within the chipset **2010**, the memory controller **2012** and the I/O controller **2014** may be integrated within a single semiconductor circuit.

(35) In one example of operation, the processor system **2000** may control the speed of the fan **340** to process air through the air processing system **300**. For instance, the processor system **2000** may start the fan **340**, causing air to be drawn into the system **300**. The system **300** receives the ambient

air from the intake vent **350** of the housing **310** wherein the ambient air is diverted by the air flow guide **320** in the chamber **370** through the passage **360**. The air flow guide **320** accelerates the air flow from a first air flow speed to a greater second air flow speed as the second portion **324** of the support portion **320B** diverts the air into the chamber **370**. The second portion **324** diverts or guides the ambient air from the passage **360** into the chamber **370** so that more area of the receiving surface **380** of the filter assembly **330** is used. For instance, a cross sectional view of the air flow from the chamber **370** onto the filter assembly **330** is substantially the same as the area of the receiving surface **380** of the filter assembly **330**. From there, the ambient air travels through the filter assembly **330**, into the fan **340**, and exhausts out the vent **342** as processed and filtered air.

(36) FIG. **6** shows a high-velocity air processing system **600** incorporated into a duct **680** of an HVAC system. The duct walls **681** enclose processing system **600**. Air enters at the top of FIG. **6**. A housing **610** has walls **611A**, **611B**, and **611C**. The housing supports a fan **640** and filters **632**, **634** and **636** to process air from chamber **670**. As with FIG. **3**, the filters may be of different types, and fewer or more filters may be used. The housing, as before, may be differently shaped depending, for example, on duct size or shape and the location of processing system **600** in duct **680**.

(37) Housing wall **611B** separates the airflow being processed from the remaining air, which flows through bypass **672**, continuing to a primary HVAC fan that is not shown. Duct wall **611B** terminates at a point past the outlet of fan **640**. Processed air is free at that point to mix with air passing through bypass **672**.

(38) A high-velocity air flow guide **620** may be formed with housing wall **611A**. Guide **620** and wall **611A** can also be separate structures. Guide **620** includes a first portion **622** and a second portion **624**. First portion **622**, cooperating with duct wall **611B**, causes the incoming air flow to turn so that it can enter a chamber **670**. Second portion **624** accelerates the air flow into chamber **670** so the airflow is distributed approximately as shown by arrows **690**. As in the case of FIG. **3**, the airflow is delivered to the face of first filter **632** at approximately a right angle. Filter efficiency is enhanced as described in the discussion of FIG. **3** and FIG. **4**. Portions **622** and **624** can be separate structures. For example, second portion **624** could be hinged so that it is adjustable.

(39) Filters **632**, **634**, and **636** are shown as approximately parallel to the path of incoming air. As with FIG. **3**, the filters may be oriented at another angle with respect to the airflow, or the filters may be at angles which differ from each other.

(40) Fan **640** is supported by any convenient means. It draws air from filters **632**, **634** and **636**, through a plenum **638** in housing **610**. Fan **640** exhausts air between plenum **638** and housing wall **611B**. Once wall **611B** ends, processed air mixes with the balance of the air traveling through bypass **672**. Mixing and recirculation of air in the HVAC system causes all the air in the system to be process by processing system **610**.

(41) The processor system of FIG. **5** may also be used with the system of FIG. **6**.

Claims

1. An HVAC system for providing inline air purification for an air stream comprising: a ductwork section having a given air flow cross-sectional area for drawing an air stream in a first direction therethrough; a diverter for diverting a first portion of the air stream in at least a second direction that is substantially orthogonal to the first direction, the second portion of the air stream remaining flowing in the first direction; a filter assembly including three filtering elements and a fan for drawing the first portion of the air stream with the fan through the three filtering elements configured to receive the first portion of the airstream from a chamber of a housing located with the ductwork section, the three filtering elements being substantially orthogonal to the second direction, the three filtering elements including at least one high efficiency particulate accumulator filter; and a bypass duct for receiving the second portion of the air stream such that the second portion of the air stream is not drawn by the filter assembly fan through the filtering elements,

whereby the bypass duct and the fan minimizes the pressure drop occurring as a result of drawing the first portion of the air stream through the three filter elements of the filter assembly.

2. An HVAC system for processing an air stream comprising: a ductwork section having a given air flow cross-sectional area for drawing an air stream in a first direction therethrough; a high-velocity air flow guide disposed within the ductwork section for diverting a first portion of the air stream in a second direction that is substantially orthogonal to the first direction, the second portion of the air stream remaining flowing in the first direction, the high-velocity air flow guide comprising a first section, and a second, curved section; a filter assembly including three filtering elements and a fan for drawing the first portion of the air stream with the fan through the three filtering elements configured to receive the first portion of the airstream from a chamber of a housing located with the ductwork section, the three filtering elements being substantially orthogonal to the second direction, the three filtering elements including at least one charcoal filter; and a bypass duct for receiving the second portion of the air stream such that the second portion of the air stream is not drawn by the filter assembly fan through the three filtering elements, whereby the bypass duct and the fan minimizes the pressure drop occurring as a result of drawing the first portion of the air stream through the three filter elements of the filter assembly.
