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System, method, and apparatus for bubble detection in a fluid line

Abstract

An apparatus for detecting at least one condition of interest relating to a tube, e.g. the presence of an air bubble. In some embodiments, the sensor includes antennas, a split-ring resonator, a frequency generator capable of generating frequencies in the microwave range, and a detection component. The detection component may estimate at least one parameter of received microwave energy in order to determine if a condition of interest exists.

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Background/Summary

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS (1) This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/157,285 entitled Method for Bubble Detection in a Fluid Line Using a Split Ring Resonator, filed on Oct. 11, 2018, now U.S. Publication No. U.S. 2019/0041362 published Feb. 7, 2019, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/629,933, entitled: System, Method, and Apparatus for Bubble Detection in a Fluid Line Using a Split-Ring Resonator, filed on Jun. 22, 2017, now U.S. Pat. No. 10,126,267, issued Nov. 13, 2018, which is a divisional application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/341,207, entitled: System, Method, and Apparatus for Bubble Detection in a Fluid Line Using a Split-Ring Resonator, filed on Jul. 25, 2014, now U.S. Pat. No. 9,719,964, issued on Aug. 1, 2017, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 61/860,398 filed Jul. 31, 2013 and entitled System, Method, and Apparatus for Bubble Detection in a Fluid Line Using a Split-Ring Resonator, which are each hereby incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND

Relevant Field

(1) The present disclosure relates to detecting the presence or absence of materials with differing dielectric properties or a material change. More particularly, the present disclosure relates to a system, method and apparatus for said detection. Some embodiments relate to detection of air bubbles in a fluid line using a split-ring resonator. e.g., air bubble detection in an intravenous fluid line using a split-ring resonator. Some embodiments relate to the detection of the coagulation time of blood samples using a split-ring resonator.

Description of Related Art

(2) Providing patient care in a hospital generally necessitates the interaction of numerous professionals and caregivers (e.g., doctors, nurses, pharmacists, technicians, nurse practitioners, etc.) and any number of medical devices/systems needed for treatment of a given patient. Despite the existence of systems intended to facilitate the care process, such as those incorporating electronic medical records ("EMR") and computerized provider order entry ("CPOE"), the process of providing comprehensive care to patients including ordering and delivering medical treatments, such as medications, is associated with a number of non-trivial issues. One such medical treatment involves the insertion of fluid into a patient. The insertion of fluid into the patient may be accomplished by using a bag of fluid that is positioned above a patient and an intravenous fluid from the bag to a needle that is inserted into the patient. The tubing between the bag and the patient may include various devices, such as an infusion pump to control to flow of fluid between the bag and the patient. Another device may be an air detector.

(3) Detection of air bubbles during the insertion of fluid into a patient may be desirable for a number of reasons. Depending on the volume of air and the insertion site, insertion of air into a patient can cause a fatal air embolism. Additionally, a volume of air which is inserted into a patient

is inserted in place of an equal volume of the fluid. This may also cause serious concern with some medicaments. For this reason, it is desirable to monitor a fluid line for the presence of air.

(4) Known solutions monitor for air in a fluid line often utilize ultrasonic sensors or sensors monitoring the electric impedance of the fluid line. While such sensors may detect the presence of an air bubble in a fluid, these sensors tend to be expensive. For some applications, such sensors are prohibitively expensive. Additionally, the resolution of these sensors is generally less than ideal. A need therefore exists for a sensor which may accurately and consistently detect the presence of an air bubble in a fluid line at lower cost. Additionally, a need exists for a sensor with resolution high enough to detect the presence of smaller volumes of air. An air bubble sensor using at least one split ring resonator satiates this need by providing a higher resolution sensor at a price approximately ten times lower than conventional sensor technologies.

SUMMARY

(5) In accordance with one embodiment of the present disclosure a system for detecting an at least one condition of interest relating to a tube may comprise a split-ring resonator component configured to interface with the tube. The system may comprise a detection component operatively coupled to the split-ring resonator component. The detection component may be configured to detect the at least one condition of interest.

(6) In some embodiments, a system for detecting at least one condition of interest relating to a tube may comprise a split-ring resonator component including a split-ring resonator. In some embodiments, the detection component may detect at least one condition of interest by estimating at least one parameter corresponding to the split-ring resonator. In some embodiments, the at least one parameter may be selected from the group consisting of a group delay caused by an inner volume of the tube, a propagation delay caused by the inner volume of the tube, a group delay caused by the split-ring resonator, a phase shift caused by the split-ring resonator, a resonance frequency of the split-ring resonator, a phase angle of a test signal applied the split-ring resonator, an amplitude of the test signal applied to the split-ring resonator, a frequency response of the split-ring resonator, a frequency response within a predetermined frequency range of the split-ring resonator, a Q of the split-ring resonator, a bandwidth of a split-ring resonator, a peak of a bandwidth response of the split-ring resonator, an anti-resonance of the split-ring resonator, a phase response of the split-ring resonator, an impedance of the split-ring resonator, a propagation delay of split-ring resonant, an S11 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S12 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S21 parameter of the split-ring resonator, and an S22 parameter of the split-ring resonator. In some embodiments, the detection component may apply a test signal to the split-ring resonator to estimate the at least one parameter. The split-ring resonator may include at least one gap disposed adjacent to the tube and at least one parameter may correspond to an impedance of the at least one gap. In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator may include at least one gap, and at least one parameter may correspond to dielectric loading of the at least one gap. In some embodiments, the detection component may detect at least one condition of interest by detecting a change in the at least one parameter.

(7) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may include a split-ring resonator comprising a conductor ring with a gap defined therein. The conductor ring may be disposed on a dielectric backing. In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may include a split ring resonator comprising at least one conductor defining at least one gap. The at least one conductor may include one or more capacitive extensions.

(8) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may include a split-ring resonator comprising a first conductor defining a first gap. The split-ring resonator may include a second conductor disposed adjacent to an inner periphery of the first conductor. The second conductor may define a second gap. The first conductor and said second conductor may be concentric and define a common center point. In some embodiments, The center of the first gap is at a radial angle from the common center that is about 180 degrees from the center of the second gap.

- (9) In some embodiments, at least one of the at least one condition of interest is selected from a group consisting of: the tube is full, the tube is empty, an air bubble exists in the tube, an air bubble of an estimated volume exists in the tube, the tube is not present, the tube is improperly inserted, the tube is properly inserted, the tube is primed, and the tube is unprimed.
- (10) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may comprise a transmitting antenna configured to transmit microwave energy. The split-ring resonator component may include a receiving antenna configured to receive the microwave energy. The split-ring resonator component may include a split-ring resonator positioned between the transmitting and receiving antennas and positioned adjacent to the tube. The split-ring resonator may be adapted to vary at least one parameter of the microwave energy in response to the existence of the at least one condition of interest.
- (11) In some embodiments, the transmitting antenna, the receiving antenna, and the split-ring resonator may be adapted to encourage a tunneling effect between the transmitting and receiving antennas when the microwave energy is transmitted from the transmitting antenna to the receiving antenna. In some embodiments, at least one of the transmitting antenna and the receiving antenna is a loop antenna.
- (12) In accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure an apparatus may comprise a raceway configured to receive a tube. The apparatus may also include a shield configured to at least partially shield the raceway. The apparatus may include at least one split-ring resonator disposed within the shield and adjacent to the raceway. The apparatus may include a first antenna disposed within the shield and a second antenna disposed within the shield.
- (13) In some embodiments, the apparatus may further comprise a microwave generating circuit coupled to the first antenna. The microwave generating circuit may be configured to generate microwave energy for transmission from the first antenna. A receiver circuit coupled to the second antenna may also be included. The microwave receiver circuit may be configured to receive the microwave energy. In some embodiments, a bubble detecting circuit operatively coupled to the microwave generating circuit and the receiver circuit may be included to compare the microwave energy from the microwave generating circuit to the microwave energy received from the receiver circuit to detect a bubble within the tube.
- (14) In some embodiments, the apparatus may further comprise a circuit board disposed on an outer surface of the shield. The circuit board may comprise the microwave generating circuit, the receiver circuit, and the bubble detecting circuit. In some embodiments, the bubble detecting circuit may detect the bubble by using the microwave energy to determine at least one of a group delay caused by an inner volume of the tube, a propagation delay caused by the inner volume of the tube, a group delay caused by the split-ring resonator, a phase shift caused by the split-ring resonator, a resonance frequency of the split-ring resonator, a phase angle of a test signal applied the split-ring resonator, an amplitude of the test signal applied to the split-ring resonator, a frequency response of the split-ring resonator, a frequency response within a predetermined frequency range of the split-ring resonator, a Q of the split-ring resonator, a bandwidth of a split-ring resonator, a peak of a bandwidth response of the split-ring resonator, an anti-resonance of the split-ring resonator, a phase response of the split-ring resonator, an impedance of the split-ring resonator, a propagation delay of split-ring resonant, an S11 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S12 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S21 parameter of the split-ring resonator, and an S22 parameter of the split-ring resonator.
- (15) In accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure, a method for detecting a bubble may comprise generating microwave energy. The method may comprise transmitting the microwave energy from an antenna. The method may comprise applying the transmitted microwave energy to a split-ring resonator said split ring resonator adjacent a tube. The method may comprise receiving the microwave energy from the antenna and the split-ring resonator. The method may comprise detecting a bubble adjacent to the split-ring resonator using the received

microwave energy.

(16) In accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure a system may comprise a split-ring resonator component configured to interface with a raceway. The system may also comprise a detection component operatively coupled to the split-ring resonant component. The detection component may be configured to detect a state of the raceway. The detection component may be configured to detect a state of the raceway including at least one of an absence of a tube within the raceway, a presence of the tube within the raceway, a presence of the tube within the raceway having liquid wholly disposed therein, a presence of the tube within the raceway having liquid and a bubble disposed therein, and a presence of the tube within the raceway have no liquid disposed therein.

(17) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component includes a split-ring resonator. The split-ring resonator may include at least one capacitive extension. In some embodiments, the detection component may detect the state of the raceway by estimating at least one parameter corresponding to the split-ring resonator. The at least one parameter may be selected from the group consisting of a group delay caused by an inner volume of the tube, a propagation delay caused by the inner volume of the tube, a group delay caused by the split-ring resonator, a phase shift caused by the split-ring resonator, a resonance frequency of the split-ring resonator, a phase angle of a test signal applied the split-ring resonator, an amplitude of the test signal applied to the split-ring resonator, a frequency response of the split-ring resonator, a frequency response within a predetermined frequency range of the split-ring resonator, a Q of the split-ring resonator, a bandwidth of a split-ring resonator, a peak of a bandwidth response of the split-ring resonator, an anti-resonance of the split-ring resonator, a phase response of the split-ring resonator, an impedance of the split-ring resonator, a propagation delay of split-ring resonant, an S11 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S12 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S21 parameter of the split-ring resonator, and an S22 parameter of the split-ring resonator.

(18) In some embodiments, the detection component may apply a test signal to the split-ring resonator to estimate the at least one parameter. In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator may include at least one gap disposed adjacent to the tube. The at least one parameter corresponds to an impedance of the at least one gap. The split-ring resonator may include at least one gap. The at least one parameter may correspond to dielectric loading of the at least one gap. The detection component may detect the state of the raceway by detecting a change in the least one parameter.

(19) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may include a split-ring resonator comprising a conductor ring defining a gap. The conductor ring may be disposed on a dielectric backing.

(20) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may include a split-ring resonator comprising a first conductor defining a first gap. The split-ring resonator may comprise a second conductor disposed adjacent to an inner periphery of the first conductor. The second conductor may define a second gap. The first conductor and second conductor may be concentric and define a common center point. In some embodiments the center of the first gap may be at a radial angle from the common center that is about 180 degrees from the center of the second gap from the common center. In some embodiments at least one of the first conductor and second conductor may include at least one capacitive extension.

(21) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may comprise a transmitting antenna configured to transmit microwave energy. In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may comprise a receiving antenna configured to receive the microwave energy. In some embodiments, a split-ring resonator may be positioned between the transmitting and receiving antennas and positioned adjacent to the tube. The split-ring resonator may be adapted to vary at least one parameter of the microwave energy depending on the state of the raceway.

(22) In some embodiments, the transmitting antenna, the receiving antenna, and the split-ring resonator may be adapted to encourage tunneling between the transmitting and receiving antennas

when the microwave energy is transmitted from the transmitting antenna to the receiving antenna. In some embodiments at least one of the transmitting antenna and the receiving antenna may be a loop antenna.

(23) In accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure a system for detecting an at least one condition of interest relating to at least one material of interest may comprise a split-ring resonator component configured to interface with the at least one material of interest. The system may also comprise a detection component operatively coupled to the split-ring resonator component. The detection component may be configured to detect the at least one condition of interest. The split-ring resonator component may include a split-ring resonator. The detection component may detect the at least one condition of interest by estimating at least one parameter corresponding to the split-ring resonator. The at least one parameter is selected from the group consisting of a group delay caused by an inner volume of a tube, a propagation delay caused by the inner volume of a tube, a group delay caused by the split-ring resonator, a phase shift caused by the split-ring resonator, a resonance frequency of the split-ring resonator, a phase angle of a test signal applied the split-ring resonator, an amplitude of the test signal applied to the split-ring resonator, a frequency response of the split-ring resonator, a frequency response within a predetermined frequency range of the split-ring resonator, a Q of the split-ring resonator, a bandwidth of a split-ring resonator, a peak of a bandwidth response of the split-ring resonator, an anti-resonance of the split-ring resonator, a phase response of the split-ring resonator, an impedance of the split-ring resonator, a propagation delay of split-ring resonant, an S11 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S12 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S21 parameter of the split-ring resonator, and an S22 parameter of the split-ring resonator.

(24) In some embodiments the detection component may apply a test signal to the split-ring resonator to estimate the at least one parameter. The split-ring resonator may include at least one gap disposed adjacent to the at least one material of interest, wherein the at least one parameter corresponds to an impedance of the at least one gap. The split-ring resonator may include at least one gap. The at least one parameter may correspond to dielectric loading of the at least one gap. In some embodiments, the detection component may detect the at least one condition of interest by detecting a change in the at least one parameter.

(25) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may include a split-ring resonator comprising a conductor ring with a gap defined therein. The conductor ring may be disposed on a dielectric backing. In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may include a split ring resonator comprising at least one conductor defining at least one gap. The at least one conductor may include one or more capacitive extensions.

(26) The split-ring resonator component may include a split-ring resonator comprising a first conductor defining a first gap. The split-ring resonator may comprise a second conductor disposed adjacent to an inner periphery of the first conductor. The second conductor may define a second gap. The first conductor and said second conductor may be concentric and define a common center point. In some embodiments, the center of the first gap may be at a radial angle from the common center that may be about 180 degrees from the center of the second gap.

(27) In some embodiments, the split-ring resonator component may comprise a transmitting antenna configured to transmit microwave energy. The split-ring resonator component may comprise a receiving antenna configured to receive the microwave energy. The split-ring resonator component may comprise a split-ring resonator positioned between the transmitting and receiving antennas and positioned adjacent to the at least one material of interest. The split-ring resonator may be adapted to vary at least one parameter of the microwave energy in response to the existence of the at least one condition of interest.

(28) In some embodiments, the transmitting antenna, the receiving antenna, and the split-ring resonator may be adapted to encourage a tunneling effect between the transmitting and receiving antennas when the microwave energy is transmitted from the transmitting antenna to the receiving

antenna. The at least one of the transmitting antenna and the receiving antenna is a loop antenna.
(29) In some embodiments, the at least one condition of interest may relate to the coagulation time of a blood sample.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- (1) These and other aspects will become more apparent from the following detailed description of the various embodiments of the present disclosure with reference to the drawings wherein:
- (2) FIG. 1 shows block diagram of a system for infusing liquid in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (3) FIG. 2 shows a block diagram of an infusion site monitor of the system of FIG. 1 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (4) FIG. 3 shows a block diagram of a pump for infusing liquid of the system of FIG. 1 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (5) FIG. 4 shows a block diagram of a system for detecting a bubble within a fluid line in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (6) FIG. 5a shows a diagram of a system for detecting a bubble within a fluid line using two dipole antennas in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (7) FIG. 5b shows a diagram of a system for detecting a bubble within a fluid line using two loop antennas in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (8) FIG. 5c shows a diagram of a system for monitoring the coagulation of blood using two loop antennas in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (9) FIG. 6 shows an example split ring resonator in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (10) FIG. 7 shows a capacitor formed in a split of a split ring resonator in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (11) FIGS. 8-14 show a number of example split ring resonators in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (12) FIG. 15 shows an example transmitting antenna and an example receiving antenna in place on either side of a fluid line.
- (13) FIGS. 16-19 show an example of a housing for a split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (14) FIGS. 20 and 21 show an embodiment of another split ring resonator component housing in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (15) FIG. 22 shows an embodiment of the split ring resonator component housing of FIGS. 20 and 21 with an example split ring resonator, antennas, and energy couplers in place on the housing in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (16) FIG. 23 shows an unassembled example split ring resonator component having a split ring resonator component housing in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (17) FIG. 24 shows an assembled view of the example split ring resonator component having the split ring resonator component housing of FIG. 23 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (18) FIG. 25 shows an example PCB including two antennas in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (19) FIG. 26 shows an example PCB including two antennas being inserted into an example split ring resonator component housing in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (20) FIG. 27 shows an example schematic diagram of a system for detecting a bubble within a fluid line in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(21) FIG. **28** shows another example schematic diagram of a system for detecting a bubble within a fluid line in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(22) FIG. **29** shows yet another example schematic diagram of a system for detecting a bubble within a fluid line in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(23) FIG. **30** shows another example schematic diagram of a system for detecting a bubble within a fluid line in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(24) FIGS. **31-35** show a specific detailed example of the system of FIG. **34** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(25) FIG. **34** shows an alternate specific detailed example of the part of the system shown in FIG. **35** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(26) FIG. **35** depicts an example rectifier circuit for use in a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(27) FIG. **36** shows an example rectifier circuit with temperature compensation for use in a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(28) FIG. **37** shows an example schematic diagram of a ratio detector and moisture sensor for use in a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(29) FIG. **38** shows an example microstrip radial stub in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(30) FIG. **39** shows an example graph depicting the impedance over a range of frequencies for the microstrip radial stub of FIG. **38** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(31) FIG. **40** shows a specific detailed example of the microstrip radial stub shown in FIG. **38** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(32) FIG. **41** shows an example schematic microstrip coupler in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(33) FIG. **42** shows a specific example of a microstrip coupler and its specific geometry in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(34) FIG. **43** shows an example graph detailing the performance of the microstrip coupler of FIG. **42** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(35) FIG. **44** shows an example of part of a system for detecting a bubble which is configured to measure phase change in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(36) FIG. **45** shows another example of part of a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(37) FIG. **46** shows another example of part of a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(38) FIG. **47** shows another example of part of a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(39) FIG. **48** shows an example graph of the S21 parameter of an example split ring resonator component over a sweep of frequencies with an empty tube in the split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(40) FIG. **49** shows an example graph of the S21 parameter of the example split ring resonator component of FIG. **48** over a sweep of frequencies with a full tube in the split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(41) FIG. **50** shows an example graph illustrating the change in output voltage of an example rectifier in relation to the power of a signal received by a receiving antenna in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(42) FIG. **51** shows an example graph illustrating the power coupling at 4.12 GHz across an example SRR component with varying tube conditions in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

(43) FIG. **52** shows an example graph illustrating the the difference in output voltage of an air bubble sensor over bubble volume in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

- (44) FIG. 53 shows an approximate equivalent circuit of two example split ring resonators with specific capacitance and inductance values given reflecting those which would be generated in the presence of an empty tube in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (45) FIG. 54 shows an example graph illustrating the S21 parameter of the example circuit shown in FIG. 53 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (46) FIG. 55 shows an approximate equivalent circuit of two example split ring resonators with specific capacitance and inductance values given reflecting those which would be generated in the presence of a full tube in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (47) FIG. 56 shows an example graph illustrating the S21 parameter of the example circuit shown in FIG. 55 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (48) FIG. 57 shows an example graph depicting the amplitude and phase shift of received energy which was transmitted through an example split ring resonator component with an empty tube in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (49) FIG. 58 shows an example graph plotting the amplitude and phase shift of received energy which was transmitted through the same split ring resonator component in FIG. 57 with the tube full of fluid in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (50) FIG. 59 shows another example graph illustrating the amplitude of received energy which was transmitted through another example split ring resonator component when no tube was in place in the split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (51) FIG. 60 shows an example graph illustrating the amplitude of received energy which was transmitted through the example split ring resonator component of FIG. 59 when an empty tube was in place in the split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (52) FIG. 61 shows an example graph illustrating the amplitude of received energy which was transmitted through the example split ring resonator component in FIG. 59 when a full tube was in place in the split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (53) FIG. 62 shows an example graph illustrating the amplitude of received energy which was transmitted through the example split ring resonator component in FIG. 59 when a tube full of foam with dielectric properties mimicking those of a fluid with an air bubble was in place in the split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (54) FIG. 63 shows an example graph of energy transmission through an example split ring resonator component when a tube full of fluid was incorrectly seated in the split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (55) FIG. 64 shows an example graph of energy transmission through the example split ring resonator component in FIG. 63 when a tube full of fluid was correctly seated in the split ring resonator component in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (56) FIG. 65 shows an example of part of circuit which may be used for calibration purposes in a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (57) FIG. 66 shows an example of part of a circuit which may be used for calibration purposes in a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (58) FIG. 67 shows an example graph of a self test which may be performed by a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;
- (59) FIG. 68 shows an example graph illustrating the resonant frequencies of a tube which is filled with materials of varying dielectric properties in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure; and
- (60) FIG. 69 shows another example graph illustrating a self test which may be performed by a system for detecting a bubble in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- (61) FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of a system 1 for infusing fluid. System 1 in FIG. 1 includes

fluid reservoirs **2**, **3**, and **4** for infusing the fluid contained therein into a patient **5**. The fluid reservoirs **2**, **3**, and **4** may be gravity fed into drip chambers **7**, **8**, and **9**, respectively. The drip chambers **7**, **8**, and **9** are respectively fed into flow meters **10**, **11**, and **12**. From the flow meters **10**, **11**, and **12**, the fluid is fed into free-flow detectors **13**, **14**, and **15**, respectively.

(62) The system **1** in FIG. **1** also includes valves **16**, **17**, and **18**. Each of the valves **16**, **17**, and **18** are coupled respectively to free-flow detectors **13**, **14**, and **15**. Pumps **19**, **20**, and **21** receive fluid from the valves **16**, **17**, and **18**, and combine the fluid using a connector **22**. Fluid from the connector **22** is fed into an occlusion detector **23**. Fluid may then be fed into an air detector **24**. The occlusion detector **23** can detect when an occlusion exists within tubing of the system **1**. The air detector **24** detects if air is present in the tubing, e.g., when flowing towards the patient **5**. Prior to entering into an infusion site monitor **26**, the fluid passes through a valve **25**.

(63) The monitoring client **6**, in some embodiments, monitors operation of the system **1**. For example, when the monitoring client **6** receives notice an occlusion is detected by the occlusion detector **23** and/or a predetermined threshold of air is detected by the air detector **24** (e.g., a bubble), the monitoring client **6** may wirelessly communicate a signal to the valve **25** to shut-off fluid flow to the patient **5**.

(64) The monitoring client **6** may also remotely send a prescription to a pharmacy. The prescription may be a prescription for infusing a fluid using a fluid pump. The pharmacy may include one or more computers connected to a network, e.g., the internet, to receive the prescription and queue the prescription within the one or more computers. The pharmacy may use the prescription to compound the drug (e.g., using an automated compounding device coupled to the one or more computers or manually by a pharmacist viewing the queue of the one or more computers), pre-fill a fluid reservoir associated with an infusion pump, and/or program the infusion pump (e.g., a treatment regime is programmed into the infusion pump **19**) at the pharmacy in accordance with the prescription. The fluid reservoir **2** may be automatically filled by the automated compounding device and/or the infusion pump **19** may be automatically programmed by the automated compounding device. The automated compounding device may generate a barcode, RFID tag **29** and/or data. The information within the barcode, RFID tag **29**, and/or data may include the treatment regime, prescription, and/or patient information. The automated compounding device may: attach the barcode to the fluid reservoir **2** and/or the infusion pump **19**; attach the RFID tag **29** to the fluid reservoir **2** and/or the infusion pump **19**; and/or program the RFID tag **29**, or memory within the fluid reservoir **2** or the infusion pump **19** with the information or data. The data or information may be sent to a database (e.g., electronic medical records) that associates the prescription with the fluid reservoir **2** and/or the infusion pump **19**, e.g., using a serial number or other identifying information within the barcode, RFID tag **29**, or memory.

(65) The infusion pump **19** may have a scanner, e.g., an RFID interrogator that interrogates the RFID tag **29** or a barcode scanner that scans a barcode of the fluid reservoir **2**, to determine that it is the correct fluid within the fluid reservoir **2**, it is the correct fluid reservoir **2**, the treatment programmed into the infusion pump **19** corresponds to the fluid within the fluid reservoir **2** and/or the fluid reservoir **2** and infusion pump **19** are correct for the particular patient (e.g., as determined from a patient's barcode, RFID **27**, or other patient identification). For example, the infusion pump **19** may scan the RFID tag **29** of the fluid reservoir **2** and check if the serial number or fluid type encoded within the RFID tag **29** is the same as indicated by the programmed treatment within the infusion pump **19**. Additionally or alternatively, the infusion pump **19** may interrogate the RFID tag **29** of the fluid reservoir **2** for a serial number and the RFID tag **27** of the patient **5** for a patient serial number, and also interrogate the electronic medical records to determine if the serial number of the fluid reservoir **19** within the RFID tag **29** matches a patient's serial number within the RFID tag **27** as indicated by the electronic medical records. Additionally or alternatively, the monitoring client **6** may scan the RFID tag **29** of the fluid reservoir **2** and an RFID tag of the infusion pump **19** to determine that it is the correct fluid within the fluid reservoir **2**, it is the correct fluid reservoir **2**,

the treatment programmed into the infusion pump **19** corresponds to the fluid within the fluid reservoir **2**, and/or the fluid reservoir **2** and infusion pump **19** are correct for the particular patient (e.g., as determined from a patient's barcode, RFID tag **27**, electronic medical records, or other patient identification or information). Additionally or alternatively, the monitoring client **6** or the infusion pump **19** may interrogate an electronic medical records database and/or the pharmacy to verify the prescription or download the prescription, e.g., using a barcode serial number on the infusion pump **19** or fluid reservoir **2**. Though the above discussion relates to infusion pump **19**, its related components, and its interaction with the system **1**, it should be noted that infusion pumps **20** and **21** may be similarly configured.

(66) Additionally or alternatively, the flow from the pumps **19**, **20**, and **21** may be monitored and/or controlled by the monitoring client **6** to ensure safe drug delivery. The monitoring client **6** may scan a RFID tag **27** on a bracelet **28**, and also RFID tags **29**, **30**, and **31** on the fluid reservoirs, **2**, **3**, and **4**, respectively. The monitoring client **6** may download electronic medical records ("EMR") associated with the RFID tag **27** on the patient's **5** bracelet, and compare it to one or more prescriptions found in the EMR of the patient **5**. If the EMR indicates that the fluid reservoirs **2**, **3**, and **4** contain the correct medication, a user can input into the monitoring client **6** a command to start pumping fluid through pumps **19**, **20**, and/or **21** into the patient **5**.

(67) The infusion site monitor **26** monitors the site at which the fluid is fed into the patient **5**. The infusion site monitor **26** receives the fluid through an input port **408** and feeds the fluid to the patient **5** through an output port **409**. As shown in FIG. **2**, in some embodiments, the infusion site monitor **5** optionally includes an air detector **410**, and infiltration detector **32**, a pressure sensor **33**, a fluid-temperature sensor **34**, and/or a patient temperature sensor **35**. In some embodiments, the infusion site monitor **26** optionally includes an ambient air temperature sensor **35** and an RFID interrogator **41**.

(68) The infusion site monitor **26** also includes a processor **37** and a memory **38**. The memory **38** may include processor executable instructions configured for execution on the processor **37**. The processor **37** is in operative communication with the air detector **410**, the infiltration detector **32**, the pressure sensor **33**, the fluid-temperature sensor **34**, the patient temperature sensor **35**, the ambient air temperature sensor **36**, the RFID interrogator **41**, the user input **39**, and the buttons **40**. For example, the processor **37** may be coupled to a bus, a parallel communication link, a serial communication link, a wireless communication link, and/or the like, which is connected to the other components (e.g., the components **410**, **32**, **33**, **34**, **35**, **36**, **41**, **39**, **40**). Referring to FIGS. **1** and **2**, information from the various circuitry **410**, **32**, **33**, **34**, **35**, **36**, **39**, **40**, and/or **41** may be communicated to the monitoring client **6** via a wired or wireless communication link, e.g., WiFi, USB, serial, WiMax, Bluetooth, Zigbee, and the like.

(69) In FIG. **1**. In each of pumps **19**, **20**, and **21**, or the fluid reservoirs **2**, **3**, and **4** may include an upstream and/or downstream pressure generating source (e.g., an occluder, speaker, etc) to generate a pressure "signature" that would travel along the line and into the other devices, e.g., pumping, monitoring, or metering devices. These pressure signatures may indicate the pressure in each of the lines, may be used to identify each line and coordinate the flow rates of the lines, and/or indicate what the measured flow rate of the line should be.

(70) For example, each of the pumps **19**, **20**, and **21** may transmit sound pressure down the IV line to the infusion site monitor **26** (which may include a transducer to detect these pressure waves) indicating to the infusion site monitor **26** the expected total flow rate therethrough. A flow rate meter **169** (see FIG. **2**) may measure the liquid flow rate, and if the measured liquid flow rate deviates by a predetermined amount, the infusion site monitor **26** may issue an alarm and/or alert, e.g., the alarm may signal the valves **16**, **17**, **18**, and **25** to close, and/or the monitoring client **6** may use the information for logging purposes and/or to cause the valves **16**, **17**, **18**, and **25** to close.

(71) Referring again to FIG. **2** and as previously mentioned, the processor **37** is in operative communication with user input **39** and one or more buttons **40**. The infusion site monitor **26** may

receive various user inputs **39** to signal the processor **37** to start monitoring treatment of the patient **5**. Additionally or alternatively, the infusion site monitor **26** may interrogate the RFID **27** of the patient's **5** bracelet (see FIG. **1**) to determine if the infusion site monitor **26** is coupled to the correct patient **5**.

(72) The air detector **410** is in operative communication with the processor **37**. The air detector **410** can measure, estimate, and/or determine the amount of air entering into the infusion site monitor **26** via the input port **29**. In some embodiments, when the processor **37** determines that air within the tube **60** exceeds a predetermined threshold, the processor **37** communicates an alarm or alert to the monitoring client **6** (see FIG. **1**) which can signal valve **25** to shut off fluid flow to the patient **5**. The air detector **410** may be an ultrasonic air detector, an impedance-based air detector, or one that utilizes split-ring resonators.

(73) The infiltration detector **32** is in operative communication with the processor **37**. The air detector **410** can measure, estimate, and/or determine the amount of blood entering into the infusion site monitor **26** via the output port **30**. In some embodiments, when the processor **37** determines that blood within the tube **60** exceeds a predetermined threshold, the processor **37** communicates an alarm or alert to the monitoring client **6** (see FIG. **1**) which can signal the valve **25** to shut off fluid flow to the patient **5**. The infiltration detector **32** may be CCD based, camera based, optical based, and the like.

(74) The pressure sensor **33** is in operative communication with the processor **37**. The pressure sensor **33** can measure, estimate, and/or determine the amount of pressure entering, exiting and/or flowing through the infusion site monitor **26** via the ports **29** and **30**. In some embodiments, when the processor **37** determines that pressure in the tube **60** exceeds a predetermined threshold and/or is below a predetermined threshold, the processor **37** communicates an alarm or alert to the monitoring client **6** (see FIG. **1**) which can signal the valve **25** to shut off fluid flow to the patient **5**. The pressure sensor **33** may be a resistive element that changes in resistance as a force is applied to the resistive element, the resistive element is stretched, and/or the resistive element is pulled. The resistive element may be wrapped around the tube **60** such that as the pressure of the fluid causes the tube **60** to expand, the resistance of the resistive element is measured and is associated with a pressure within the tube **60**, e.g., the resistance may be measured and a look-up table may be used to look up an estimated pressure within the tube **60** using the resistance.

(75) The fluid-temperature sensor **34** is in operative communication with the processor **37**. The fluid-temperature sensor **34** can measure, estimate, and/or determine the temperature of the fluid within the tube **60**. In some embodiments, when the processor **37** determines that temperature of the fluid within the tube **60** exceeds a predetermined threshold and/or is below a predetermined threshold, the processor **37** communicates an alarm or alert to the monitoring client **6** (see FIG. **1**) which can signal valve **25** to shut off fluid flow to the patient **5**. The fluid-temperature sensor **34** may utilize a temperature sensitive material, a positive temperature-coefficient material, a negative temperature-coefficient material, or other temperature sensor technology.

(76) The patient temperature sensor **35** is in operative communication with the processor **37**. The patient temperature sensor **35** can measure, estimate, and/or determine the temperature of the patient **5** (see FIG. **1**). The temperature of the patient **5** may be used to determine the condition of the patient **5**, compliance with a temperature affecting medication, or effect of a temperature affecting medication. The temperature of the patient **5** (a patient-condition parameter) may be communicated to the monitoring client **6** (see FIG. **1**). In some embodiments, when the processor **37** determines that the temperature of the patient **5** exceeds a predetermined threshold or is below a predetermined threshold, the processor **37** communicates an alarm or alert to the monitoring client **6** (see FIG. **1**) which can signal valve **25** to shut off fluid flow to the patient **5**, send an alert to a remote communicator, and/or notify a caregiver of the condition via an internal speaker **42** or vibration motor **43** within the infusion site monitor **26**. The patient temperature sensor **35** may utilize a temperature sensitive material, a positive temperature-coefficient material, a negative

temperature-coefficient material, or other temperature sensor technology.

(77) The ambient air temperature sensor **36** is in operative communication with the processor **37**. The ambient air temperature sensor **36** can measure, estimate, and/or determine the temperature of the ambient air within the infusion site monitor **26**, or in other embodiments, the temperature of the air outside of the infusion site monitor **26**. In some embodiments, when the processor **37** determines that the temperature from the ambient air temperature sensor **36** exceeds a predetermined threshold or is below a predetermined threshold, the processor **37** communicates an alarm or alert to the monitoring client **6** (see FIG. **1**) which can signal valve **25** to shut off fluid flow to the patient **5**. The ambient air temperature sensor **36** may utilize a temperature sensitive material, a positive temperature-coefficient material, a negative temperature-coefficient material, or other temperature sensor technology.

(78) Referring to the drawings, FIG. **3** shows a block diagram of a pump **19** for infusing liquid of the system **1** of FIG. **1** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. Although the pump **19** of FIG. **3** is described as being one of the pumps **19**, **20**, and **21** of FIG. **1**, the pump **19** of FIG. **3** may be one or more of the pumps **19**, **20**, and **21** of FIG. **1**.

(79) Pump **19** includes a processor **37** coupled to a memory **38**. The processor **37** is in operative communication with the memory **38** to receive processor executable instructions configured for execution on the processor **37**. In some embodiments, the processor **37** is, optionally, in operative communication with the user input **39**, the air detector **411**, the fluid temperature sensor **34**, valves **47**, **49**, **51** and **52**, a flow meter **48**, an actuator **54**, an air filter **50**, a drain chamber **53**, and/or a pressure sensor **33**.

(80) The pump **19** in FIG. **3** includes an actuator **54** which operates on fluid contained within the tubing **56** flowing through the pump. The actuator **54** may directly operate on the tube **56**, or may actuate against one or more membranes contained within the actuator **54**. In some embodiments, the valves **47** and **49** cooperate with the actuator **54** to pump fluid, e.g., liquid, from the input port **44** to the output port **45** through the tube **56**. In some embodiments of the present disclosure, the pump **19** contains no internal tubing and may interface with external tubing.

(81) The air filter **50** filters out air from the tube **56**. In alternative embodiments, the air filter **50** is upstream from the air detector **411**. Valve **52** can activate to allow air to enter in from the tube **56** into a drain chamber **53** via a diversion tube **57**.

(82) FIG. **4** shows a block diagram of a system **58** for detecting a bubble **61** within a fluid line **60** (herein used interchangeably with “tube”) in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The system **58** for detecting a bubble may be the air detector **24** of FIG. **1**, the air detector **410** of FIG. **2**, and/or the air detector **411** of FIG. **3**. The system **58** for detecting a bubble **61** may also be a component in any number of other systems, processes, applications, etc. including an air detector or device which would benefit from the use of such a detector. The system **58** may be used more broadly in applications to determine the presence, absence, or change in state of various materials or substances in or proximal to the system **58**.

(83) Relating specifically to the medical field for exemplary purposes only, the system **58** for detecting a bubble **61** may be used in a dialysis pump, an infusion pump, or other fluid delivery device. In specific embodiments, the system **58** may be used for detecting a primed vs. an unprimed tube **60** and/or may be used to facilitate automated-priming of the tube **60**. In other specific embodiments, the system **58** may be used for detection of an unfilled tube **60** (e.g., detecting the presence of an air-vs. a fluid-filled tube **60**). In some example embodiments, the system **58** may be used for detection of an air bubble **61** and or size of an air bubble **61** in a fluid line **60**. In yet other specific embodiments, the system **58** may be used for determining whether or not a tube **60** has been inserted or is properly inserted into a larger medical device, such as an infusion pump. In other embodiments, the system **58** may be used to detect a multiplicity of scenarios, such as, but not limited to, any combination of those listed above.

(84) The system **58** shown in FIG. **4** includes a split-ring resonator component **59** operatively

coupled to a fluid line **60** (e.g., an intravenous fluid line) and a bubble detection component **62**. The split-ring resonator component **59** and the bubble detection component **62** are operatively coupled together.

(85) The split-ring resonator component **59** includes at least one split-ring resonator (often abbreviated herein as “SRR”). The split-ring resonator component **59** may also include a transmitting antenna configured to transmit energy (e.g., electromagnetic energy, such as microwave energy) into the at least one SRR and a receiving antenna configured to receive the energy from the transmitting antenna and/or the one or more SRRs. The split-ring resonator component **59** may be arranged such that the one or more SRRs cause a tunneling effect or increased frequency selective coupling to occur between the antennas.

(86) The one or more SRRs of the split-ring resonator component **59** each have at least one gap that is affected by properties of the surrounding materials. Properties of the surrounding material may cause the behavior of the SRR within the split-ring resonator component **59** to change. For example, surrounding materials of differing dielectric properties will alter the behavior of the SRR. The resonant frequency of the SRR within the split-ring resonator component **59**, for example, will change as a function of the dielectric properties of the surrounding material. The split-ring resonator component **59** and bubble detector component **62** may be used in any system where a dielectric change may correlate to a condition of interest beyond only in the detection of bubbles.

(87) Referring specifically to FIG. **4**, the bubble **61** has different dielectric properties than the surrounding fluid in the fluid line **60**. Differences in the dielectric properties of the bubble **61** as compared to the fluid affects the one or more SRRs within the split-ring resonator component **59** by, for example, altering the capacitance of the one or more SRRs and therefore shifting the resonant frequency of the one or more SRRs when the bubble **61** is located near the split-ring resonator component **59**. This shift may be observed and utilized by a bubble detection component **62** to determine the presence of the air bubble **61** within the fluid line **60**.

(88) This effect may also be used to determine a variety of other information about a fluid line **60** as mentioned above. For non-limiting exemplary purposes, this effect may be used to determine the presence of one or more bubbles **61** or the approximate size of a bubble or bubbles **61** within the fluid line **60**. The effect, for example, may also be used to sense the presence or the absence of liquid within the tube **60**. In some embodiments, the effect may indicate the absence of a tube **60** within a raceway **86** (see FIG. **20**). In some embodiments, the effect may indicate the presence of a tube **60** within a raceway **86** or may be used to determine if a tube **60** has been correctly inserted into a raceway **86**.

(89) The bubble detection component **62** may be operatively coupled to the split-ring resonator component **59**. The bubble detection component **62** may generate energy (e.g., electromagnetic energy such as microwave energy), apply the energy to a transmitting antenna of the split-ring resonator component **59**, and receive the energy from a receiving antenna within the split-ring resonator component **59**. The bubble detection component **62** may measure parameters of the energy to detect information about the fluid line **60**, for instance, whether or not a bubble **61** is present in the fluid line **60**. In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure only a single parameter, or in other embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a plurality of parameters. The bubble detector component **62** may measure one or any combination of parameters, such as, but not limited to, those described below. The measured parameter or parameters may be analyzed to determine whether or not the parameter or parameters correlate to the existence of one or more conditions of interest. The parameters may be affected by the dielectric properties surrounding one or more SSRs within the split-ring resonator component **59**. Some parameters may be calculated by a processor using directly-measured parameters.

(90) In some embodiments, the bubble detection component applies a test signal to the split-ring resonator component **59** having one or more frequencies to the split-ring resonator component to determine one or more parameters correlated to, related to, or of one or more SSRs within the split-

ring resonator component **59**.

(91) The bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as a group delay caused by an SRR within the split-ring resonator component **59**. In such embodiments, the group delay may be measured as the electromagnetic signal imparted on or applied to the SRR in time over a range of frequencies. The measured parameter of group delay may correlate to one or more conditions of interest, e.g. a condition where an air bubble **61** is present in the tube **60**. The bubble detector component **62** may be configured to recognize such a correlation between the group delay and the condition of interest to determine when a bubble **61** is near or within the split-ring resonator component **59**. The frequency at which the peak group delay occurs within a frequency range may be used to determine whether or not a bubble **61** is near or within the split-ring resonator component **59**. Predetermined ranges may be used to determine if a bubble is present in the tube **60**.

(92) For example, if the peak group delay occurs within a first predetermined range of frequencies, the bubble **61** may be determined to exist at or near the split-ring resonator component **59**; likewise, if peak group delay occurs within a second predetermined range of frequencies, the bubble **61** is determined to not exist at or near the split-ring resonator component **59**. In some embodiments, the minimum group delay is used.

(93) The bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as a propagation delay cause by an SSR within the split-ring resonator component **59**. The measured parameter of propagation delay may correlate to one or more conditions of interest, e.g. a condition where an air bubble **61** is present in the tube **60**. The bubble detector component **62** may be configured to recognize such a correlation between the propagation delay and the condition of interest to determine when a bubble **61** is near or within the split-ring resonator component **59**. The frequency at which the peak propagation delay (or minimum propagation delay) occurs within a frequency range may be used to determine whether or not a bubble **61** is near or within the split-ring resonator component **59**. That is, predetermined ranges may be used to determine if a bubble **61** is present in the tube **60** at or near the split-ring resonant or component **59**.

(94) In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the phase angle of a test signal which is applied to an SRR and received by a receiving antenna of the split-ring resonator component **59**. In some embodiments the bubble detection component **62** may compare the phase angle of the applied test signal to the test signal received by a receiving antenna of the split-ring resonator component **59**. The measured parameter of phase angle may be checked to determine if it corresponds to one or more conditions of interest (e.g., whether the bubble **61** is present). That is, predetermined ranges may be used to determine if a bubble **61** is present in the tube **60** at or near the split-ring resonant or component **59**.

(95) In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the phase response of an SRR within the split-ring resonator component **59**. In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure the phase response of an SRR over a predetermined range of frequencies (e.g. microwave frequencies or a specified range of microwave frequencies). The measured parameter of phase response may then be interpreted to determine if at least one condition of interest exists. Predetermined ranges may be used to determine if a bubble **61** is present in the tube **60** at or near the split-ring resonant or component **59**.

(96) In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the amplitude of a test signal which is applied to an SRR and received by a receiving antenna of the split-ring resonator component **59**. In some embodiments, the bubble detection component **62** may compare the amplitude of the applied test signal to the test signal received by a receiver antenna of the split-ring resonator component **59**. The measured parameter of amplitude may be scrutinized to determine if it correlates to one of more conditions of interest by using predetermines ranges, e.g., using predetermined ranges to determine if a bubble **61** is present in the tube **60** at or near the split-ring resonant or component **59**.

(97) In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the resonant frequency of an SRR. In some embodiments the bubble detector component **62** may monitor for a shift in the resonant frequency of an SRR. The measured parameter of resonant frequency may be used to determine if it correlates to one or more conditions of interest.

(98) In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the anti-resonance of an SRR. In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may monitor for a shift in the anti-resonant frequency of an SRR. The measured parameter of anti-resonance may then be considered to determine if it correlates to one or more condition of interest, e.g., using predetermined ranges to determine if a bubble **61** is present in the tube **60** at or near the split-ring resonant or component **59**.

(99) In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the frequency response an SRR. In some embodiments, the frequency response may be measured over a predefined frequency range (e.g. the microwave spectrum or a specific frequency range within the microwave spectrum). The measured parameter of frequency response may then be analyzed to determine if it correlates to the existence of one or more conditions of interest, e.g., using predetermined ranges to determine if a bubble **61** is present in the tube **60** at or near the splitting resonant or component **59**.

(100) In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the impedance of an SRR. In such embodiments, the measured impedance of the SRR may be used to determine if it correlates to at least one condition of interest, e.g., using predetermined ranges to determine if a bubble **61** is present in the tube **60** at or near the split-ring resonant or component **59**.

(101) In other embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the quality factor (hereafter “Q”) of an SRR. Similarly, the bubble detector component **62** may measure a parameter such as the bandwidth of an SRR. Again the measured parameter of Q and/or bandwidth may be evaluated to determine if it correlates to one or more conditions of interest, e.g., using predetermined ranges to determine if a bubble **61** is present in the tube **60** at or near the splitting resonant or component **59**.

(102) In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may measure one or any combination of the S11, S12, S21, or S22 parameters of the SRR component **59**. The S11 parameter is the input port voltage reflection coefficient. The S12 parameter is the reverse voltage gain. The S21 parameter is the forward voltage gain. The S22 parameter is the output port voltage reflection coefficient. In such embodiments the measured S-parameter or S-parameters may be analyzed to determine whether or not they correlate to one or more conditions of interest.

(103) Additionally or alternatively, in some exemplary embodiments, the bubble detection component **62** may monitor for a change in one or more of these parameters to detect the bubble **61**. In some embodiments, the bubble detector component **62** may monitor for a change greater than a predetermined threshold or a change beyond a predetermined initial measurement. In other embodiments, the bubble detection component **62** may detect a state of a raceway **86** (see FIG. **28**) adjacent to an SRR using one or more parameters of an SRR or any other condition of interest.

(104) FIG. **5a** shows a diagram of a system **90** for detecting a bubble **61** within a fluid line **60** using two dipole antennas **91** and **92** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The diagram of the system **90** in FIG. **5a** may be one specific example embodiment of the system **58** shown in FIG. **4**. The dipole antennas **91** and **92** in combination with an SRR **93** may form an SRR component, such as the SRR component **59** shown in FIG. **4**; a housing may also be included as part of the SRR component **59**. Some embodiments may include more SRRs than just the single SRR **93** shown in FIG. **5a**.

(105) In the example embodiment, the dipole antenna **92** transmits microwave energy. The microwave energy transmitted from the dipole antenna **92** is received by the SRR **93**. As shown in the exemplary embodiment in FIG. **5a**, the SRR **93** is arranged such that the tube **60** is within its center.

(106) The microwave energy is received by the receiving antenna **91** after passing through the SRR **93**. The bubble detection component **62** may detect a bubble **61** or other condition of interest by measuring one or more parameters corresponding to the SRR **93**. This is so because the properties of the bubble **61** may alter the parameter when the bubble **61** is at or near the SRR **93**. In other embodiments, the bubble detection component **62** may detect a state of a raceway **86** (see FIG. **20**) adjacent to the SRR **93** using one or more parameters of the SRR **93**.

(107) FIG. **5b** shows a diagram of a system **97** for detecting a bubble **61** within a fluid line **60** using two loop antennas **95** and **96** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The diagram of the system **97** in FIG. **5b** may be another specific example embodiment of the system **58** shown in FIG. **4**. The transmitting loop antenna **96** and receiving loop antenna **95** in combination with the SRR **93** may form an example SRR component such as the SRR component **59** shown in FIG. **4**. Some embodiments may include one or more SRRs in addition to the single SRR **93** shown in FIG. **5b**.

(108) In the example embodiment in FIG. **5b**, the transmitting loop antenna **96** transmits microwave energy which may be absorbed by the SRR **93**. The receiving loop antenna **95** receives the microwave energy after it passes the SRR **93**. The bubble detection component **62** may detect a bubble **61**, for example, by measuring one or more parameters corresponding to the SRR **93**. This is because the properties of the bubble **61** may alter the measured or estimated parameter when the bubble **61** is at or near the SRR **93**.

(109) The bubble detection component **62** may measure one of more parameters using the microwave energy to determine when a bubble **61** affects one or more parameters of the microwave energy. For example, the dielectric loading of a gap of the SRR **93** alters the transmission of the microwave energy between the loop antennas **95** and **96**. Thus a parameter or parameters relating to the transmission of energy may be used to determine the presence of the bubble **61**. As mentioned above, this is because the bubble **61** would cause differing dielectric loading than that created when only fluid is present in the fluid line **60**. In other embodiments, the bubble detection component **62** may detect other conditions of interest such as a state of a raceway **86** (see FIG. **28**) adjacent to the SRR **93** using one or more parameters of the SRR **93**.

(110) In some embodiments, blood coagulation may be monitored by a similar system. An example blood coagulation monitoring system **1000** is shown in FIG. **5c**. In such a system **1000**, a sample of blood **1002** may be brought into proximity of an SRR component **1004**. In such embodiments, the fluid line **60** (shown in FIGS. **5a-5b**) may not be included. In such embodiments, the transmission of energy will be similarly altered by changing dielectric loading as the sample of blood **1002** coagulates. The example system **1000** includes a transmitting loop antenna **1006** which transmits microwave energy that may be absorbed by the SRR component **1004**. The example system **1000** also includes a receiving loop antenna **1008** which receives the microwave energy after it passes the SRR component **1004**.

(111) By monitoring one or more parameters of the transmitted microwave energy with a coagulation detection component **1010** which performs a role analogous to the bubble detection component **62**, coagulation time may be determined. This may be used to report PT-INR. For example, as the sample of blood **1002** coagulates and its dielectric properties change, a parameter such as the resonant frequency of the SRR component **1004** may change. Using the example of resonant frequency of the SRR component **1004**, the resonant frequency of the SRR component **1004** may be monitored by a coagulation detection component **1010** and analyzed to determine if it correlates to a state in which the sample of blood **1002** has coagulated.

(112) In some embodiments, the sample of blood **1002** may be hermetically sealed after it is drawn. This may help to ensure that dielectric changes in the sample of blood **1002** are due to coagulation and not, for example, due to the drying of the sample of blood **1002**. This may help to ensure more accurate and consistent results. In some embodiments, such as the embodiment in FIG. **5c**, the sample of blood **1002** may be placed on a disposable **1012** which may be placed in proximity to an

SRR component **1004**. After the coagulation time for sample of blood **1002** has been measured, the disposable **1012** may be discarded. When it is desirable to measure a subjects blood coagulation time again another sample of blood **1002** may be drawn and placed on a new disposable **1012** for analysis. This may allow the system **1000** to be easily reusable. It may also make the system **1000** easy to use in a non-clinical environment such as a home or residence.

(113) FIGS. **6** and **8-14** and show examples of a number of various possible SRR embodiments. FIG. **6** shows an example embodiment of a single ring, single split SRR **200**. As shown, the SRR **200** includes a single conductive ring **202** which includes a single split **204**. The conductive ring **202** is roughly circular and roughly of uniform width and thickness along its entire arc. The conductive ring **202** may act as an inductor. The single split **204** defines a gap **206**. The edges of the gap **206** may be approximately parallel as is shown in FIG. **6**. The single split **204** may act as a parallel plate capacitor. As such, the SRR **200** in FIG. **6** may be considered to form a simple LC circuit. The SRR **200** has a resonant frequency which may be determined as follows:

$$(114) f_0 = \frac{1}{2\sqrt{LC}},$$

(115) where f is the resonant frequency in hertz, L is the inductance in henries, and C is the capacitance in farads. As delineated by this equation, the resonant frequency f is dependent upon the inductance L and the capacitance C . Any change in either of these values will result in a change of the resonant frequency f .

(116) FIG. **7** shows a close-up view of a split **214** in the conductive ring **212** of an SRR **210**. In the view shown in FIG. **7**, only a portion of the conductive ring **212** of the SRR **210** is visible. The portion of the conductive ring **212** shown is not arced, but rather is essentially straight. The split **214** defines a gap **216**. As in the embodiment in FIG. **6**, the edges of the gap **216** are generally parallel to one another. Thus the split **214** may act as a parallel plate capacitor.

(117) The embodiment of the SRR **210** shown in FIG. **7** additionally includes two capacitive extensions **218**. In the example embodiment, the capacitive extensions **218** extend substantially perpendicularly from the conductive ring **212**. One edge of each capacitive extension **218** may be continuous with a respective edge of the gap **216**. These capacitive extensions **218** serve to increase the overall capacitance of the SRR **210**. The capacitance of a parallel plate capacitor may be determined as follows:

$$(118) C = \epsilon_0 \frac{A}{d}$$

(119) where C is capacitance, $\epsilon_{\text{sub}.0}$ is the permittivity of empty space, A is the area of one of the plates, and d is width the gap **216**.

(120) As indicated above, the capacitance C increases linearly with area A . The capacitive extensions **218** serve to increase the area A of the parallel plate capacitor created in the SRR **210**. In alternate embodiments, the capacitive extensions **218** may be longer or shorter. The capacitive extensions **218** and gap **214** may also be otherwise manipulated in any number of other ways, some of which are described herein, to achieve a desired capacitive value. In other embodiments, the width of the gap **214** may be changed to vary capacitance. In some embodiments a surface mount capacitor such as a voltage controlled varactor diode may be placed in the gap **216** to alter the capacitance as well.

(121) FIG. **8** shows another exemplary SRR **220** which is similar to the SRR **200** shown in FIG. **6**, but includes capacitive extensions **228**. The SRR **220** includes a single conductive ring **222** which includes a single split **224**. The single conductive ring **222** is roughly circular and roughly of uniform width and thickness along its entire arc. The conductive ring **222** may act as an inductor. As in FIG. **6** and FIG. **7**, the single split **224** defines a gap **226** whose edges are generally parallel to one another. Thus, the single split **224** may act as a parallel plate capacitor.

(122) As above, the capacitive extensions **228** serve to increase the overall capacitance of the SRR **220**. In the example embodiment, the capacitive extensions **228** extend substantially from the conductive ring **222**. The parallel edges of the single split **224** are also oriented at an angle away from the conductive ring **222**. The angle at which the single split **224** and capacitive extensions **228**

are oriented may be selected to tailor the area A to a desired value.

(123) By enlarging the total capacitance of an SRR, such as by using the extensions **228** of the SRR **220** shown in FIG. **8**, the dielectric properties of the surrounding material will have more effect on the resonant frequency of the SRR. Consider the following equation to calculate capacitance of a capacitor with a dielectric material completely filling the space between its two plates:

$$C = \kappa_{\text{sub.e}} C_{\text{sub.0}}$$

(124) where $C_{\text{sub.0}}$ is the initial capacitance with nothing between the plates, $\kappa_{\text{sub.e}}$ is the dielectric constant of the material placed between the plates, and C is the resulting capacitance with the dielectric present. If the dielectric constant remains the same, the higher the initial capacitance $C_{\text{sub.0}}$, the larger the resulting capacitance value C will be. It should be noted that this equation is given for the sake of simplicity and demonstration and should not be construed to mean that the fluid line must completely fill or be at all disposed with the gap created by the split in an SRR. Since the electrical field created by a capacitor will “spill” beyond the gap between two plates, a dielectric placed outside of this gap may still have an effect on the capacitance of a capacitor.

(125) As the dielectric properties of the surrounding material changes, the capacitance value C will also change. For example, the dielectric constant $\kappa_{\text{sub.e}}$ of water (e.g. fluid in a fluid line) is 80, while that of air (e.g. a bubble in a fluid line) is 1.00059. The capacitance value C will be greater in the presence of water and lower in the presence of air. This is exaggerated when the initial capacitance $C_{\text{sub.0}}$ is large. Consequentially, the resonant frequency will be different when an air bubble is performing the role of the dielectric relative to when the fluid is performing the role of the dielectric.

(126) FIG. **9** depicts another example embodiment of an SRR **230**. The SRR **230** includes an inner conductive ring **232** and an outer conductive ring **234** which are concentric. In the example embodiment in FIG. **9**, the diameter of the inner conductive ring **232** is chosen such that there is an inner-outer ring gap **236** between the inner conductive ring **232** and the outer conductive ring **234**. Inductance in the SRR **230** arises from the inner conductive ring **232**, the outer conductive ring **234**, and the inner-outer ring gap **236**.

(127) The inner conductive ring **232** includes a single inner ring split **238** which defines the edges of a gap **240**. The edges of the gap **240** are roughly parallel to one another and thus form a parallel plate capacitor. Additionally, the outer conductive ring **234** includes a single outer ring split **242** which defines the edges of a gap **244**. The gaps **240**, **244** are disposed substantially 180° from one another to maximize capacitance by ensuring the charges induced by one ring is opposite that of the other. As would be understood by one skilled in the art, the inner-outer ring gap **236** also adds to the overall capacitance.

(128) FIG. **10** shows a specific embodiment of an example SRR **250** similar to the SRR **230** shown in FIG. **9**. FIG. **10** details specific dimensions for the SRR **250**. In alternate embodiments, these dimensions may differ. As shown, the SRR **250** in FIG. **10** includes two concentric conductive rings which each have a single split. The inner conductive ring and the outer conductive ring of the SRR **250** are both approximately 0.0500 inches in width. The inner-outer ring gap is roughly 0.0050 inches in width. The split in the outer conductive ring is approximately 0.0200 inches in width while the split in the inner conductive ring is somewhat smaller in width. The distance from the inner edge of the inner conductive ring to the center point of the two conductive rings is approximately 0.0500 inches.

(129) FIG. **11** depicts yet another exemplary embodiment of an SRR **260**. As shown, the SRR **260** is similar to the SRR **230** shown in FIG. **9**. The SRR **260** includes an inner conductive ring **262** and an outer conductive ring **264** which are concentric. The inner conductive ring **262** includes an inner ring split **266**. The outer conductive ring **264** includes an outer ring split **270**. The outer ring split **270** includes a number of capacitive extensions **272**. As shown, the capacitive extensions **272** resemble fingers which protrude into the gap **274** created by the outer ring split **270**. The capacitive extensions **272** project into the gap **274** in a fashion substantially parallel to one another and are

continuous with the outer conductive ring **264**. As is additionally shown, the edges of the gap **274** are not entirely straight. The tips of the capacitive extensions **272** in the example embodiment are oriented such that they are substantially parallel to the edge of the gap **274** they are most proximal to.

(130) The capacitive extensions **272** shown in FIG. **11** serve to increase the capacitance of the SRR **260**. In alternate embodiments, spacing, width, length, number, etc. of capacitive extensions **272** may differ. In some embodiments, the inner ring split **266** may include finger-like capacitive extensions (not shown), similar to the capacitive extensions **272** in the outer ring split **270**. In such embodiments, the capacitive extensions **272** in the outer ring split **270** may or may not be present. Additionally, in some embodiments, a second set of capacitive extensions (not shown) may extend into the outer ring split **270** from the opposite side of the outer ring split **270** such that they may interdigitate with the capacitive extensions **272**. Again, this would serve to increase the overall capacitance of the SRR **260**.

(131) The example SRR **260** shown in FIG. **11** also includes an inner-outer ring gap **276**. The edges of the inner conductive ring **262** and outer conductive ring **264** defining the inner-outer ring gap **276** are ruffled. This ruffling may be created by varying the width of the inner conductive ring **262** and outer conductive ring **264**.

(132) As in FIG. **9** inductance in the SRR **260** arises from the inner conductive ring **262**, the outer conductive ring **264** and the inner-outer ring gap **276**. The ruffling increases the overall inductance of the SRR **260**. The inner-outer ring gap **276** also adds capacitance to the SRR **260**.

(133) FIG. **12** depicts another example embodiment of an SRR **280** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. As in FIG. **12**, the term “ring” may be used loosely herein to refer to structures which are not necessarily classically ring-like in shape, but when used in the place of a classic ring-like shape behave equivalently or similarly. The SRR **280** shown in FIG. **12** includes an inner conductive ring **282** and an outer conductive ring **284** both of which are rectangular in the example embodiment. The inner conductive ring **282** includes an inner ring split **286**. The outer conductive ring **284** includes an outer ring split **288**. The inner conductive ring **282** and outer conductive ring **284** are separated by an inner-outer ring gap **290**. As shown in the example embodiment depicted in FIG. **12**, the inner-outer ring gap **290** is of uniform width along its entire span. The inner-outer ring gap **290**, inner conductive ring **282**, and outer conductive ring **284** bring about the inductance in the SRR **280**.

(134) FIG. **13** depicts yet another SRR **300** embodiment. The SRR **300** shown in FIG. **13** includes an inner conductive ring **302** and an outer conductive ring **304**. The inner conductive ring **302** and the outer conductive ring **304** are each rectangular similar to the SRR **280** shown in FIG. **12**. The inner conductive ring **302** includes an inner ring split **306**. The outer conductive ring **304** includes an outer ring split **308**. The inner conductive ring **302** and the outer conductive ring **304** are separated by an inner-outer ring gap **310** which is of uniform width along its entire expanse. As in FIG. **12**, inductance arises from the inner conductive ring **302**, outer conductive ring **304**, and the inner-outer ring gap **310**.

(135) The inner ring split **306** and outer ring split **308** of the SRR **300** include capacitive extensions **312** in FIG. **13**. As shown, the capacitive extensions **312** are similar to the capacitive extensions **218** shown in FIG. **7**. The capacitive extensions **312** extend in a direction substantially perpendicular to the edges of the inner conductive ring **302** and the outer conductive ring **304**. Differing from FIG. **7**, however, the capacitive extensions **312** are only connected to the inner conductive ring **302** and outer conductive ring **304** by a thin bridge of material. This leaves a void **314** between the edges of the inner conductive ring **302** and the outer conductive ring **304** and each of their respective capacitive extensions **312**. As in FIG. **7**, the capacitive extensions **312** in FIG. **13** serve to increase the capacitance of the gap created by the splits **306**, **308**. The voids **314** also act as a capacitive gap increasing the overall capacitance of the SRR **300**. Some capacitance is also introduced by the inner-outer ring gap **310**.

(136) FIG. 14 depicts yet another example embodiment of an SRR 320. As shown, the SRR 320 includes an inner conductive ring 322 and an outer conductive ring 324. In the example embodiment, the inner conductive ring 322 and the outer conductive ring 324 are octagonal. In other embodiments, the inner conductive ring 322 and outer conductive ring 324 may be square, pentagonal, hexagonal, heptagonal, nonagonal, decagonal, undecagonal, dodecagonal, or any other suitable shape. The inner conductive ring 322 and the outer conductive ring 324 are separated by an inner-outer ring gap 334. The inductance arises from the inner conductive ring 322, outer conductive ring 324, and the inner-outer ring gap 334.

(137) The inner conductive ring 322 includes two inner ring splits 326, 328. The outer conductive ring 324 includes two outer ring splits 330, 332. As is shown, the two inner ring splits 326, 328 are disposed opposite the two outer ring splits 330, 332. Alternate embodiments may include additional splits on each ring. Preferably, the splits of one ring are not oriented in line with the splits in the other ring. The additional splits increase the capacitance of the SRR 320. As mentioned above, the larger the initial capacitance value, the more the dielectric properties of surrounding materials will affect the overall capacitance of the SRR 320.

(138) FIG. 15 shows an example transmitting antenna 342 and receiving antenna 344 positioned near a fluid line 60. The transmitting antenna 342 and the receiving antenna 344 each include two concentric conductive rings 346 with a single split 348 in each ring. In other embodiments the transmitting antenna 342 and the receiving antenna 344 may be any other suitable type of antenna. The transmitting antenna 342 and the receiving antenna 344 are arranged in a preferred orientation where flank both sides of the fluid line 60.

(139) A split ring resonator component including a split-ring resonator (not shown in FIG. 15) such as any of those described herein may be placed near the fluid line 60 and between the transmitting antenna 342 and the receiving antenna 344. Energy, e.g. microwave energy, may be supplied to the transmitting antenna 342. This energy may then be transmitted by the transmitting antenna 342. The energy received by the receiving antenna 344 may pass to a bubble detection component (not shown).

(140) As mentioned above, depending on the dielectric properties of the surrounding materials, e.g. the tube 60 and its contents, various parameters of the transmitted energy will change. The capacitance of a gap in an SRR, for example, will change depending on the dielectric properties of the surrounding materials. If, for example, an air bubble is traveling through the fluid line 60, the gap capacitance would be different than when only fluid is traveling through the fluid line 60. Since the capacitance of an SRR alters the transmission of energy in a split ring resonator component as described above, the capacitance change may indicate the existence of an air bubble. These changes may be used by a bubble detection component to determine, for example, the state of the tube 60.

(141) Some embodiments of the system for detecting a bubble (see FIG. 4) may include a housing. The housing may house, hold, include attachment sites, etc. for a number or all of the components which are included in the system. The housing may for example hold a split ring resonator component and a bubble detecting component. The housing may also include a feature in which a fluid line may be seated.

(142) FIGS. 16-19 show an example embodiment of a housing 370 for a split ring resonator component (see, for example, FIG. 4). As shown, the housing 370 includes a substantially rectangular block 372 having a U-shaped valley 374. In other embodiments, the housing 370 may be any other suitable shape. The U-shaped valley 374 is recessed into the rectangular block 372 along the longitudinal centerline of the rectangular block 372. The U-shaped valley 374 is recessed into the rectangular block 372 a distance slightly smaller than the height of the rectangular block 372. The “U” shaped valley 374 is recessed into the rectangular block 372 at an angle substantially perpendicular to the plane of the top face of the rectangular block 372. The bottom of the “U” shaped valley 374 defines a raceway 86 for a fluid line.

(143) Two leg-like members **376** may extend roughly perpendicularly from the bottom face of the rectangular block **372**. The two leg-like members **376** in the example embodiment are oriented approximately perpendicularly to the longitudinal axis of the rectangular block **372**. The two leg-like members **376** may be disposed symmetrically about the lateral centerline of the rectangular block **372** as is shown in FIG. **16**. As in the example embodiment, snap fit features **378** may be included on each of the two leg-like members **376** (only one is visible in FIG. **16**). The snap fit features **378** may be disposed such that they extend from the center of the bottom edge of each of the two leg-like members **376**. In the example embodiment, the snap fit features **378** extend from the edges most proximal to the lateral centerline of the rectangular block **372**. The snap features **378** may allow energy couplers for the antennas of a split ring resonator component to interface with to be snapped into place on the housing **370**. In some embodiments, the housing **370** may include snap fit features **378** to help to hold a bubble detection component (see FIG. **4**) in place on the housing **370**. In some embodiments, the snap fit features **378** may allow the housing **370** to be snap fit into a larger device. Some embodiments of the housing **370** may not include the two leg-like members **376** and snap fit features **378** (see FIG. **26**).

(144) Flanking the U-shaped valley **374** may be two antenna slits **380**. As shown in the example embodiment, the two antenna slits **380** may extend all the way through the rectangular block **372** and continue all the way through the two leg-like members **376**. The two antenna slits **380** may extend through the rectangular block **372** and the two leg-like members **376** at an angle substantially perpendicular to the top face of the rectangular block **372**. Additionally, as shown in FIG. **16**, the two antenna slits **380** may have a slit width which extends an equal distance longitudinally from each side of the lateral centerline of the rectangular block **372**.

(145) The housing **370** may be made from any number of suitable materials. In some embodiments, the housing **370** may be made from plastic, nylon, a polymer, etc. The housing **370** may include a shield which may be, for instance, a coating. In such embodiments the housing **370** may be coated with a conductive material, such as copper, another metal, etc. The coating may help to protect the SRR component from spurious signals. In some specific embodiments, the housing **370** may be approximately 1.500 inches long, 0.480 inches wide, and 0.930 inches in height (including the leg-like members **376**).

(146) FIG. **17** shows a top view of the exemplary housing **370** depicted in FIG. **16**. In FIG. **17**, the top face of the rectangular block **372**, U-shaped valley **374**, raceway **86**, and the antenna slits **380** are visible. The embodiment shown in FIG. **17** also includes two spacer members **382**. The two spacer members **382** may project from the raceway **86** and up the walls of the U-shaped valley **374** toward the top face of the rectangular block **372**. The two spacer members **382** are disposed perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the housing **370** and are located between the two antenna slits **380**.

(147) When a fluid line (see FIG. **18**) is in place in the housing **370**, the two spacer members **382** may serve to ensure proper and consistent positioning of the fluid line in relation to the SRR component (see FIG. **4**). In the example embodiment, the two spacer members **382** may position the fluid line such that it is substantially level with the antennas (see FIG. **5a** or FIG. **5b**) when the antennas are in place in the antenna slits **380**. In some embodiments, the top face of the two spacer members **382** may be flat. In some embodiments, the two spacer members **382** may include a contour in their top faces to better and more securely locate a fluid line. In some embodiments, an SRR, such as any of those described herein, may also be supported by the two spacer members **382**.

(148) FIG. **18** depicts a side view of the example housing **370** shown in FIG. **16**. As shown, the rectangular block **372**, two leg-like members **376**, and both of the snap fit features **378** are visible in FIG. **18**. Additionally, a fluid line **60** is shown in place in the housing **370**.

(149) FIG. **19** depicts another side view of the example housing **370** shown in FIG. **16**. The rectangular block **372**, U-shaped valley **374**, raceway **86**, one of the leg-like members **376**, the

antenna slits **380**, and one of the two spacer members **382** are visible in FIG. **19**.

(150) Another example embodiment of a housing **390** is shown in FIGS. **20-22**. A perspective view of this housing **390** is shown in FIG. **20**. The housing **390** includes a block **392**. The block **392** may be substantially rectangular. A valley **394** is recessed into a face of the block **392**. The valley **394** may be “U” shaped. In the example embodiment, the valley **394** is recessed perpendicularly into a side of the block **392** roughly along the longitudinal centerline of the block **392**. The valley **394** may be approximately 0.125 inches wide. In other embodiments, the valley **394** may be dimensioned in any suitable way. The bottom of the valley **394** may define a raceway **86** for a tube (not shown).

(151) The block **392** may also include at least one housing depression. A first housing depression **396** is shown in FIG. **20**. The first housing depression **396** is dimensioned such that one or a number of components of a system for detecting a bubble (see FIG. **4**) may be seated in the housing **390**. The first housing depression **396** may be recessed into a face of the housing **390**. In the example embodiment, the first housing depression **396** is recessed into the housing **390** at an angle perpendicular to the top face (relative to FIG. **20**) of the housing **390**. Certain parts of the first housing depression **396** may be recessed deeper into the housing **390** than others.

(152) FIG. **21** shows another perspective view of the housing **390**. The block **392**, valley **394**, and raceway **86** are visible. Also visible are a number of additional housing depressions **398**. The additional housing depressions **398** may be dimensioned such that one or a number of components of a system for detecting a bubble (see FIG. **4**) may be seated in the housing **390**.

(153) FIG. **22** depicts an example top view of the housing **390** with a number of components in place in and on the housing **390**. As shown, an SRR **400** is placed into the valley **394** and contoured such that it conforms to the shape of the raceway **86**. Two energy couplers **348** are also shown partially housed within the first housing depression **396** (best shown in FIG. **20**). The energy couplers **348** transmit and receive energy respectively to and from a transmitting antenna and receiving antenna which are not visible in FIG. **22**. The transmitting antenna and the receiving antenna may be housed at least partially within the first housing depression **396**.

(154) FIG. **23** shows an unassembled example split ring resonator component and split ring resonator component housing **412**, and FIG. **24** shows an assembled view of the example split ring resonator component and split ring resonator component housing in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. Referring to FIG. **23**, the housing **410** includes a block **412**. A valley **414** is recessed into a face of the block **412**. A raceway is defined at the bottom of the valley **414**. Two antenna slits **416** are also cut through the block **412** and flank each side of the raceway **86**.

(155) A number of components of the system for detecting a bubble are also shown in FIG. **23**. A transmitting antenna **418** and a receiving antenna **420** are shown attached to two energy couplers **348**. The transmitting antenna **418** and the receiving antenna **420** are each loop antennas. Specifically, they each include two concentric conductive rings which include splits and appear substantially identical to some of the SRR embodiments disclosed herein. By attaching an SRR to a coaxial cable, energy coupler, etc., the SRR may be utilized as a loop antenna. Additionally, an SRR **422** is shown in place in an SRR housing **424** in FIG. **23**. Alternate embodiments may not include the SRR housing **410**.

(156) In FIG. **24**, the components shown in FIG. **23** are in place in the housing **410**. As shown, the SRR **422** and SRR housing **424** are in place in the raceway **86** of the valley **414**. In some embodiments, the SRR housing **424** may be fixedly coupled to a particular spot on the raceway **86** to ensure optimal energy transmission. The transmitting antenna **418** and the receiving antenna **420** are in place in the antenna slits **416** (best shown in FIG. **23**) of the housing **410**. The housing **410** is configured such that it may sit atop the energy couplers **348**.

(157) When in use, a tube (not shown) would be placed in the raceway **86**. The SRR housing **424** may wrap around the tube or a portion of the tube to hold the tube in place. Energy may be

transmitted from the transmitting antenna **418** to the receiving antenna **420** and through the SRR **422**. A parameter of the energy may then be measured to determine, for example, if an air bubble exists in the tube.

(158) In some embodiments, a choke may also be included to block noise from being transmitted by a transmitting antenna such as the transmitting antenna **418**. In various embodiments, the choke may be an RF choke, or specifically a ferrite bead choke.

(159) Referring now to FIG. 25, a PCB **430** and two antennas **432**, **434** are shown. The two antennas **432**, **434** may be operatively coupled to the PCB **430**. The PCB **430** may be designed such that it may cause one of the antennas **432**, **434** to transmit at any suitable frequency or number of different frequencies. The PCB **430** may also include, for example, circuitry for the bubble detection component **62** shown in FIG. 4.

(160) FIG. 26 depicts an example embodiment of an example PCB **430** with antennas **432**, **434** being placed into an example housing **440**. The housing **440** shown is similar to that shown in FIGS. 16-19. The housing **440** in FIG. 26, includes a rectangular block **442** with a U-shaped valley **444**, a raceway **86**, and antenna slits **450**. The housing **440**, however, does not include the leg-like members **346** and snap fit features **348** shown in FIGS. 16-19. Instead the PCB **430** may be coupled directly to a face of the rectangular block **442**. As shown, the antennas **432**, **434** may be slid into their respective antenna slits **450**. After the antennas **432**, **434** are completely within their respective antenna slits **450**, the PCB **430** may be coupled to the rectangular block **442** via any suitable fastener or combination of fasteners, such as for example, screws, bolts, glue, adhesive, etc.

(161) FIG. 27 shows a schematic **470** illustration of an embodiment of the system **58** of FIG. 4 in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The schematic **470** includes a split-ring resonator component **472** and a bubble detection component **474**. The bubble detection component **474** is coupled to the split-ring resonator component **472** to measure or estimate one or more parameters of the energy transmitted through the split-ring resonator component **472**. The bubble detection component **474** may use the one or more parameters to detect the existence of a condition of interest, e.g., the presence of a bubble **61** within a tube **60**. In other embodiments, the bubble detection component **474** may, for example, detect the state of a raceway **86** (see, for example, FIG. 16) adjacent to the split ring resonator component **472** using the one or more parameters.

(162) The split-ring resonator component **472** includes a transmitting antenna **476**, an SRR **478**, and a receiving antenna **480**. The transmitting antenna **476** and the receiving antenna **480** may be loop antennas. In additional embodiments, the transmitting antenna **476** and the receiving antenna **480** may be any other suitable type of antenna, such as monopole antennas and/or dipole antennas. The SRR **478** may be one of the example SRRs shown and described in reference to FIGS. 6-14. The SRR **478** may have a resonance frequency of about 4.3 GHz in some embodiments. A tube **60** may be positioned near the SRR **478**, near a gap of the SRR **478**, or through the center void of the SRR **478** such that one or more of the conductors of the SRR **478** surround the tube **60**. In some embodiments of the present disclosure, multiple SRRs (see FIG. 28) may be used.

(163) The bubble detection component **474** may include a processor **482** coupled to a Voltage Controlled Oscillator (abbreviated herein often as VCO) **484** that generates microwave energy as in shown in FIG. 27. The processor **482** may select one or more frequencies for generation by the VCO **484** which will then be transmitted via the transmitting antenna **476**. In some specific embodiments, the VCO **484** may have a range of 3.9-4.4 GHz. The processor **482** includes a digital-to-analog converter (not explicitly shown) to apply the voltage to the VCO **484**. The voltage applied to the VCO **484** is converted to an electromagnetic signal such as microwave energy in accordance with a predetermined formula, e.g., the voltage supplied from the processor **482** to the VCO **484** is converted to a frequency in accordance with a predetermined specification of the VCO **484**. Appropriate buffer circuitry, amplifiers, and/or isolators may be used between the processor **482** and the VCO **484** and/or between the VCO **484** and the transmitting antenna **476**, in some

embodiments.

(164) As shown in FIG. 27, the bubble detection component **474** receives a signal from a receiving antenna **480** which is electrically coupled to capacitors **486** and **488**, and to diodes **490** and **492** to rectify the signal. The diodes **490** and **492** may be a Schottky Diode pair such as a Microwave Schottky Mixer Diodes circuit having the part number HSMS-8202-TR1, manufactured by Avago Technologies Inc. of 350 West Trimble Road, Building 90, San Jose, CA, United States, 95131. In the example embodiment, the DC out signal (i.e., the rectified signal) is fed into the processor **482**. The processor **482** may include an analog-to-digital converter (not explicitly shown) to determine the DC value of the signal from the diode **492** and capacitor **488**. The processor **482** may use the DC value to measure one or more parameters of the SRR **478**. In some embodiments, the processor **482** may be in communication with additional circuitry coupled to the receiving antenna **480** to measure or estimate one or more parameters associated with the SRR **478**, e.g., the phase angle, resonance frequency, etc.

(165) In some embodiments, the processor **482** may instruct the VCO **484** to perform a frequency sweep (e.g., linearly or non-linearly) to output one or more frequencies. The processor **482** may receive a DC signal from the capacitor **488** which may then be used to determine one or more parameters, e.g., a bandpass response, frequency response, phase response, etc.

(166) The processor **482** may also receive additional feedback information; for example, the processor **482** may receive feedback about the signal applied to the antenna **486** from the VCO **484**, such as a measured frequency, a measured amplitude, a variance, a power, etc. In some embodiments, this feedback may be compared to the signal from the capacitor **488** to determine a condition of interest.

(167) FIG. 28 shows a diagram of a system **500** for detecting a bubble within a fluid line **60** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The system **500** includes a bubble detection component **502** and an SRR component **504**.

(168) The bubble detection component **502** includes a processor **482** coupled to a VCO **484**. The VCO **484** may be coupled to an amplifier **506** as shown in FIG. 28. The amplifier **506** applies the amplified microwave energy to the transmitting antenna **512** of the SRR component **504** via SMA connectors. The processor **482** may select one or more frequencies to be transmitted via the VCO **484**. The selected one or more frequencies may then pass through the amplifier **506** and be transmitted by the transmitting antenna **512**.

(169) In the example embodiment shown in FIG. 28, the bubble detection component **502** receives the transmitted microwave energy through a receiving antenna **514** of the SRR component **504**. The bubble detection component **502** may rectify the signal using the capacitors **486** and **488**, and the diodes **490** and **492**. The rectified signal may then be received by the processor **482**. The processor **482** may use the received signal to measure one or more parameters corresponding to the SRRs **516** and **518** to detect a condition of interest, for example, the presence of a bubble within the tube **60**.

(170) As shown in FIG. 28, the bubble detection component **504** may include two SRRs **516** and **518**. The two SRRs **516**, **518** are positioned next to the tube **60**. The two SRRs **516**, **518** may have a resonant frequency of 4.3 GHz in some specific embodiments. The SRR component **504** also includes a transmitting and a receiving loop antenna **512** and **514**. The transmitting loop antenna **512** and receiving loop antenna **514** may specifically be 8 GHz loop antennas each including an inner conductor having a gap and outer conductor having a gap.

(171) As in FIG. 27, the processor **482** of FIG. 28 may instruct the VCO **484** to perform a frequency sweep (e.g., linearly or non-linearly) over one or more frequencies. In some embodiments, the processor **484** may receive various feedback about the signal applied to the antenna **512**. In such embodiments, this may help the processor **482** to determine whether or not one or more conditions of interest exist.

(172) FIG. 29 shows a diagram of a system **520** for detecting a bubble **61** within a fluid line **60** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The system **520** includes a bubble

detection component **522** and a split ring resonator component **524**.

(173) The split ring resonator component **524** includes a transmitting loop antenna **526** and a receiving loop antenna **528**. The transmitting loop antenna **526** and the receiving loop antenna **528** are disposed such that the fluid line **60** is encircled by each of the transmitting loop antenna **526** and the receiving loop antenna **528**. The split ring resonator component **524** in FIG. **29** also includes a single SRR **530**. The fluid line **60** extends through the center of the SRR **530**. The SRR **530** is disposed between the transmitting loop antenna **526** and the receiving loop antenna **528**. As in the embodiments in FIGS. **27** and **28**, the system **520** includes a processor **482** and a VCO **484**. The processor **482** may select one or more frequencies to be generated by the VCO **484** and transmitted by the transmitting loop antenna **526**.

(174) The bubble detection component **522** may be operatively coupled to the transmitting loop antenna **526** and the receiving loop antenna **528** which surround the fluid line **60** in FIG. **29**. As mentioned above, the bubble detection component **522** in FIG. **29** includes a processor **482** coupled to a VCO **484** to transmit one or more microwave energy frequencies via the transmitting loop antenna **526**. The bubble detection component **522** receives the microwave energy via a bandpass **532**. The bandpass **532** may filter out frequencies other than the transmitting frequency of the transmitting loop antenna **526**. The processor **482** may be coupled to the bandpass **532** to tune the frequency of the bandpass **532**.

(175) In the example embodiment in FIG. **29**, the bandpass **532** is coupled to capacitors **534** and **536**, an inductor **538**, a diode **540**, and a resistor **542**. The circuit components **534**, **536**, **538**, **540**, and **542** rectify the signal which is sent to an analog-to-digital converter (not explicitly shown) of the processor **482**.

(176) The signal received by the processor **482** from the analog-to-digital converter (not explicitly shown) may be used to measure or estimate one or more parameters of the SRR **530**. The measured or estimated one or more parameters of the SRR **530** may then be used to determine if one or more conditions of interest, for instance, the presence of an air bubble **61** in a tube **60** exist.

(177) As mentioned above in reference to other embodiments, the processor **482** may also receive various feedback regarding the signal applied to the transmitting loop antenna **526**. The processor **482** may, in some embodiments, instruct the VCO **484** to sweep one or more frequencies. In such embodiments, the processor **482** may then, for example, determine a frequency response of the SRR **530** over the one or more frequencies.

(178) FIG. **30** shows a diagram of a system **550** for detecting a bubble within a fluid line **60** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The system **550** includes circuitry **552** which may perform the function of a bubble detection component. The system **550** additionally includes a split ring resonator component **554**. The split ring resonator component **554** may include or be included in a housing, such as one of the housing embodiments depicted in FIGS. **16-19**.

(179) The split ring resonator component **554** in FIG. **30** includes a transmitting loop antenna **556** and a receiving loop antenna **558**. As shown the, transmitting loop antenna **556** and receiving loop antenna **558** each include two concentric conductive rings with a split. The split ring resonator component **554** in FIG. **30** includes two SRRs **560**, **562**. The SRRs **560**, **562** may, for example, be any of the SRR embodiments described herein (e.g., FIGS. **6-14**). The SRRs **560**, **562** depicted are similar to the SRR **230** shown in FIG. **9**.

(180) The circuitry **552** includes a processor **482**. The processor **482** may be coupled to a potentiometer **564**. The processor **482** selects one or more frequencies for the VCO **484** and controls operation of the VCO **484** via the potentiometer **564**. The processor **482** may, for example, control the potentiometer **564** to create a voltage ramp. This may be done in embodiments where it is desirable to measure some parameters, such as a frequency response or a phase response.

(181) The VCO **484** in FIG. **30** is coupled to the transmitting loop antenna **556** and an incident detector **567** (e.g. a microwave coupler **569** and a diode **571**). The circuitry **552** receives the microwave energy via a receiving loop antenna **558**. The receiving loop antenna **558** is coupled to a

diode **568**. The signals received from the diodes **571** and **568** are compared by a difference amplifier **570**. The output signal of the difference amplifier **570** is then fed into the processor **482**. The processor **482** measures or estimates one or more parameters corresponding to the SRRs **560** and **562** in order to detect a condition of interest, e.g. an air bubble in the tube **60**.

(182) FIGS. **31-33** show a detailed specific example embodiment of a bubble detector circuit similar to that shown in FIG. **30**. FIG. **31** shows a circuit **572** for use in a bubble detector including a voltage controlled oscillator component **574** coupled to a transmitting antenna **576** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. A processor (e.g., the processor **482** of FIG. **30**) is coupled to a potentiometer **578** may control the frequency by selectively varying the position of the wiper on the resistive element of the potentiometer **578**. In some embodiments, the position may instead be manually manipulated or set. The VCO component **574** may transmit a signal via a transmitting antenna **576**. As in the example embodiment, the VCO **574** and the transmitting antenna **576** may be separated by an isolation attenuator **577**. The circuit also includes a rectifier **580**. The output of the rectifier **580** is a power detected voltage out **582**.

(183) FIG. **32** shows another circuit **584** coupled to a receiving antenna **586** for use in a bubble detector in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The receiving antenna **586** receives the signal from the transmitting antenna **576** in FIG. **31**. An SRR (not shown) may be placed between the receiving antenna **586** and the transmitting antenna **576** (see FIG. **31**). In such embodiments the SRR may be placed in close proximity to a tube. The circuit **584** serves as a rectifier for the signal received by the receiving antenna **586** and may have the same layout as the rectifier **580** shown in FIG. **31**. The circuit **584** outputs a detect voltage out **588**. The detect voltage out **588** will be dependent upon a number of features such as the state of a tube near the SRR.

(184) FIG. **33** shows a difference amplifier circuit **590** for use in a bubble detector in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The difference amplifier circuit **590** receives the output **582** and **588** respectively from the rectifier **580** of FIG. **31** and the circuit **584** of FIG. **32**. The difference amplifier circuit **590** amplifies the difference between the two received outputs **582** and **588**. The amplified signal may then be passed to a processor (e.g., the processor **482** of FIG. **30**). The processor may utilize this signal to determine if a condition of interest exists. The condition of interest, in some embodiments, may be related to the state of a tube.

(185) In some embodiments, such as the embodiment shown in FIG. **33**, a threshold detector **591** may also be included in the circuit **590**. The threshold detector **591** may be included such that it may trigger an alarm if the voltage applied to the threshold detector **591** strays from an expected value. In some embodiments, the alarm may be triggered if the voltage deviates outside of a predefined threshold. In some additional embodiments, the threshold detector **591** may be configured to trigger an alarm if the output voltage crosses over a predefined threshold.

(186) In other embodiments, the circuit **590** may be modified such that a window comparator is used in place of the threshold detector **591**. In such embodiments, an alarm may be triggered if the voltage deviates out of a predefined window. In some embodiments including a window comparator, an alarm may be triggered if the output voltage enters a predefined window.

(187) The alarm may be any of a variety of alarms. For example, the alarm may be a light or a number of lights which are illuminated in response to an alarm state. In some embodiments, the alarm may be an audible noise emitted from a speaker. In other embodiments, the alarm state may turn on a vibratory motor to produce vibrations. In some embodiments, a message declaring the alarm, e.g. a text message, may be displayed on the GUI of a larger device. Any other suitable alarm may also be used. In some embodiments, multiple alarms may be triggered in the alarm state, for example, a light and audible noise may be produced.

(188) FIG. **34** shows an amplifier circuit **592** similar to the circuit **590** shown in FIG. **33**. The difference amplifier circuit **592** receives the outputs **582** and **588** respectively from the rectifier **580** of FIG. **31** and the circuit **584** of FIG. **32**. The difference amplifier circuit **592** amplifies the difference between the two received outputs **582** and **588**. The amplified signal may then be passed

to a processor (e.g., the processor **482** of FIG. **30**). The processor may utilize this signal to determine if a condition of interest exists. The condition of interest, in some embodiments, may be related to the state of a tube.

(189) The amplifier circuit **592** in FIG. **34** also includes a threshold detector **593**. In other embodiments, the circuit **592** may instead include a window comparator. The threshold detector **593** may be included such that it may trigger an alarm if the voltage applied to the threshold detector **593** strays from an expected value. In some embodiments, the alarm may be triggered if the voltage deviates outside of a predefined threshold. In some additional embodiments, the threshold detector **593** may be configured to trigger an alarm if the output voltage crosses over a predefined threshold. The alarm may be any type or combination of types of suitable alarms such as, but not limited to those described above.

(190) FIG. **35** shows example embodiment of a rectifier circuit **600** including a schottky diode pair **602**. The example rectifier circuit **600** may be used to rectify the signal received by one of the receiving antenna embodiments disclosed herein into a DC output. The DC output may then be forwarded to a processor, a differential amplifier, or other component. In a preferred embodiment, the rectifier circuit **600** may be designed such that it mitigates or compensates for the temperature dependency of the voltage drop across the schottky diode pair **602**.

(191) FIG. **36** shows another example embodiment of a rectifier circuit **610**. The rectifier circuit **610** may be coupled to, for example, any receiving antenna disclosure herein for providing a DC output to a processor, differential amplifier, or other component. The rectifier circuit **610** is constructed such that it has built in temperature compensation. As shown, the rectifier circuit **610** is designed such that it mitigates or compensates for the temperature dependency of the voltage drop across the schottky diode pair **612** with a nearly equal and opposite temperature change in a silicon diode **614**.

(192) FIG. **37** shows an example embodiment of a system **620** for detecting a bubble. As shown, the system **620** includes a split-ring resonator component **622**. The split-ring resonator component **622** includes a transmitting antenna **624**, a receiving antenna **626** and an SRR **628**. The system **620** also includes a bubble detector component **630** with a ratio detector **632**. Use of a ratio detector **632** in the bubble detector component **630** provides temperature compensation. As shown, the ratio detector **632** receives a DC output from two rectifiers **634**, **636**. The rectifier **634** creates a DC voltage representative of the output signal of the VCO **638**. The second rectifier **636** creates a DC voltage representative of the signal received by the receiving antenna **626** of the split-ring resonator component **622**. The ratio detector **632** outputs a signal relative to the ratio between the two voltages. This signal may then be forwarded to, for example, a processor (e.g., the processor **482** of FIG. **30**).

(193) Also shown in FIG. **37** is a moisture sensor **640** included as part of a moisture sensor component **642**. Use of a moisture sensor **640** may be desirable because it allows the detection of liquid ingress or humidity. Both liquid ingress and humidity may change the dielectric loading of an SRR and thereby introduce output error. In some embodiments, the moisture sensor **640** may be a conductivity sensor. The moisture sensor **640** may be configured to generate a pass/fail signal to indicate whether or not moisture is present. Depending on the sensitivity of the moisture sensor **640**, some embodiments may provide a more nuanced output. For example, some embodiments may be able to discriminate between the presence of a large volume of moisture and a small volume of moisture.

(194) FIG. **38** shows an example of a microstrip radial stub **650** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The example microstrip radial stub **650** includes an inductor portion **652** and a capacitor portion **654**. The microstrip radial stub **650** allows DC to flow in and out without affecting RF performance at a particular frequency range. In some embodiments, the frequency range may be approximately 4-5 GHz. Additionally, the microstrip radial stub **650** shown in FIG. **38** is designed to reject any ingress from signals of devices operating at the ISM band (Wireless

LANs, cordless phones, etc.). In order to allow DC in or out with minimal effect on signals at the desired frequency or frequencies, the microstrip radial stub **650** may be designed to have high impedance at those frequencies.

(195) The performance of the example microstrip radial stub **650** over a range of 2000-6000 MHz is shown in the graph in FIG. **39**. FIG. **40** depicts a specific detailed example of a microstrip circuit **656** which may perform the function of the microstrip radial stub **650** shown in FIG. **38**. The example microstrip radial stub **650** may be used as the decouplers between the bubble detector component **630** and the moisture sensor component **642** in FIG. **37**.

(196) FIG. **41** shows an example embodiment of a microstrip coupler **660** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The microstrip coupler **660** embodiment shown may be used in any suitable embodiment described herein utilizing a directional coupler. A specific example embodiment detailing the specific geometry of an example microstrip coupler **662** is shown in FIG. **42**. FIG. **43** shows an example graph of the coupling characteristics of the example microstrip coupler **662** illustrated in FIG. **42**.

(197) FIG. **44** shows another example embodiment of a system **670** for detecting a bubble. As shown, the system **670** includes a split-ring resonator component **672**. The split-ring resonator component **672** includes a transmitting antenna **674**, an SRR **676**, and a receiving antenna **678**. The system **670** also includes a bubble detection component **680**. The bubble detector component **680** in FIG. **44** is designed to measure a parameter such as the phase shift or phase response of the SRR **676**. As shown, the output of a VCO **682** is transmitted via the transmitting antenna **674** of the split-ring resonator component **672**. The bubble detector component **680** includes a mixer **684** which receives a signal from the output of the VCO **682** via a directional coupler **686**. The mixer **684** also receives an output from the receiving antenna **678** of the split-ring resonator component **672**. The bubble detector component **680** may include an adjustment means to allow the signal from the receiving antenna **678** to be tailored to the same amplitude as the signal traveling to the mixer **684** from the directional coupler **686**. As is well known in the art, two identical frequency, constant-amplitude signals that are sent to a mixer **684** will result in a DC output which is proportional to the phase difference between the two signals. The DC output may be used by a processor (e.g., the processor **482** of FIG. **30**) to determine the existence of a condition of interest, for example, the presence of a bubble in a fluid line. This is due to the fact that the phase shift of the signal which passes through the SRR **676** will depend on the resonant properties of the SRR **676**. Since the resonant properties of the SRR **676** will change depending on the dielectric loading of the SRR **676**, the phase shift of a specific frequency introduced by a full tube will be different than that introduced by a tube including an air bubble.

(198) FIG. **45** shows another example embodiment of part of a circuit **690** for an air bubble sensor. As shown, the circuit **690** includes a VCO **692**. The VCO **692** may produce a modulated transmission with subcarriers or a modulated spectrum. This signal may be transmitted by a transmitting antenna (not explicitly shown). The signal may pass through an SRR **694** (shown here as a variable passband filter) and be received by a receiving antenna (not explicitly shown). The received modulated transmission may then be fed, for example, to a number of passband filters **696**, **698**, **700** which are tuned to recover information about the transmission of particular frequencies.

(199) In the part of the circuit **690** shown, the passband filter **696** is included for a first center frequency, F1, the passband filter **698** is included for a second center frequency, F2, and the passband filter **700** is included for a third center frequency, F3. The signal from each passband filter **696**, **698**, **700** may then be rectified into a DC output voltage by respective rectifiers **702**, **704**, **706**. The DC output voltages may be used by a processor (not shown) to determine where the passband of the SRR **694** is located in the frequency spectrum. In turn, this information may be used to determine a condition of interest, e.g. tube full, tube empty, air bubble, etc.

(200) FIG. **46** depicts an example embodiment of part of a circuit **720** which may be used to detect

a condition of interest using phase shift or propagation delay. As shown, a VCO 722 generates a signal. The signal travels to a power splitter 724 and is split into parts. One part of the signal travels through the SRR 728 and to a frequency mixer 726, and another part is delay delayed by a predefined amount. The split ring resonator 728 may be part of a split ring resonator component such as any of the split ring resonator components described herein. Depending on the status of, for example, a tube near the split-ring resonator 728 the received signal from the SRR 728 will be phase shifted a specific amount. By sending this signals to the frequency mixer 726 a DC output can be created which is proportional to the phase difference between both parts of the signal. This signal may then be sent to another component such as a processor in order to determine if a particular condition of interest exists.

(201) FIG. 47 illustrates another example part of a circuit 740 which may be used to measure a phase shift or a group delay to determine the existence of a condition of interest. The VCO 722 applies a signal (via a transmitting antenna that is not shown) into a SRR 728, which is then sent through an IQ mixer 741. The results of the IQ mixer 741 may be used to estimate whether a condition exists, e.g., a bubble within a tube, using a processor (e.g., the processor 482 of FIG. 30).

(202) FIG. 48 and FIG. 49 show a graph of the S21 parameter of an example SRR component over a sweep from 3.6 GHz to 4.6 GHz as measured by a network analyzer. Each test was performed by controlling the dielectric loading of an SRR in the example SRR component. The graph in FIG. 48 measured the S21 parameter of a tube which was completely empty (air filled). The graph in FIG. 49 measured the S21 parameter of a tube which was completely filled with fluid thereby increasing the dielectric loading of the SRR. As shown, the lowest amount of loss seen with the empty tube occurred at approximately 4.1 GHz. With a tube full of fluid, the lowest amount of loss seen occurred at approximately 3.92 GHz. A processor may be used to monitor for such a shift in the S21 parameter in order to determine if an air bubble exists in a tested fluid line. In some embodiments, a processor may monitor for a deviation from an initial measurement. The initial measurement may be taken during a calibration procedure on a tube know to be empty or full and then stored in memory.

(203) FIG. 50 shows an example graph illustrating the change in output voltage of an example rectifier in relation to the power of a signal received by a receiving antenna. As shown, the greater the power of the signal at the receiving antenna, the greater the voltage. Thus, a processor may use the voltage from an example rectifier to determine the loss or gain of a transmitted signal which reaches a receiving antenna.

(204) FIG. 51 shows an example graph illustrating the power coupling at 4.12 GHz across an example SRR component with varying tube conditions. As shown, the coupling is best when the tube is empty. When the tube includes an air bubble, that is when the tube is partially filled with fluid, more loss is experienced. When the tube is completely full of fluid, for example when water is flowing through the tube, loss is greatest. This suggests that the resonant frequency of the SRR in the example SRR component is nearest 4.12 GHz when the capacitance value of the SRR is being influenced by an empty tube. A processor may monitor a signal being transmitted at a constant frequency for such deviations to determine if a condition of interest exists. In some embodiments, the frequency of the transmitted signal may be chosen such that it is at the resonant frequency of the SRR in the example SRR component when the tube is full or alternatively when the tube is empty.

(205) FIG. 52 shows another example graph. The example graph in FIG. 52 shows the difference in output voltage of an air bubble sensor over bubble volume. The example graph was created by transmitting a signal at a constant frequency. The graph plots two tests. One test was performed by introducing specific volumes of air into a tube and measuring the change in voltage of the rectified signal from a receiving antenna of a split-ring resonator component. As is shown, no bubble, i.e. the tube is full, is the voltage reference point. The output of the sensor was tested with bubbles having volumes of as little as 2 μ l and as large as 50 μ l. As shown, the difference in output voltage

grows in step with the volume of the bubble. This is so because the power coupling is altered by bubble volume. Additionally as shown, the sensor is capable of detecting a bubble at the smallest test bubble volume of 2 μl . For reference, the graph also includes a second test on a fluid line which was completely empty. This test was performed over a period of time. As shown, the output voltage is generally static at just over a 5V difference from the measured output voltage of a tube full of fluid. Thus the output voltage provides information on the status of a tube. The output voltage may therefore be monitored for changes from, for example, an initial amount to determine the existence of an air bubble as well as its approximate size.

(206) FIG. 53 depicts an approximate equivalent circuit 750 representing two example SRRs positioned near an empty tube. As shown, the circuit 750 includes a first LC circuit 752 and a second LC circuit 754. The first LC circuit 752 and second LC circuit 754 represent the two SRRs. In the embodiment shown, capacitors 756a and 756b represent the capacitance between the two SRRs. The capacitance values given are in picofarads and, as mentioned above, are those generated in the presence of an empty tube.

(207) FIG. 54 shows a graph of the S21 parameter of the SRRs represented by the circuit 750 of FIG. 53 with the capacitance values given in FIG. 53. The S21 parameter is plotted over a sweep from a frequency of 3700 MHz to 4500 MHz. As shown, a notch occurs at approximately 4200 MHz with the capacitance values created by the dielectric properties of the empty tube. This notch occurs at the anti-resonant frequency of the SRRs. The frequency at which the notch occurs will change depending on the dielectric constant of the tube. This is shown in FIGS. 55 and 56.

(208) FIG. 55 shows a second drawing of the circuit 750 of the same two SRRs drawn in FIG. 53. The capacitance values given are in pF and are those generated when in the presence of a full tube. As shown, the capacitance difference between the circuit in FIG. 53 and the circuit in FIG. 55 is ~ 0.03 pF with the circuit in FIG. 55 having the higher capacitance value due to the higher dielectric constant of the fluid within the tube.

(209) FIG. 56 shows a graph of the S21 parameter of the SRRs represented by the circuit 750 in FIG. 55 with the capacitance values given in FIG. 55. The S21 parameter is plotted over a sweep from a frequency of 3700 MHz to 4500 MHz. As shown, a notch at the anti-resonant frequency also occurs in this graph. The notch, however, occurs at a different frequency. While the notch in FIG. 54 occurs at approximately 4200 MHz, the notch in FIG. 56 occurs at approximately 4000 MHz. This shift in anti-resonant frequency caused by the dielectric properties of the surrounding material may be used by a processor to determine if the tube is empty or full.

(210) When an air bubble is present in the tube the capacitance value will be somewhere between that given in FIG. 53 and FIG. 55. Thus, in such an event, the notch would be somewhere between the 4000 MHz value and the 4200 MHz value. The location of the notch would be dependent on the size of the air bubble in the tube. Consequentially, the location of the notch in the frequency sweep may be used to detect the presence of an air bubble. Additionally, the notch may also be informative as to the size of the air bubble present.

(211) FIG. 57 shows an example graph, as measured by a network analyzer, of the transmission characteristics of energy through a split ring resonator component. The graph in FIG. 57 measured transmission with an empty tube in place in the split ring resonator component. Two parameters are plotted in the graph. Line 760 plots the amplitude of the transmission over the swept frequencies. Line 762 plots the phase shift of the transmission over the frequency swept. As shown by line 760, a rise in transmission occurs at approximate 4.4 GHz. Likewise, a change in the phase shift also occurs and is centered around the 4.4 GHz frequency.

(212) FIG. 58 shows another graph, as measured by a network analyzer, of the transmission characteristics of energy through the same split ring resonator component in FIG. 57. The graph in FIG. 58 measured transmission with a tube which was full of water. The same two parameters are plotted in the graph. Line 764 plots the amplitude of the transmission over the swept frequencies. Line 766 plots the phase shift of the transmission over the frequencies swept. As shown, the

transmission behaves differently when the tube is full of water. As shown by line **764**, a rise in transmission amplitude occurs at approximately 3.9 GHz. A change in the phase shift also occurs and is centered around the 3.9 GHz frequency. As above, these shifts may be used by a processor of an air bubble detection component (see FIG. **4**) to determine whether tube is full of water or if air exists within the tube. Among other applications, this may be used for automatic priming of a tube. The shifts may also be used to determine whether an air bubble is in the tube. For example, if the rise in amplitude and change in phase shift occurred at approximately 4.1 GHz, it would be indicative that the tube included both water and some air.

(213) FIGS. **59-62** depict another series of graphs as measured by a network analyzer. These graphs measure the transmission of energy through another example split ring resonator component. The graph in FIG. **59** shows the power of the received transmission over a frequency sweep with no tube present in the split ring resonator component. As shown by line **770**, the power of the transmission experiences the smallest amount of loss at approximately 4.9 GHz. The amplitude of the transmission thereafter experiences an increase in loss until approximately 5.2 GHz.

(214) FIG. **60** depicts the power of the received transmission over the same frequency sweep with an empty tube present in the split ring resonator component. As shown by line **772**, a similar low point followed thereafter by a high point in loss occurs. The low loss point in the transmission occurs at approximately 4.3 GHz, a shift of approximately 0.6 GHz from FIG. **59**. The largest amount of loss occurs at approximately 4.5 GHz, a shift of approximately 0.7 GHz from FIG. **59**. Thus the transmission of energy through a split ring resonator component may be used to determine whether or not a tube is present in the split ring resonator component.

(215) FIG. **61** depicts the power of the received transmission for the same frequency sweep with a full tube present in the split ring resonator. As shown by line **774**, a similar low point followed thereafter by a high point in loss occurs. The low loss point in the transmission occurs at approximately 3.75 GHz. The high loss point thereafter occurs at approximately 3.9 GHz. Again, both of these points are at a lower frequency then those that occur when no tube is present and when an empty tube is present. Thus, the transmission of energy through the split-ring resonator component may be used to determine if a tube is present and if so the contents of the tube.

(216) FIG. **62** depicts another graph of the power of the transmission over the same frequency sweep with a tube present in the split-ring resonator component. The tube used to create the graph in FIG. **62** was filled with foam. The foam was chosen such that its dielectric properties would be similar to those which would be created when an air bubble was in place in the tube. As shown by line **776**, a similar low loss point followed thereafter by a high loss point occurs. The low loss point occurs at approximately 3.9 GHz. The high loss point occurs at approximately 4 GHz. These values are both different from the values created with an empty tube and those created with a full tube. Thus, using the transmission of energy through a split-ring resonator component it may be determined if an air bubble is present in a fluid line.

(217) Another two example graphs depicting the transmission of energy through an example split ring resonator component are shown in FIGS. **63-64**. The graph in FIG. **63** depicts the transmission of energy when a full tube is incorrectly placed in the split-ring resonator component. The graph in FIG. **64** depicts the transmission of energy when a full tube is correctly seated in a split ring resonator component.

(218) FIG. **65** shows an example embodiment of a circuit **800** which may be used for calibration purposes in a system for detecting a bubble. The circuit **800** may become active when, for example, a “push to calibrate” button is depressed. As shown, the circuit **800** includes a VCO **802**. A voltage is supplied to the VCO **802** via a V.sub.TUNE line. This voltage causes the VCO **802** to generate a signal to be transmitted through a split-ring-resonator component **804**. The RF OUT signal from the receiving antenna (not shown) of the split-ring resonator component **804** may travel out to additional circuitry or components (not shown) for processing, rectification, storage in memory, etc. In the example embodiment the signal received by the receiving antenna is also looped back to

the VCO **804**.

(219) The signal travels to a directional coupler **806** from the receiving antenna. The signal is then rectified into a DC voltage by a rectifier **808**. After rectification, the DC voltage provides an input voltage to a summing amplifier **810**. The summing amplifier **810** is also provided with a reference voltage. The reference voltage may be selected such that it is sufficient to drive the VCO **802**. Due to the summing of the input voltage and reference voltage by the summing amplifier **810**, the circuit will end up locking to the V_{sub}.TUNE voltage which generates a frequency creating the maximum RF OUT signal. Thus the circuit **800** works as an automatic peak detector and effectively find the resonant frequency of the SRR.

(220) By calibrating the system when a tube known to be full of fluid is in place in the split ring resonator component **804**, the frequency which creates the maximum RF OUT signal may be determined. In operation, when the circuit **800** transmits at this frequency it should expect to see this same RF OUT signal if the tube is full of fluid. A processor (not shown) may make use of this information by instructing the VCO **802** to generate this frequency. The processor may monitor the signal received by the receiving antenna of the split-ring resonator **804** to determine if it deviates from the expected RF OUT signal. Deviation beyond, for example, a predefined threshold may indicate the presence of an air bubble. In some alternate embodiments, the circuit **800** may be configured to be calibrated with a tube which is known to be empty.

(221) FIG. **66** shows example embodiment of a circuit **820** which may be used to create a phase locked loop or automatic frequency control. The circuit **820** shown in FIG. **66** may be used to automatically control for any drift of a VCO **822** due to temperature etc. The circuit **820** shown includes a VCO **822** which produces a signal. The circuit **820** includes a directional coupler **824** to sample a proportion of the signal produced by the VCO **822**. This signal then travels to a prescaler **826** which scales the signal down to a lower frequency. A crystal **828** is also included in the circuit **820** to provide a reference frequency which may also be scaled to a lower frequency. The reference and the VCO **822** signal may be compared to produce a VTUNE voltage. This VTUNE voltage is then fed to the VCO **802** thus locking the VCO **802** frequency to the reference frequency.

(222) Referring now both to FIG. **67** and FIG. **68**, an example of a self test which may be performed by a system for detecting a bubble is shown. The example self test may be performed by any system described herein. In FIG. **67** four lines which each depict voltage over time are shown. The top line, VCONT, shows the control voltage supplied to a VCO over a period of time. The VOUT Full Tube line shows the output voltage of an air bubble sensor when the tube in the sensor is full of fluid. The VOUT Empty Tube line shows the output voltage of an air bubble sensor when the tube in the sensor is empty. The VOUT Air Bubble line shows the output voltage of an air bubble sensor when the tube in the sensor contains an air bubble.

(223) As shown in FIG. **68**, the normal operating voltage supplied to the VCO (when VCONT is low) causes the VCO to generate a signal to be supplied to a split-ring resonator component at the resonant frequency of an SRR which is in proximity to an empty tube. The VCONT low voltage is given as 1 volt for exemplary purposes. As is shown in FIG. **67**, when VCONT is low, VOUT Empty Tube is high and VOUT Full Tube is low.

(224) As a check, the VCONT may be periodically intentionally shifted to a LOOK HIGH voltage. The LOOK HIGH voltage may, for example, be chosen to cause the VCO generate a signal at the resonant frequency of an SRR in proximity to a full tube. The LOOK HIGH voltage is shown in FIG. **72** as 3 volts for exemplary purposes. As shown in FIG. **67**, when VCONT is high, VOUT Empty Tube should drop low because the SRR is no longer receiving a signal at its resonant frequency. Additionally, when VCONT is high VOUT Full Tube should also be high because the SRR is now receiving a signal at its resonant frequency. If the correct behavior is not observed for a tube thought to be empty or full, the self test may be deemed to have been failed. In such an event, an alarm or alert may be initiated.

(225) FIG. **69** shows another example of a self test which may be used to ensure proper function of

a system for detecting a bubble. Four lines are shown which depict voltage over time. The first line, VCONTROL, plots the control voltage which is supplied to a VCO to generate a signal. The VOUT Full Tube line plots an example output voltage of an air bubble sensor when the tube in the sensor is full of fluid. The VOUT Empty Tube line shows an example output voltage of an air bubble sensor when the tube in the sensor is empty. The VOUT Air Bubble line shows an example output voltage of an air bubble sensor when the tube in the sensor contains an air bubble.

(226) The self test in FIG. 69 is similar to the self test described in relation to FIG. 67, however, in FIG. 69, the voltage is swept high during the test period. In other embodiments, the voltage may be stepped high. Again, in the example, the normal operating voltage, VCONTROL low, is the voltage which would cause a VCO to generate a signal at the resonant frequency of the SRR with an empty tube present. In alternate embodiments, the normal operating voltage may cause a VCO to generate a signal at the resonant frequency of a full tube. In such embodiments, the voltage may be swept low.

(227) As shown, when VCONTROL is low VOUT Empty Tube is high and VOUT Full Tube is low. As VCONTROL is swept high the VCO's output signal may approach the resonant frequency of the SRR with a full tube in close proximity. This should cause VOUT Empty Tube to drop low and will cause VOUT Full Tube to go high. If correct behavior is not observed for a tube thought to be full or empty, the self test may be deemed to have been failed. In such an event, an alarm or alert may be initiated.

(228) When an air bubble is present, the resonant frequency of the SRR will be somewhere between the resonant frequency of the empty tube and the full tube. This should cause the VOUT Air Bubble voltage to rise from low to high and then drop from high to low over a single sweep. If such behavior is observed, an alarm may be triggered.

(229) Various alternatives and modifications can be devised by those skilled in the art without departing from the disclosure. Accordingly, the present disclosure is intended to embrace all such alternatives, modifications and variances. Additionally, while several embodiments of the present disclosure have been shown in the drawings and/or discussed herein, it is not intended that the disclosure be limited thereto, as it is intended that the disclosure be as broad in scope as the art will allow and that the specification be read likewise. Therefore, the above description should not be construed as limiting, but merely as exemplifications of particular embodiments. And, those skilled in the art will envision other modifications within the scope and spirit of the claims appended hereto. Other elements, steps, methods and techniques that are insubstantially different from those described above and/or in the appended claims are also intended to be within the scope of the disclosure.

(230) The embodiments shown in the drawings are presented only to demonstrate certain examples of the disclosure. And, the drawings described are only illustrative and are non-limiting. In the drawings, for illustrative purposes, the size of some of the elements may be exaggerated and not drawn to a particular scale. Additionally, elements shown within the drawings that have the same numbers may be identical elements or may be similar elements, depending on the context.

(231) Where the term “comprising” is used in the present description and claims, it does not exclude other elements or steps. Where an indefinite or definite article is used when referring to a singular noun, e.g. “a” “an” or “the”, this includes a plural of that noun unless something otherwise is specifically stated. Hence, the term “comprising” should not be interpreted as being restricted to the items listed thereafter; it does not exclude other elements or steps, and so the scope of the expression “a device comprising items A and B” should not be limited to devices consisting only of components A and B. This expression signifies that, with respect to the present disclosure, the only relevant components of the device are A and B.

(232) Furthermore, the terms “first”, “second”, “third” and the like, whether used in the description or in the claims, are provided for distinguishing between similar elements and not necessarily for describing a sequential or chronological order. It is to be understood that the terms so used are

interchangeable under appropriate circumstances (unless clearly disclosed otherwise) and that the embodiments of the disclosure described herein are capable of operation in other sequences and/or arrangements than are described or illustrated herein.

Claims

1. An apparatus comprising: a raceway configured to receive a fluid conduit; a shield configured to at least partially shield the raceway; at least one split-ring resonator disposed within the shield and adjacent the raceway, wherein the at least one split-ring resonator is configured to vary at least one property in accordance with a condition of interest being present in a main fluid flowing through the fluid conduit; a pair of antennas within the shield; a microwave generating circuit configured to generate microwave energy for transmission from the one of the antennas; a receiver circuit coupled to the second antenna and configured to receive the microwave energy; and a condition of interest detecting circuit operatively coupled to the microwave generating circuit and the receiver circuit to compare the microwave energy from the microwave generating circuit to the microwave energy received from the receiver circuit to detect the condition of interest within the fluid conduit, wherein the condition of interest detecting circuit detects the condition of interest in accordance with the affect of the variation of the at least one property on the microwave energy.
2. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a circuit board disposed on an outer surface of the shield, wherein the circuit board comprises the microwave generating circuit, the receiver circuit, and the condition of interest detecting circuit.
3. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the condition of interest detecting circuit detects the condition of interest by using the microwave energy to determine a change in the at least one property of at least one of a group delay caused by an inner volume of the fluid conduit, a propagation delay caused by the inner volume of the fluid conduit, a group delay caused by the split-ring resonator, a phase shift caused by the split-ring resonator, a resonance frequency of the split-ring resonator, a phase angle of a test signal applied the split-ring resonator, an amplitude of the test signal applied to the split-ring resonator, a frequency response of the split-ring resonator, a frequency response within a predetermined frequency range of the split-ring resonator, a Q of the split-ring resonator, a bandwidth of a split-ring resonator, a peak of a bandwidth response of the split-ring resonator, an anti-resonance of the split-ring resonator, a phase response of the split-ring resonator, an impedance of the split-ring resonator, a propagation delay of split-ring resonant, an S11 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S12 parameter of the split-ring resonator, an S21 parameter of the split-ring resonator, and an S22 parameter of the split-ring resonator.
4. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a split-ring resonator of the at least one split-ring resonator is disposed within a valley of the raceway.
5. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a split-ring resonator of the at least one split-ring resonator is disposed within a valley of the raceway and is concave within the valley.
6. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a housing with a pair of slits for receiving the pair of antennas.
7. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the each of the pair of antennas are split-ring resonators.
8. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the at least one split-ring resonator includes a split-ring resonator electrically isolated from the pair of antennas.
9. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a housing having two legs.
10. The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein each of the two legs are configured to snap-fit into a cooperating receptacle.
11. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising an energy coupler coupled to a first of the pair of antennas and another energy coupler coupled to the second of the pair of antennas.
12. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the at least one split-ring resonator includes a

split-ring resonator having an inner ring and an outer ring.

13. The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the inner ring and the outer ring interface each other in a ruffling pattern.

14. The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the outer ring includes capacitive extensions.

15. An apparatus comprising: a raceway configured to receive a fluid conduit; a shield configured to at least partially shield the raceway; a means for varying at least one property in accordance with a second fluid being present in a main fluid flowing through the fluid conduit, the means disposed within the shield and adjacent the raceway; a pair of antennas within the shield; a microwave generating circuit configured to generate microwave energy for transmission from the one of the antennas; a receiver circuit coupled to the second antenna and configured to receive the microwave energy; and a second fluid detecting circuit operatively coupled to the microwave generating circuit and the receiver circuit to compare the microwave energy from the microwave generating circuit to the microwave energy received from the receiver circuit to detect the second fluid within the fluid conduit, wherein the second fluid detecting circuit detects the second fluid in accordance with the affect of the variation of the at least one property on the microwave energy.

16. The apparatus according to claim 15, further comprising a circuit board disposed on an outer surface of the shield, wherein the circuit board comprises the microwave generating circuit, the receiver circuit, and the second fluid detecting circuit.

17. The apparatus according to claim 15, wherein the means for varying the at least one property is disposed within and conformed to the shape of a valley of the raceway.

18. An apparatus comprising: a raceway configured to receive a fluid conduit; a shield configured to at least partially shield the raceway; a means for varying at least one property in accordance with the presence of bubbles in the fluid flowing through the fluid conduit, the means disposed within the shield and adjacent the raceway; a pair of antennas within the shield; a microwave generating circuit configured to generate microwave energy for transmission from the one of the antennas; a receiver circuit coupled to the second antenna and configured to receive the microwave energy; and a bubble detecting circuit operatively coupled to the microwave generating circuit and the receiver circuit to compare the microwave energy from the microwave generating circuit to the microwave energy received from the receiver circuit to detect the bubbles within the fluid conduit, wherein the bubble detecting circuit detects the bubbles in accordance with the affect of the variation of the at least one property on the microwave energy.

19. The apparatus according to claim 18, further comprising a circuit board disposed on an outer surface of the shield, wherein the circuit board comprises the microwave generating circuit, the receiver circuit, and the bubble detecting circuit.

20. The apparatus according to claim 18, wherein the means for varying the at least one property is disposed within and conformed to the shape of a valley of the raceway.
