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Systems and methods for providing coating operations

Abstract

A coating system operations vehicle. Related methods are provided for filling a tank and operating coating equipment on a vehicle. The methods include pumping coating from containers into a tank on the vehicle and dispensing the coating for application on a surface. A method also includes removing residual coating from the containers after pumping out coating and adding the residual coating material to the tank. If the level of coating is at the desired level in the tank, a layer of water may be formed over the coating in the tank.

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Background/Summary

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS (1) This application is a Continuation in Part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/134,874 filed 21 Apr., 2016, incorporated herein by reference and which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/150,359 filed Apr. 21, 2015.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

(1) The invention relates to industrial systems and methods for applying coating materials and, more particularly, to mobile systems and methods for providing and dispensing liquid coating materials for application to surfaces.

BACKGROUND

(2) Conventionally, transport vehicles carry paint to job sites for dispensing from individual shipping containers to perform commercial projects. Containers of paint, typically referred to as buckets, are manually carried from the vehicle to locations around the job sites. The paint is then applied with a sprayer directly from the buckets to surfaces at locations around the job sites.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

(3) According to an embodiment of the invention, a method for providing a liquid coating, such as paint, for application to surfaces, includes providing a mobile coating operations vehicle having a plurality of tanks (e.g., six tanks) mounted for dispensing the coating directly from the coating operations vehicle. The combined holding capacity of the tanks may be on the order of at least 300 gallons (˜1,136 liters), with individual tanks having capacities ranging in size, e.g., from 50 to 80

gallons (˜190 to 303 liters) but a larger number of relatively small capacity tanks is contemplated to provision the coating operation vehicle with more coating colors or types. The coating operations vehicle further includes a plurality of hydraulic spray units mounted for powered operation on the vehicle with feed lines connected to extend from the mounted spray units to dispense the coating a substantial distance, e.g., 180 feet (60 meters) or more away from the coating operations vehicle. By way of example, prior to dispensing the coating, the coating operations vehicle is brought to a location at which a source of supply for the coating is present for transfer into the tanks. This location may be at a facility which distributes buckets of coating for contractor pick-up or at a central location at a job site. However, a distribution facility may receive the coating from manufacturers in large containers such as tank cars or 55 gallon (˜208 liter) size barrel drums A pumping system on the coating operations vehicle transfers the coating from the source of supply to the tanks. When the coating is simultaneously transferred from multiple buckets or barrel drums, the pumping system may include multiple draw tubes to transfer the coating into tanks on the coating operations vehicle.

(4) A manifold, connected between the pumping system and the tanks, includes multiple fill lines, with at least one fill line extending to one of the tanks. A manually adjustable fill valve is positioned in each fill line (i) for controlled flow of the coating into each of the tanks and (ii) for selection of tanks for receipt of the coating through one or multiple draw tubes into one or more tanks. The controllable valves facilitate selection of the coating from among varies types and may enable simultaneous transfer of different coating materials into different tanks via the one or more draw tubes. The coating material may be pumped from the source of supply and through each draw tube at, for example, a minimum rate of two gallons per minute via the manifold into the one or more tanks.

(5) When the source of supply of the coating is in the form of multiple buckets, each bucket may have as nominal holding capacity at least five gallons (˜19 liters), with the totality of containers providing enough coating to fill at least one tank. The step of pumping the coating may include using the pumping system to transfer the coating from the totality of containers, e.g., buckets, through the one or more draw tubes and into one or more tanks on the vehicle.

(6) There is disclosed a coating delivery system for providing a liquid coating, such as paint, for application to surfaces. In one embodiment, the coating delivery system includes a coating operations vehicle having a plurality of tanks mounted thereon for use in the vehicle, where the combined holding capacity of the tanks may be on the order of 300 gallons. The system also includes a plurality of hydraulic coating spray units mounted for powered operation on the vehicle. A plurality of feed lines are connected to extend from the mounted spray units which are, in one embodiment, capable of dispensing the coating 180 feet (60 meters) or more away from the coating operations vehicle. The exemplary coating delivery system includes a pumping system to transfer coating from a source of coating supply to one or more tanks, where the pumping system includes one or more draw tubes. The system also includes a manifold connected between the pumping system and the tanks, the manifold including multiple fill lines, each extending to one of the tanks. A sensor unit, which measures the level of coating within each tank, is configured to transmit a signal to the pumping system when the level of coating material in the one or more tanks is at a desired level in order to deactivate the pumping system.

(7) One embodiment of a method for dispensing liquid coating for application to surfaces includes providing a coating operations vehicle on which a plurality of tanks are mounted for use on the vehicle. The combined holding capacity of the tanks may be on the order of 300 gallons. The tanks are filled with the coating to a desired or predetermined level. The coating operations vehicle further includes a plurality of hydraulic spray units mounted for powered operation on the vehicle and a plurality of hose lines connected to extend from the mounted spray units which are capable of dispensing the coating 180 feet (60 meters) or more away from the coating operations vehicle. A first input manifold is connected between multiple ones of the tanks and at least a first of the

hydraulic spray units, with the first input manifold including a plurality of manifold input lines, each connected to receive flow of coating material from one of the tanks.

(8) The first input manifold also includes at least one output line connected between the manifold input lines and at least one of the hydraulic spray units to carry flow of coating material from the manifold input lines to at least one of the hydraulic spray units. The method may include providing one or more additional input manifolds, with each input manifold including a plurality of additional manifold input lines and at least one output line. Each additional input manifold is also connected to receive flow of coating material from one of the tanks, and the at least one output line is connected between the manifold input lines and at least one of the hydraulic spray units to carry flow of coating material from the manifold input lines to at least one of the hydraulic spray units. The method may also include providing one or more valves to control flow from one or more input lines in the first input manifold to enable selection of flow of coating material into the at least one of the hydraulic spray units. Valves may selectively deliver the coating material between different hose lines.

(9) There is disclosed an embodiment of a dispensing system for dispensing liquid coating, such as paint, to surfaces. The dispensing system includes a coating operations vehicle and a plurality of tanks mounted for use on the coating operations vehicle. The combined holding capacity of the tanks may be on the order of 300 gallons. Each tank includes an output valve. The system further includes a plurality of hoses on reels mounted on the vehicle, flow through the hoses controlled with an input valve. The system further includes hydraulic spray units mounted for powered operation on the vehicle with an input manifold having input ports connected to the plurality of tanks and an output port connected to the plurality of hoses. The hydraulic spray units are configured to draw coating through the intake manifold from at least one in the plurality of tanks when the output valve of the at least one tank is in an open position. The coating spray units are configured to deliver coating material from the output port to at least one of the plurality of hoses when the input valve of the at least one hose is in an open position.

(10) A method for cleaning a liquid coating from one or more tanks on a vehicle includes opening an output valve of the one or more tanks on the vehicle and draining coating of a first type through the output valve of the one or more tanks. Pressurized water is applied along an inside surface of the one or more tanks to remove residual coating of the first type from the inside surface of the one or more tanks. The method also includes draining the water through the output valve of the one or more tanks and repeating the applying and draining steps if the drained water includes the residual coating material of the first type.

(11) A method for cleaning liquid coating material from one or more tanks on a vehicle includes opening a first output valve of one or more tanks on a vehicle and draining coating material of a first type through the first output valve of the one or more tanks and drawing pressurized water from a pump on the vehicle through a water intake valve of the one or more tanks. The pressurized water is applied along an inside surface of the one or more tanks to remove residual coating material of the first type from the inside surface of the at least one tank. The water is drained through a second output valve of the one or more tanks. The method further includes spraying the water through one or more hoses connected to the second output valve and repeating the drawing, applying, draining and spraying steps when the water sprayed through the one or more hoses includes residual coating of the first type. The method also includes pumping a coating of a second type through a fill valve of the one or more tanks using a draw pump if the sprayed water through when the one or more hoses no longer include residual coating material of the first type.

(12) An embodiment of system for cleaning a liquid coating from one or more tanks on a vehicle includes a vehicle and a plurality of tanks mounted for use on the vehicle, and a container to drain coating material of a first type from one or more tanks. The system also includes a water delivery device within each tank and a pump on the vehicle configured to provide pressurized water to the water delivery device within the one or more tanks and apply the pressurized water along an inside

surface of the one or more tanks to remove residual coating material of the first type from the inside surface. The system also includes one or more hoses configured to spray the water from the one or more tanks.
(13) An embodiment of a method for cleaning a nozzle of a spray gun includes drawing pressurized water from a pressure washer and injecting the pressurized water from the pressure washer to an interior region of the open container. The spray gun nozzle is inserted into the interior of the open container to impact the spray gun nozzle with the injected pressurized water for a minimum time period.
(14) Another embodiment of a method for cleaning a nozzle of a spray gun includes, after spraying a coating on a surface from a spray gun nozzle on an end of a hose, injecting pressurized water drawn from a pressure washer from orifices to within an interior of an open canister for a minimum time period. The spray gun nozzle is rotated about a position within the interior of the open canister to direct the pressurized water on the spray gun nozzle from multiple angles with respect to the nozzle position to dislodge residual coating accumulated on the spray gun nozzle during the spraying step. An embodiment of a system for cleaning a nozzle of a spray gun includes a coating operations vehicle which comprises hydraulic spray equipment operable to simultaneously apply coatings with multiple spray guns to perform a project at a job site. In one embodiment the system includes a canister, a pressure washer configured on the vehicle to draw a liquid from a first holding tank on the vehicle. The system further includes a pressure washer valve between the pressure washer and the canister to configure the pressure washer to deliver multiple sprays of pressurized liquid, e.g., water, through orifices into the canister to clean the spray gun nozzle when the pressure washer valve is in an open position. The system further includes a second holding tank on the vehicle configured to receive the pressurized liquid used to clean the component.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS
(1) Features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will be better understood when the following detailed description of embodiments of the invention is read with reference to the accompanying drawings in which like reference numerals refer to similar elements and wherein:
(2) FIG. **1** schematically illustrates a system for filling tanks on a coating operations vehicle with liquid coating material, according to an embodiment;
(3) FIG. **2** is an exploded view of an exemplary assembly comprising a cap which secures a filter within a draw tube of the system shown in FIG. **1**;
(4) FIG. **3** is a partial view of the system presented in FIG. **1** showing components for filling an exemplary tank;
(5) FIG. **4** is a side perspective view of the coating operations vehicle incorporating the system of FIG. **1**;
(6) FIG. **5** is a view from above of the coating operations vehicle of FIG. **4**;
(7) FIG. **6**A is a side perspective view of a tank shown in FIGS. **1**, **4** and **5**;
(8) FIG. **6**B is a side perspective view of an output manifold of the tank shown in FIG. **6**A;
(9) FIG. **7** illustrates a method for filling tanks on the coating operations vehicle with liquid coating;
(10) FIG. **8** is a schematically illustrates a system for dispensing liquid coating from tanks on the coating operations vehicle;
(11) FIG. **9** is a front perspective view of an intake manifold in the dispensing system of FIG. **8**;
(12) FIG. **10** is a perspective view of a hydraulic spray unit in the dispensing system of FIG. **8**;
(13) FIG. **11** schematically illustrates a plurality of hoses in the system of FIG. **8** shown extended to reach a plurality of locations about a job site;

(14) FIG. **12** is a front perspective view of an overflow tank in the system of FIG. **8**;
(15) FIG. **13** illustrates an exemplary method for dispensing a liquid coating from tanks on the coating operations vehicle;
(16) FIG. **14** illustrates another exemplary method for dispensing a liquid coating material from tanks on the coating operations vehicle;
(17) FIG. **15** schematically illustrates an exemplary system for cleaning tanks on the coating operations vehicle;
(18) FIG. **16** provides a perspective view of a series of water intake valves in the cleaning system of FIG. **15**;
(19) FIG. **17** illustrates an exemplary method for cleaning tanks on the coating operations vehicle;
(20) FIG. **18** schematically illustrates an exemplary system for cleaning the nozzle of a paint spray gun;
(21) FIG. **19** is a side perspective view of the paint spray gun showing a spray nozzle cleaned by the system of FIG. **18**;
(22) FIG. **20** is a perspective elevation view of a paint filter cleaned by the system of FIG. **18**;
(23) FIG. **21** illustrates an exemplary method for cleaning the nozzle of a paint spray gun;
(24) FIG. **22** schematically illustrates an exemplary system for changing oil in a plurality of engines on a the coating operations vehicle;
(25) FIG. **23**A is a perspective view of a portion of the oil changing system showing an exemplary hose attached in a retracted configuration while attached to an engine;
(26) FIG. **23**B is a perspective view of another portion of the oil changing system showing an exemplary cut off valve on an end of the hose of FIG. **23**A with the hose shown in an extended position;
(27) FIG. **24** illustrates an exemplary method for changing oil in a plurality of engines mounted on the coating operations vehicle;
(28) FIG. **25** schematically illustrates a system for refilling oil reservoirs in a plurality of engines mounted on the coating operations vehicle;
(29) FIG. **26** illustrates an exemplary method for refilling oil reservoirs in a plurality of engines mounted on the coating operations vehicle;
(30) FIG. **27** schematically illustrates a system for filling tanks on a second vehicle with a pump positioned on the coating operations vehicle; and
(31) FIG. **28** illustrates an exemplary method for filling tanks on the second vehicle with the pump positioned on a first vehicle.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

(32) Before describing in detail particular embodiments of systems and methods according to the invention, it is noted that the present invention resides primarily in a novel and non-obvious combination of components and process steps. So as not to obscure the disclosure with details that will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, certain conventional components and steps have been omitted or presented with lesser detail, while the drawings and the specification describe in greater detail other elements and steps pertinent to understanding the invention. Further, the illustration of an embodiment does not define limits as to the definition of any system or method according to the invention, but only provide examples which include features that are permissive rather than mandatory and illustrative rather than exhaustive.
(33) Novel subsystems are now described for a mobile industrial coating system **4**. In the illustrated embodiments the subsystems are integrated into a truck. Exemplary methods of operating the associated subsystems are also illustrated. The meaning of the term coating spans a wide variety of spray-on coatings, including paints, primers, sealants and a variety of finish coatings typically applied to surfaces. When the description refers to paint it is to be understood that, unless otherwise stated, the description is not limited to embodiments which apply paint and can apply to coatings generally. Also, the terms coating and coating material are used interchangeably to describe a

coating. Generally, many embodiments and examples of the invention are described with reference to equipment which pumps liquid, including generating high pressure sprays. Use of terms such as paint sprayer, hydraulic sprayer, draw pump and paint sprayer pump are to be understood as equipment which includes a pump suitable for the described purpose with understanding that, in principal other types of pumps may perform the described function.

(34) The example system **4** comprises a series of subsystems assembled primarily on the bed of the truck to provide the illustrated coating operations vehicle **8**. It is to be understood that the configuration of the coating operations vehicle and the sizes of components thereon may be varied as may be most suitable to optimally perform daily activities for any in the variety of large scale industrial activities, including interior and exterior painting of buildings and other structures. Although the following description of the vehicle **8** and associated subsystems refers to paint as the coating, it is to be understood that any liquid coating may be handled by the vehicle **8** and its subsystems. The subsystems include: (i) a paint filling system **10** which transfers large quantities of paint to the vehicle for high volume dispensing; (ii) a multi-user paint dispensing system **200** which pumps the paint from large reservoir tanks through multiple hose lines that enable simultaneous spraying of different coatings (e.g., multiple coating types or multiple coating colors), by operators at large distances from the vehicle (e.g., for interior and exterior work in different buildings or in different rooms of the same building); and a series of cleaning and maintenance systems which reduce cleaning time and extend equipment life, including; (iii) a nozzle spray cleaning system **600**; (iv) a tank cleaning system **400** which facilitates changing of coating types and colors in the reservoir tanks; (v) a pump lubrication system **1000**; and (vi) a multi-pump oil changing system **800** for motorized equipment installed on the vehicle **8**. Generally, the mobile industrial painting system **4** provides a series of features which reduce equipment operating costs and reduce the time and costs for preparing and performing painting services. The unique combination of subsystems provides overall reductions in the labor required for performing daily activities (e.g., set-up, actual painting, cleaning and associated maintenance), permitting division of labor, a higher level of productivity and lower overall cost of providing services.

(35) Before describing the subsystems in detail, exemplary features of a few of the subsystems are summarized. The tank filling system **10** provides high volume delivery of paint into a series of tanks during a large volume dedicated fill operation that can transfer the liquid from over a hundred smaller (e.g., five gallon capacity) containers. See the example embodiment of FIG. **1**. The filling process avoids waste due to non-transfer of residual paint otherwise left in the containers. The process prevents loss of liquid which normally remains in a container with a conventional paint pumping system that draws paint directly from the smaller container. Conventional systems do not draw all of the paint from the smaller containers. However, during a transfer operation (e.g., from multiple five gallon buckets into a tank) with the filling system **10**, the system can minimize the amount of residual paint in the container. The transfer operation performed with the tank filling system enables the operator to manually facilitate transfer of any paint remaining in the container after a pumping system initially transfers most of the contents. Thus, for the first time, systems are provided which enable a practical method, which is both time efficient and convenient, for preventing loss of relatively small amounts of paint, e.g., between two and eight ounces, which would otherwise be cumulatively lost in the process of serially drawing paint from multiple small containers. With conventional dispensing systems and methods, efforts to avoid loss of such residual amounts of coating present in buckets have not been regarded worthwhile in the overall cost structure for performing coating operations.

(36) The tank dispensing system **200** provides a level of flexibility heretofore not available to customize operations for the needs of a particular activity. See the example embodiment of FIG. **2**. With multiple tanks, each connected to operate through a dedicated pump system, also mounted on the coating operations vehicle **8**, the mobile system can carry a different coating material (e.g., interior or exterior paint or primer) in each tank; and the associated pump system can feed multiple

spray lines so that multiple painters can each quickly change the coating being dispensed without having, for example, to clear the pumps, intake lines, hoses and spray equipment when changing the coating. This avoids waste and eliminates a series of steps normally taken by a painter in order to transition between different types of coating applications on the same surface or to move between rooms in a building that have different coating requirements. Advantageously, multiple long spray hoses (e.g., greater than two hundred feet in length, and ranging up to 400 feet (˜122 meters) or more), may be connected to each of the tanks and extended from the vehicle **8** to easily deliver paint to various locations around a job site. This relieves workers from having to bring heavy, cumbersome buckets of paint into, or within a few feet of, a room being painted. The workers can apply paint using With spray guns attached on the ends of hoses of extended lengths, workers can apply the paint without having the time consuming burden of carrying volumes of the paint within 50 feet (˜15 meters) from the point of application, unsealing a full bucket of paint and transferring the intake end of a hose from an empty bucket to a full bucket in order to draw more paint into the spray gun. Rather, the tank dispensing system **200** allows the operator to continue applying the coating without frequent disruptions to interchange containers.

(37) Another advantage of the tank dispensing system **200** is that advantageously, the tanks **12** on the coating operations vehicle **8** are sufficiently large that multiple workers can continuously draw paint from each tank to apply the same coating on multiple large surface areas that are at different locations on the same job site—without incurring down-time to refill paint containers. Generally, with the system **200**, operators are able to spend a higher percentage of time applying coatings instead of changing between different types of coating containers and cleaning work areas after changing of containers. Further, when changing the type of coating to be applied (e.g. when going from a primer to a paint, it is no longer necessary to clear the lines feeding the sprayer since lines for each coating type or color can be dedicated to that coating type or color. The painter can simply disconnect the sprayer, clean the sprayer with the system **600** and attach the sprayer to a different feed line to provide the next coating. See FIGS. **18** and **21**.

(38) With the tank dispensing system **200** providing an ability to rapidly change the coating being sprayed, it becomes advantageous to move the sprayers among feed lines containing different coatings. The nozzle cleaning system **600** is readily and conveniently available [in a work station format] for rapid light cleaning when changing the coating and for deep cleaning, such as required after extended use or drying of coating material, to remove residual paint which typically builds up inside a nozzle or a safety housing or along the tip of the spray gun. Advantageously, the system allows a person to clean the spray gun nozzles by selectively applying high pressure water to impinge on surfaces of the nozzles and dislodge residual paint, e.g., on the interior surfaces

(39) In the past it was not practical to use large tanks, e.g., having capacity in the range of 50 to 100 gallons (˜189 to 379 liters), to dispense paint. In part this was because storage of paint for long periods of time in vessels exposed to air causes drying and collection of residues which would have to be completely removed from the vessel interior before introducing a different type or a different color of coating material. The tank cleaning system **400** is provided on the vehicle **8** for in situ cleaning, whenever it becomes necessary, to replace a first type of coating used in one of the tanks with a second type of coating. The system **400** quickly cleans interior surfaces of the tank to ensure that the first type of coating has been completely rinsed from the tank before the second type of coating is added to the tank.

(40) The mobile industrial painting system **4**, as embodied in the coating operations vehicle **8**, comprises dedicated equipment, e.g., pumps, compressors or generators. In the past, these have not been considered mobile or portable, but now, the same equipment is mounted for efficient use within the mobile vehicle **8**. Accordingly, the system **4** comprises subsystems which facilitate routine care and maintenance without having to be moved from positions of operation. For example, systems are also provided on the vehicle **8** to service hydraulic paint sprayers used in conjunction with the tank dispensing system **200**. Also, an in situ oil changing system **800** enables

convenient changing of engine oil in hydraulic sprayers with the system **800** comprising an auxiliary reservoir system **100** provided to refill oil reservoirs in the machinery and to collect spent oil.

(41) FIG. **1** schematically illustrates a system **10** for dispensing paint into a series of tanks **12***a-f* on the coating operations vehicle **8**, for high volume delivery during a painting operation involving multiple paint sprayers. As shown in FIG. **4**, six tanks **12***a*-**12***f* are positioned on the bed of the vehicle **8**. Each tank **12** has an 85 gallon (˜322 liter) capacity. The combined volume of the tanks **12** provides sufficient volume for a typical full work day of efficient painting while also affording flexibility to provide different kinds of paints and primers and other coatings, as well as paint of varied colors during the work day without having to refill the system. However, the tanks **12** are not limited to any particular tank size and the paint dispensing system **200** is not limited to any particular number of tanks mounted on the vehicle **8**. The tank filling system **10** advantageously fills one or more of the tanks **12** with a coating prior to commencement of the coating project (e.g. at a job site or at a facility having the paint supply). The paint supply may, for example, be available in relatively small (e.g., five gallon size) containers or in large containers (sometimes referred to as totes) holding up to or over 250 gallons (˜946 liters) of material.

(42) FIG. **1** depicts the tank filling system **10** for performing a first phase of filling one or more of the tanks **12** mounted on the coating operations vehicle **8**. In this example, multiple containers **24**, such as multiple standard capacity (e.g., five-gallon) buckets of paint are provided in sufficient quantity to provide the vehicle with a sufficient volume of paint to fill the tanks as required for a job. If a project requires 300 gallons of a coating, then the contents of 60 standard capacity (e.g. five-gallon) containers **24** of coating are transferred into the tanks. The tank filling system **10** includes a siphon or draw tube **26** with a first end that is inserted into each five-gallon container **24** of paint. To minimize exposure of paint in the bucket to the air, the first end of the draw tube **26** is inserted through a conventional, relatively small cap opening in the lid of the container **24**. A second end of the draw tube **26** is connected to an input of a draw pump **28**. Multiple draw tubes **26***a* and **26***b*, may be simultaneously inserted into multiple containers **24***a* and **24***b* and simultaneously connected through one or more draw pumps **28** to effect delivery into the tanks **12**. Although FIG. **1** depicts two draw tubes **26***a* and **26***b* simultaneously inserted into two containers **24***a* and **24***b* and simultaneously connected to the draw pump **28**, more than two draw tubes **26** can be simultaneously inserted into more than two respective containers and simultaneously connected to the draw pump **28**. In another example, each of the multiple draw tubes **26***a* and **26***b* can be connected to a different draw pump **28**. As shown in FIG. **1**, the draw pump **28** includes an output manifold with manifold lines **38***a*-**38***f* leading to the tanks **12**, with a series of fill valves **39***a*-**39***f* each positioned in a manifold line to control flow to one of the respective tanks **12***a*-**12***f*. An output hose **51** connects each fill valve **39** to an opening in a top of each tank **12**. One or more fill valves are opened, depending on which of the tanks **12** are to be filled with paint from the containers **24**. Multiple tanks can be simultaneously filled with paint when filling the multiple tanks with the same type of paint from containers **24**. If paint of a first color from containers **24** is to be filled in tanks **12***a* and **12***b* only, only fill valves **39***a* and **39***b* are opened during the filling of the first color paint from containers **24**. Similarly, if paint of a second color from containers **24** is to be filled in tanks **12***c* and **12***d*, only fill valves **39***c* and **39***d* are opened during the filling of the second color paint from containers **24**. When paint of the first color from containers **24** is to be filled in tank **12***a*, only the fill valve **39***a* is opened. The fill valve **39***b* is kept closed until the first color paint is filled in tank **12***a*, after which the fill valve **39***b* is opened and fill valve **39***a* is closed wile the first color paint is filled in tank **12***b*. The fill valves are provided with tags **31** (FIG. **1**) to identify a paint type or color for feeding each tank **12** as shown for one of the tanks in FIG. **1**. For example, the tag **31** may associate a green paint color with a particular one of the tanks **12**. Upon activating the draw pump **28**, paint from the containers **24***a* and **24***b* is siphoned or pumped through draw tubes **26***a* and **26***b*, transferred through the open fill valves **39** and into those tanks **12** corresponding to the

open fill valves.
(43) In the exploded view shown in FIG. **2**A, a draw tube filter arrangement **30** comprises an in-line filter **32** positionable within each of the draw tubes **26** of the system **10** so that, during operation of the tank filling system **10**, a filter **32** is in the coating flow path of each draw tube to separate or remove debris or other material from the liquid coating passing from each container **24** and into a tank **12**. During the tank filling operation, a first end **34** of the draw tube is positioned near or at the bottom of the container to draw the liquid coating. An opposing second end of the draw tube is connected to the draw pump **28** to send the coating through the pump and on to a tank **12**.
(44) The filter **32** is inserted into the draw tube **26** through the first end **34** which end has a first series of threads formed along an outside surface thereof. A removable spacer cap **32**, having a bore of a first diameter extending there through, is attachable to the first end **34** of the draw tube. Attachment of the spacer cap **33** to the draw tube **26** is effected with mating engagement between a series of threads (not shown) formed along the surface of the bore and the threads of the draw tube first end **34**. The filter **32**, being generally cylindrical in shape, has opposing ends, one of which is positionable directly against a surface of the cap **33**. The cap bore is of a relatively small diameter compared to the diameter of the end of the filter positioned against the cap **33**.
(45) The cap **33** may be threaded on to the draw tube first end **34**. The filter **32** strains paint or other coating as it is drawn out of the paint container **24**, i.e., to remove any unwanted contaminants or other material from the paint. The first end **34** of the draw tube **26** is positioned in the container **24** and the opposing second end is connected to the draw pump **28**. During operations the cap **33** is in contact with a base surface of the container **24**, but the grooves **36** prevent intimate or sealing contact about the cap bore opening with respect to the base surface of the container **24**, which would lead to unwanted suction on the base of the container **24**. In an example embodiment, the grooves **36** are orthogonal to one another, forming a cross about the draw tube opening.
(46) After the paint has been pumped from each container **24** into one or more of the tanks **12**, to avoid waste, residual paint remaining in individual containers **24** may be consolidated into a residual container, e.g., by pouring coating out of the containers which have been pumped out. Scraping the interior surface of the container **24** with a spatula to collect residuals may be a preferred method to optimally extract and transfer most of the residual coating into the residuals container for addition to the one or more tanks, e.g., by pumping coating out of the residuals container using the draw tube **26** and draw pump **28**. Use of the tanks to consolidate the coating provides further improvement in cost efficiency, e.g., on the order of three to five or more percent. That is, approximately 4 gallons of residual paint are recoverable for every 100 gallons of paint drawn into the tanks **12**. This rate of recovery also applies to relatively heavy coatings such as elastomeric paints which adhere to the side walls of the containers. This method also provides improvement in the time efficiency for applying the coating, in part because one worker can operate the tank filling system **10** to draw paint from the containers **24***a* and **24***b* into the one or more tanks **12** while, at the same time, another worker removes and consolidates residual paint into another container **24** for pumping into a tank **12**.
(47) After paint is drawn from each container **24** into the one or more tanks **12**, if the levels of coating are at the desired levels, the first phase of the filling of the tanks **12** is complete. The levels of coating in the one or more tanks **12** may be visually monitored and the draw pumps **28** may individually be shut off when each level of paint in a tank **12** reaches the desired level. In another embodiment, a sensor **29** (see FIG. **1**) is provided in each of the tanks **12** to monitor changes in levels of paint within the tanks **12**. Although FIG. **1** only depicts the sensor **29** in the tank **12***f*, it is to be understood that similar sensors **29** may be provided in each of the tanks **12***a*-**12***f*. Signals generated from the sensors **29** are applied to deactivate the draw pump **28** when the level of paint in the one or more tanks **12** reaches the desired level. For example, the desired level may be reached in an 85 gallon tank **12** when the paint level reaches a level corresponding to a volume in the range

of 75-85 gallons (˜75-322 liters).
(48) FIG. **3** illustrates a second phase of operation with the tank filling system **10** for filling a tank on the vehicle **8**. Although one tank **12** is shown in the figure, it is to be understood that, for the illustrated embodiment, all tanks **12***a*-**12***f* include this arrangement. After the paint **53** has been pumped into the tank **12** to a desired level **54**, the draw tube **26** is inserted into a container of water, such as a standardized container **58** of water. The draw pump **28** is then activated to draw water from the container **58** which passes through the fill valve **39**, into output hose **51** and into an opening **50** in the top of the tank **12**. The water forms a layer **60** of water in the tank over the paint **53** since water has a lower density than paint. The layer **60** of water remains on top of the paint **53** within the tank **12**. Advantageously, placing the layer **60** of water over the paint provides a form of a closed system for the paint **53**, isolating the paint **53** from elements in the surrounding environment. This prevents the nozzle **612** on a spray gun **608** from receiving relatively thick or coagulated portions of paint from the tank **12** and thereby mitigates clogging. This permits continuous use of the spray gun **608** for longer time periods, improving productivity of coating applications.
(49) Secondly, as paint **53** is pumped out of a tank having a water layer **60** over the paint, as the paint level in the tank **12** diminishes, the water layer **60** on top of the paint **53** continuously contacts, dilutes or washes an inside wall surface **62** of the tank **12** to help prevent formation of a skin of paint along the inside wall surface **62** of the tank **12**. Otherwise, with formation and eventual breaking away of such a coagulated residue from the wall surface **62**, there is an entry of debris into lines (e.g., hoses **230**) leading to the spray guns **608**, causing clogging in the spray nozzle **612**. Third, if the operator of a spray gun **608** neglects to check the level of paint **53** in a tank **12**, eventual ejection of water from the layer **60** through the sprayer nozzle **612** serves as an alert to refill the tank **12**. This can prevent a pump that normally draws paint from the tank **12** from running dry and becoming damaged, thus avoiding major repair. This also overcomes a drawback in conventional systems which render use of a layer of water less desirable. A layer of water could be placed over the surface of a liquid coating in a five gallon container, but in a conventional method of drawing the coating directly from the bucket, normally the draw tube is always kept in the same container and, as the coating is pumped out, more coating is periodically added to the same container to replenish the container with new coating material. However, with this pouring of paint over the water layer **60**, the water layer is no longer preserved as a layer on top of the coating material. Instead, pouring of more liquid coating over the water results in mixing and dilution of the liquid coating with the water.
(50) Subsequently, to prevent the spray gun nozzle **612** from receiving relatively thick or coagulated portions of paint, even more water would have to be added on top of the new coating material to form a new layer of water over the new coating material added to the container. The tank filling system **10**, having the layer **60** of water on top of the coating in the tank **12** does not result in this disadvantage. The layer **60** of water remains on top of the liquid coating placed in the tank throughout the process of drawing the coating down in the tank **12**. There is no addition of further water or dilution of the coating.
(51) In an example method, with different tanks **12***a*, **12***c* in the system **10** to be filled with different colors of paint, the first colored paint is initially pumped into the first tank **12***a*. Water is then pumped into the first tank **12***a* to form a layer **60** of water floating on top of the paint **53** and then pumping continues to clear the first color paint from the pump lines (e.g., the draw tube **26**). The second color paint is then pumped into the second tank **12***c*, after which a layer **60** of water is pumped into the second tank **12***c* to float on top of the paint **53** as described above. This process can be repeated for each other tank.
(52) The tank filling system **10** provides numerous advantages over conventional filling systems. By filling the paint into the one or more tanks **12** prior to commencement of spray painting, there is no need for workers to carry multiple containers of paint to various locations around a job site.

Instead, after the paint is transferred into the tanks **12**, the paint can be delivered to each of multiple painting locations with hoses stored on reels in the vehicle **8**. Each hose may be extended 350 feet or farther from the tank to be dispensed, as discussed below.

(53) FIG. **4** is a perspective elevation view, and FIG. **5** is a view from above, of the coating operations vehicle **8** illustrating portions of an embodiment of the system **10** installed thereon with six tanks **12***a*-**12***f* mounted on a bed of the vehicle **8**. The illustrated fill valves **39** are positioned in the manifold lines **38***a*-**38***f* of the draw pump **28**. Although six tanks are shown on the vehicle **8**, the tank filling system **10** is not limited to having any specific number of the tanks **12**. FIG. **6**A depicts the opening **50** in the top of the tank **12** where the output hose **51** is connected as an input to the tank, as shown in FIGS. **1** and **3**.

(54) FIG. **7** is an example flow diagram of a method **100** for filling tanks **12***a*-**12***f* on the vehicle **8**. In step **102**, multiple containers **24** are at a location for transfer into the coating operations vehicle **8**. The vehicle may be located at a job site when filling the tanks or may be brought to a supply center remote from the job site, such as the warehouse of a paint supplier. The paint supply may, for example, be available in relatively small (e.g., five gallon size) containers or in large containers (sometimes referred to as totes) holding up to or over 250 gallons of material.

(55) In step **104**, the first end of the draw tube **26**, having the spacer cap attached thereto, is inserted into each container **24** of paint or into the large container (tote) of paint. With this insertion, the base of the container **24** is in contact with the surface of the spacer cap **33** having grooves formed therein. Use of the cap **33** having the grooved surface when inserting the draw tube **26** prevents unwanted suction on the base of the container **24** because grooves **36** on the cap **33** permit more enhanced flow of liquid coating into the draw tube when contact between the draw tube and the base of the container would otherwise impede flow. Multiple draw tubes, e.g., tubes **26***a* and **26***b* may be simultaneously inserted into multiple containers **24***a* and **24***b* of paint.

(56) In step **106**, paint is pumped through the draw tube **26** using the draw pump **28** and into one or more tanks **12** on the vehicle **8**. In an example embodiment, this includes straining the paint through the draw tube **26** to remove unwanted contaminants from the paint based on the in-line filter **32** positioned within the draw tube **26**. Paint is simultaneously pumped through the multiple draw tubes **26***a* and **26***b*, that are simultaneously inserted into the multiple containers **24***a* and **24***b*, with the draw pump **28** and into one or more tanks **12**. In an example embodiment, the draw pump **28** is capable of pumping the coating material at a minimum rate of five gallons per minute. In one example, the draw pump **28** is capable of pumping the coating material from the container **24** into the manifold lines **38** at a rate of 5 gallons in 45 seconds. The pump **28** may be an air-operated diaphragm pump of the type driven by an air compressor. The pump **28** may have a one inch diameter intake bore. Suitable equipment is available from Price® Pump (Sonoma Ca). The compressor may be a model SS3 or SS5 from Ingersoll Rand (Davidson, N.C.).

(57) In step **106** multiple fill valves **39** may be simultaneously opened to pump coating into multiple tanks **12**. The fill valves **39** may be provided with paint tags **31** that identify the specified coating material by type or color that each tank **12** is to receive. The operator may, however, only open one fill valve **39** at a time to sequentially fill each tank **12** one at a time.

(58) In step **108**, after coating is pumped out of a container, residual paint left in the container is removed. This may include manually scraping an interior of the container **24** with an instrument, such as a spatula. The removal step **108** may be performed on a first set of pumped-out containers **24***a* and **24***b* while step **106** is being simultaneously performed to pump coating out of a second set of containers full of coating material.

(59) In step **110** the residual paint removed from the container **24** in step **108** is added to the one or more tanks **12**. This step may include collecting residual paint from each container **24**, according to step **108**, into one residual container and then pumping the residual paint from the residual container using the draw tube **26** and draw pump **28**.

(60) According to step **112**, a determination is made whether the level of paint in the one or more

tanks **12** is at the desired, e.g., predetermined, level **54**. This step **112** may be performed by visual inspection or performed with use of the sensors **29** positioned in each tank **12**, the sensors each providing a signal that controls operation of the draw pump **28**. Step **112** need not be performed after step **110** and the determination of step **112** may be performed while pumping coating into a tank (step **106**) such that the tanks **12** are continuously monitored during step **106** to determine whether a desired fill level has been reached, in which case the draw pump is deactivated during. When step **112** indicates a positive determination, the tank filling method **100** proceeds to step **116**. If step **112** results in a negative determination, the method **100** proceeds to step **114**.

(61) In step **114**, the draw tube **26** is sequentially inserted into next sets of containers **24***a* and **24***b* of coating material and the method **100** proceeds to step **106** if the next set of containers **24***a* and **24***b* of paint has the same type of paint as the previous set of containers **24***a* and **24***b* of paint.

(62) In step **116**, the draw tube **26** is inserted into the container **58** of water and water is pumped using the draw pump **28** from the container **58** into the one or more tanks **12** to form the layer **60** of water on top of the paint **53** in the filled tank. One to two gallons of water may be pumped into each tank **12** to form layers **60**. However, the amount of water pumped in step **116** is not limited to any specific quantity and may be of sufficient quantity to also assure that the hydraulic sprayer **210** (discussed below) does not run dry, e.g., prior to an operator observing discharge of water or watery paint through a spray gun connected to an emptied tank.

(63) Step **102** may include providing containers **24** of a first color or type of coating (first material), a second color or type of coating (second material) and a third color or type of coating (third material) at a vehicle location. Steps **104**-**112** provide pumping the first material type through the draw tubes **26** using the draw pump **28** and into tanks **12***a* and **12***b* until the level of the first material type in the tanks **12***a* and **12***b* is at the desired level **54**. Step **116** includes pumping water through the draw tubes **26** using the draw pump **28** and into the tanks **12***a* and **12***b* to form the layer **60** of water in the tanks **12***a* and **12***b* and to clear the draw tubes **26** and the draw pump **28** of the first paint. In this example embodiment, steps **104**-**112** are next performed to pump the second material through the draw tubes **26** using the draw pump **28** and into the tanks **12***c* and **12***d* until the level of second material type in the tanks **12***c* and **12***d* is at the desired level **54**. Step **116** includes pumping water through the draw tubes **26** using the draw pump **28** and into the tanks **12***c* and **12***d* to form the layer **60** of water in the tanks **12***c* and **12***d* and to clear the draw tubes **26** and the draw pump **28** of the second material type. In this example embodiment, steps **104**-**112** are next performed to pump the third material type through the draw tubes **26** using the draw pump **28** and into the tanks **12***e* and **12***f* until the level of third material type in the tanks **12***e* and **12***f* is at the desired level **54**. In the example embodiment, step **116** includes pumping water through the draw tubes **26** using the draw pump **28** and into the tanks **12***e* and **12***f* to form the layer **60** of water in the tanks **12***e* and **12***f*. Although an example embodiment includes sequentially pumping coating material of a first material type, a second material type and a third material type into the tanks **12***a* and **12***b*, the tanks **12***c* and **12***d*, and the tanks **12***e* and **12***f*, respectively, the example embodiment is not limited to this arrangement and fewer or more coating materials may be pumped into one or more of the tanks **12**.

(64) FIG. **8** illustrates an embodiment of the system **200** for dispensing paint from tanks **12***a*-**12***f* on the vehicle **8** With the tanks **12** filled with coating material according to the tank filling method **100**, spray gun operators may arrive at the job site and commence painting upon arrival with the tank dispensing system **200**, and without having to perform conventional preliminary steps, e.g., such as carrying and placing containers of paint at various locations around the job site, filling up containers of paint or moving paint sprayers around the job site.

(65) The illustrated tank dispensing system **200** includes multiple hydraulic sprayers **210***a*-**210***c*, each connected to a pair of tanks (**12***a*, **12***b*), (**12***c*, **12***d*), (**12***e*, **12***f*) through a different one of three input manifolds **211***a*-**211***c*. Where appropriate, the system **200** is described with reference to the hydraulic sprayer **210***a* and tanks **12***a*,**12***b* while the description applies to the other hydraulic

sprayers **210***b* and **210***c* and tank sets (**12***c*, **12***d*)and (**12***e*, **12***f*). FIG. **10** provides a perspective view of an exemplary hydraulic sprayer **210** powered with a gasoline engine **802** having a seven gallon gas tank. Other types of paint sprayers can be used in the tank dispensing system **200**. The illustrated configuration of the tank dispensing system permits the engine in each hydraulic sprayer to run uninterrupted for an entire work day, e.g., for eight hours. Feed lines connecting the tanks (**12***a*, **12***b*) to the hydraulic sprayer **210***a* have an inside diameter in a range of ⅜″ to ¼″.

(66) Each tank (**12***a*, **12***b*) includes a respective tank output valve **216***a*, **216***b*. Referring to FIGS. **6**A-**6**B, each tank **12** includes an output line **401** coupled to direct coating output from each tank **12** either through an output valve **216**, for entry to an input manifold **211**, or through a drain valve **402**. The input manifold **211** is, generally, a multi-port input manifold to a hydraulic sprayer **210**. In the illustration the manifold is connected to a pair of tank output valves **216** to selectively receive paint from one or more of the tanks **12** depending on whether the output valve **216** of each respective tank **12** is open. When the output valve **216***a* is open and the output valve **216***b* is closed, the input manifold **211***a* only draws paint from the tank **12***a*. When the output valves **216***a*, **216***b* are both open, the input manifold **211***a* draws paint from both tanks **12***a* and **12***b*. As shown in FIG. **8**, the input manifold **211** merges flow received from two output valves **216** e.g., a "T" input, for flow into one hydraulic sprayer **210**. The top perspective view of the intake manifold **211** shown in FIG. **9** illustrates the two inputs of an intake manifold **211** which receives paint from the tanks **12***a*, **12***b*. The output valves **216***a*, **216***b* are opened or closed, depending on whether coating from one or both of the tanks **12***a*, **12***b* is to be passed into the sprayer **210***a*, i.e., through the intake manifold **211***a*. The input manifolds **211***b*, **211***c* may have the same configurations as the input manifold **211***a*. In an example embodiment, if both tanks **12***a*, **12***b* hold coating material of the same color or type, both tank valves **216***a*, **216***b* may be opened to maximize a flow rate of coating material through the hydraulic sprayer **210***a*. The output valves **216***c*, **216***d* of the tanks (**12***c*, **12***d*) are connected with the intake manifold **211***b* and the output valves **216***e*, **216***f* of the tanks (**12***e*,**12***f*) are connected with the intake manifold **211***c* in a similar manner as the output valves **216***a*, **216***b* are connected with the intake manifold **211***a*.

(67) The multiple hydraulic sprayers **210***a*-**210***c* each include a pair of output lines each connected to a hose **230** on a hose reel (**228***a*, **228***b*), (**228***c*, **228***d*), (**228***e*, **228***f*), providing a two output manifold hose configuration where each of two hoses **230** is stored on a separate reel **228**. The term hose reel refers to a frame on which a hose **230** is stored and on which connections to the hose **230** may be effected through fittings mounted on the frame associated with the reel **228**. However, a hose may be connected directly to a sprayer **210** and simply wound on a reel **228**. As indicated in FIG. **5**, the hose reels **228** are stored in a rear portion of the coating operations vehicle **8**. The output configuration of the tank dispensing system **200** described for the hydraulic sprayer **210***a* and hose reels (**228***a*, **228***b*) is exemplary of corresponding configurations for the hydraulic sprayers **210***b*, **210***c* and associated hose reels (**228***c*,**228***d*), (**228***e*,**228***f*).

(68) For the hydraulic sprayer **210***a*, each hose reel (**228***a*,**228***b*) includes an input valve **240***a* and **240***b* connected to receive flow from the sprayer **210***a*, i.e., providing a sprayer output manifold having two hoses **239** (hose lines) connected to simultaneously operate two spray guns. When both input valves **240***a* and **240***b* are open, the hydraulic sprayer **210***a* delivers paint to hose lines in both hose reels **228***a* and **228***b*. If one input valve **240***a* is open and the other input valve **240***b* is closed, the hydraulic sprayer **210***a* only delivers paint to the hose reel **228***a* with the open input valve **240***a*. In one example, an input valve **240**, for hose reel **228** may be closed if the hose reel **228** is not in use or becomes inoperable, e.g., in the event of a blown hose line. A first end of each hose reel **228** is connected to the input valve **240** to receive the paint, and an opposing second end of each hose reel **228** is attachable to a spray gun **608** shown in FIG. **19**. In an example embodiment, the hose reels **228** have inside diameters in a range of ⅜″-½″.

(69) Although the arrangement of the tank dispensing system shown in FIG. **8** illustrates six tanks **12***a*-**12***f*, three hydraulic sprayers **210***a*-**210***c* and six hose reels **228***a*-**228***f* on the vehicle **8**,

numerous other arrangements are contemplated. The coating operations vehicle **8** may include less than or more than six tanks **12**, fewer or more than three hydraulic sprayers **210**, and fewer or more than six sets of hose reels **228** and hoses **230**. In other configurations there may be a single tank **12**, or more than two tanks, connected to each hydraulic sprayer **210** through output valves **216**, with the manifold **211** comprising two, three or more input ports.

(70) In other embodiments the configuration of the tank dispensing system **200** may provide one hose reel **228** and one hose **230**, or more than two hose reels **228** and hoses **230** connected to each hydraulic sprayer **210** through different input valves **240**. Each hydraulic sprayer **210** may be connected to hoses **230** of varying lengths, such as one or more relatively short hoses (i.e., hoses of a first length) for use at locations close to the vehicle **8** and one or more longer lengths hose reels (i.e., hoses of a second length) for use at locations more distant from the vehicle. In this example embodiment, the first length is in a range of 150′ to 400′ and the second length is in a range of 250′ to 400′.

(71) During use of the tank dispensing system **200**, the number of tanks **12** providing paint to the hydraulic sprayers **210** is determined by the settings of the output valves **216**; and the number of hoses **230** receiving paint for spraying, from the hydraulic sprayers **210**, is determined by the settings of the input valves **240** shown in FIG. **8**. Each hose **230** is of sufficient length that it can be extended from the vehicle **8** to a desired location at the job site to spray paint. In an example embodiment, generally, the lengths of the hoses may be up to 400 feet (˜122 meters) or more. FIG. **11** illustrates a plurality of hoses **230***a*-**230***f* of the tank dispensing system **200** extended to a plurality of locations around a job site. The multiple hoses **230** can be simultaneously extended from the coating operations vehicle **8** to multiple locations around the job site requiring painting, so multiple workers can simultaneously spray paint delivered from multiple tanks **12***a*-**12***f* through different hoses. For example, four of the hoses **230***a*, **230***b*, **230***e*, and **230***f* are shown extended from the vehicle **8**, each to one of the surfaces **292**, **294**, **296**, **298** on different sides of the building **290**, to simultaneously spray paint the surfaces on the different exterior sides of the building. At the same time, two hoses **230***c*, **230***d* are extended from the vehicle **8** to different locations within an interior of the building **290** to spray paint interior surfaces **293**, **295** on different interior sides of the building **290**. Thus a combination of six interior and exterior surfaces may be simultaneously painted about a building with the tank dispensing system **200**. Similarly, the system **200** can simultaneously apply coating material to interior or exterior surfaces on different buildings.

(72) Still referring to FIG. **8**, each hydraulic sprayer **210***a*-**210***c* is connected to an overflow tank **272***a*-**272***c* through an overflow line **279***a*-**279***c* with flow to the overflow tanks controlled by a primer valve **278***a*-**278***c*. The overflow tanks **272** are each secured in respective recesses **284** in a side of the vehicle **8**.

(73) Noting that the hydraulic sprayer **210** would normally operate at a high pressure, e.g., 3000-4000 psi, with the hydraulic sprayer **210** off, when the primer valve **278** is opened to slowly release high pressure within feed lines between the tanks **12** and/or the hoses **230** and the hydraulic sprayer **210**, paint within the feed lines is sent into an overflow tank **272**. Referring to the front perspective view of the overflow tanks **272***a*-**272***c* shown in FIG. **12**, the overflow tanks **272** are each secured within a recess **284** in a side of the vehicle **8**. The overflow lines **279** are secured to dispense overflow through an intake port in the top of each overflow tank **272**, providing the advantage of eliminating the need for each worker to have an overflow container to release pressure from the hose line. With the overflow tanks **272** and overflow lines **279** secured, these components remain stable when subjected to high pressures present in the feed lines.

(74) During use of the paint dispensing system **200**, when tanks **12***a* and **12***b* hold coating material of the same color or type the output valves **216***a* and **216***b* of tanks **12***a* and **12***b* shown in FIG. **8** are in the open position to maximize the flow rate of paint of that color or type through the hydraulic sprayer **210***a* and through the hoses **230***a* and **230***b*. When the paint color or type in one or both of tanks **12***a* and **12***b* is subsequently changed, the feed lines between the tanks **12***a* and **12***b*

and the hydraulic sprayer **210***a* and between the hydraulic sprayer **210***a* and the hoses **230** are cleared before the new color or coating type is passed through the feed lines. The feed lines are cleared by the system **400** discussed below.

(75) In accord with the example embodiment of FIG. **8**, FIG. **13** illustrates a method **300** for dispensing paint or another coating type from tanks **12** on the vehicle **8**.

(76) In step **302**, the input manifold **211** of a paint sprayer **210** is connected to multiple tanks, e.g., tanks **12***a* and **12***b*. The input manifold **211***a* of a first paint sprayer **210***a* is connected to a first plurality of tanks **12***a* and **12***b* and the input manifold **211***b* of a second paint sprayer **210***b* is connected to a second plurality of tanks **12***c* and **12***d* on the vehicle **8**, where the first and second plurality of tanks **12***a*-**12***d* have been filled with coating to a desired level **54**.

(77) In step **304**, an output of the paint sprayer **210** is connected to the plurality of hoses, e.g., including hoses **230***a* and **230***b* on reels **228***a* and **228***b*, which are mounted on the vehicle **8**. The output of the first paint sprayer **210***a* is connected to a first plurality of hoses **230***a* and **230***b* and the output of the second paint sprayer **210***b* is connected to a second plurality of hoses **230***c* and **230***d* on the vehicle **8**.

(78) In step **306**, with the sprayer operating to create pumping action, the output valves **216** of certain ones of the one or more of the tanks **12** are opened, e.g., based on determination as to which tanks **12** the coating is to be drawn from, causing the coating to pass through the input manifold **211**. If paint should be drawn from both tanks in an intake manifold, e.g., tanks **12***a* and **12***b*, both output valves **216***a* and **216***b* are opened. If paint should only be drawn from one tank **12**, then only the output valve **216** controlling flow from that tank **12** is opened. Step **306** includes opening the output valves **216***a*, **216***b* of one or more of the first plurality of tanks, e.g., comprising tanks **12***a* and **12***b* and may further include opening the output valves **216***c* and **216***d* of one or more of the second plurality of tanks, e.g., comprising tanks **12***c* and **12***d* and may further include opening the output valves **216***e* and **216***f* of one or more of a third plurality of tanks, e.g., comprising tanks **12***e* and **12***f*.

(79) In step **308**, with the sprayer **210** operating, the input valves **240** of applicable hoses **230** controlling flow through the hoses are opened, e.g., input valves **240***a* and **240***b* are opened to supply coating material through the hoses **230***a* and **230***b* from the pumping action of the hydraulic sprayer **210***a*. When coating is to be delivered through both hoses **230***a*, **230***b*, both input valves **240***a* and **240***b* are opened. When coating is only to be delivered to one hose **230**, then only the input valve **240** for that hose is opened. Step **308** includes opening the input valves **240***a* and **240***b* in the one or more of the first plurality of hoses **230***a* and **230***b* and opening the input valves **240***c* and **240***d* in one or more of the second plurality of hoses **230***c* and **230***d*.

(80) As a result of opening each of the input valves **240**, paint is drawn from one or more tanks **12**, through an intake manifold **211** and into one or more paint sprayers **210**. For example, paint may be drawn from one or more tanks **12***a* and **12***b*, through the intake manifold **211***a* and into the first paint sprayer **210***a*, and paint may be drawn from one or more tanks **12***c* and **12***d*, through the intake manifold **211***b* into the second paint sprayer **210***b*.

(81) Also in accord with step **308**, paint reaching the paint sprayer is pumped to one or more of the hoses **230** based on selective opening of input valves **240**. For example, paint may be pumped from the first paint sprayer **210***a* and into one or more of the hoses **230***a* and **230***b*, and paint may be pumped from the second paint sprayer **210***b* and into one or more of the hoses **230***c* and **230***d*.

(82) Referring next to step **310** and FIG. **11**, the hoses **230** are extended from the reels **228** to locations around an exterior of the building **290** and to locations within an interior of the building **290**.

(83) As indicated in step **312**, coating is then sprayed from the one or more hoses **230** positioned at the one or more locations, e.g., from one or more of the first hoses **230***a* and **230***b* and from one or more of the second hoses **230***c* and **230***d*. See, again, FIG. **11**, which illustrates positioning for spraying on exterior surfaces **292**, **294** of the building **290** and on interior surfaces **293**, **295** within

the building **290**.
(84) FIG. **14** illustrates steps in an exemplary embodiment of a method **350** for dispensing paint from tanks **12** on the coating operations vehicle **8**. As described in Step **352**, a coating sprayer **210** mounted on the coating operations vehicle is connected through feed lines to a plurality of tanks **12**. Next, the coating sprayer **210** is connected through a series of feed lines to a plurality of hoses **230**. See Step **354**. In step **356**, the overflow tanks **272** are secured to the vehicle **8**.
(85) In step **358**, each sprayer **210** is connected to an overflow tank **272** through an overflow line **279** having an in-line primer flow control valve **278**. The overflow line **279** is shown connected to an intake port in a top of the overflow tank **272**. See FIG. **11**. Generally, the paint sprayer's **210***a*-**210***c* may be connected to the overflow tanks **272***a*-**272***c* through the overflow lines **279***a*-**279***c* by opening in-line primer valves **278***a*-**278***c*.
(86) In Step **360**, with the sprayer **210** operating, coating can be drawn from one or more tanks to the sprayer when the associated in-line output valve **216** is in an open position. In Step **362** with one or more input valves **240** in open positions, coating is pumped from the sprayer **210** to one or more hoses **230**. Next, with at least one spray gun **608** connected to at least one hose, in Step **364** at least one operator applies paint to a surface. In step **366**, when all of the one or more operators, drawing coating from the same sprayer **210**, cease applying all coating from the sprayer **210**, pumping action in each such sprayer is turned off, e.g., after completion of step **364**, which may correspond to completion of a work session. Step **368**, one or more of the primer flow control valves **278***a*-**278***c* are opened to release pressure and coating present (i) within feed lines between the tanks **12** and hydraulic sprayers **210** or (ii) within feed lines between the hoses **230** and hydraulic sprayers **210**, to send material to the overflow tank **272**.
(87) FIG. **15** illustrates a system **400** for cleaning interior surfaces **62** of the tanks **12***a*-**12***f* mounted on the coating operations vehicle **8**. The described cleaning of a single tank **12** is exemplary of cleaning each of the tanks **12***a*-**12***f*. When a first coating present in one of the tanks **12** is depleted or needs to be removed, e.g., changed from a first type to a second type, the cleaning system **400** can operate on a tank **12** to clear out feed lines which have carried the coating into the tank or from the tank and through associated hoses **230** to spray guns **608**. The tank cleaning system **400** is particularly useful for providing a circulating wash for removing the first coating material from the tank and feed lines, especially before a second coating material is placed in the tank **12**. However, the cleaning system can also be used before refilling an emptied tank with coating of the same type and color.
(88) The tank cleaning system **400** includes an input line **39**L, having an in-line input fill valve **39**, and an output line **401** coupled to three output valves arranged in parallel (drain valve **402**, output valve **216**, holding tank valve **404**). The output line **401** is also shown in FIG. **6**. In other embodiments the tank **12** may include multiple input valves or fewer or more than three output valves. The input valve **39**, shown in FIG. **1**, is used to fill the tank **12** with coating. Tank output valve **216** is also associated with the tank dispensing system **200**, through which coating flows to the hydraulic sprayer **210** for dispensing through one or more hoses **230** to the spray guns **608**. The perspective view of FIG. **16** illustrates the series of fill valves **39** and drain valves **402**.
(89) The flow diagram of FIG. **17** illustrates an example method **500** for cleaning one or more tanks on the vehicle **8**. While the tank cleaning method **500** is described with reference to a single tank **12**, it is applicable to all of the tanks **12***a*-**12***f*. In step **502**, an output valve of the tank **12** is opened. In an example embodiment, the drain valve **402** of the tank **12** is the output valve which is opened. In step **504**, a remaining layer **407** of coating of a first type, such as illustrated in the tank **12** of FIG. **15**, is drained through the output valve opened in step **502**. The remaining layer **407** of coating of the first type passes from the tank **12** through the drain valve **402** and into a container **406** such as a five-gallon bucket. The tank drain valve **402** is then closed. However, even after performing steps **502** and **504**, draining the layer **407** of the first coating into the container **406**, residual coating of the first type normally remains along inside surfaces **62** of the tank **12**, and this

is removed with the cleaning system **400**.
(90) In step **506**, pressurized water, provided in a holding tank **414**, is drawn with the pump **28**, through a wash water intake valve **416**, and to a water delivery system **408** at the tank **12**. See, also, FIG. **16**. The holding tank **414** may have a 60 gallon capacity. To operate the system **400**, a feed line from the draw pump **28** is connected through the wash water intake valve **416** to the water delivery system **408**. During operation of the cleaning system **400** the wash water intake valve **416** is open. Each illustrated tank **12***a*-**12***f* includes such an in-line wash water intake valve which is open when the tank is being cleaned according to the tank cleaning method **500**. With the draw tube **26** of the draw pump **28** placed in the holding tank, the needed water from the holding tank **414** is drawn through the tube **26** by the pump **28** and pressurized by the draw pump **28**.
(91) With the valve **416** open, the pressurized water is fed to the water delivery system **408** and applied along the inside surface **62** of the tank **12** to remove residuals of the coating of the first type. The water delivery system **408** circulates water along the inside surface **62** of the tank **12**. In one embodiment, the water delivery system **408** is a circulating sprinkler system with which the residuals of coating of the first type are cleaned off from the inside surface **62** of the tank **12** by injecting water tangentially along the inside surface **62** with a circulating or circumferential flow. Consequently, any residual coating of the first type is rinsed off the inside surface **62** of the tank **12**. With the draw pump **28** activated, the injected water may be applied for a 5 minute cleaning period.
(92) After completion of the cleaning period, in step **508** the water applied along the inside surface **62** of the tank **12** in step **506** is drained through an output valve of the tank **12**. For example, the output valve **216** is opened so that the rinse water which has been circulated along the inside surface **62** of the tank **12** is passed through the opened output valve **216** and to the hydraulic sprayer **210**.
(93) In step **510**, the hydraulic sprayer **210** is activated to send the drained rinse water through the opened output valve **216** and through one or more spray guns on ends of hoses **230**. This spraying operation in step **510** clears the hoses **230** associated with the tank of the coating material of the first type.
(94) In step **512**, a decision is made based on whether, at the end of the cleaning period of Step **510**, residuals of the coating of the first type continued to flow through the spray coming through the one or more spray guns on the end of the hoses **230**. If only clean water was observed as a spray gun output during step **510**, the determination in step **512** is negative and the method **500** proceeds to step **514**. If residual coating of the first type was observed mixed with the water sprayed through a spray gun during step **510**, the determination in step **512** is positive and the operator proceeds to repeat steps **506**-**510**.
(95) In step **514**, the tank **12** may be filled with coating material of a second type according to the tank filling method **100**.
(96) In an example embodiment, the holding tank valve **404** is opened and the rinse water which was circulated along the inside surface **62** of the tank **12** is passed to a gravity fed holding tank **418** on the vehicle **8**. After the rinse water is passed into the holding tank **418**, step **506** is performed, and in step **508**, with the holding tank valve **404** closed, the output valve **216** is opened, and the water is passed through the hydraulic sprayer **210**. In step **510**, the hydraulic sprayer **210** is activated to spray the rinse water through spray guns on ends of one or more hoses **230**. This step **510** clears the hose lines **230** of the coating material of the first type and step **514** determines whether residual coating I was in the water sprayed from the hose lines **230**. In one example embodiment, the cleaning system **400** need not include the holding tank valve **404** and may dispense the rinse water from the tank **12** through the output valve **216** and the hoses **230**, without draining rinse water into the holding tank **418**.
(97) FIG. **18** schematically illustrates a system **600** for cleaning nozzles of spray guns which apply paint and other coatings. In the illustrated example, the nozzle cleaning is effected with high pressure water, but the applied liquid may be a water based solution or other fluid suitable for

facilitating removal of coating residue. After using the tank dispensing system **200** to dispense a coating from spray guns at the end of the hoses **230**, residuals of the coating typically build up on an inside **612***i* of the nozzle **612** or safety housing and along the tip of the spray gun. Conventionally, nozzle cleaning operations have introduced water which passes through the hoses **230** and through the nozzle, i.e., from the fluid passage on the inside of the spray gun. With the water passing along the inside of the spray gun, it has been determined that this method of cleaning does not completely remove the residual coating material on the inside of the nozzle in regions along the location of the tip. An inability to more completely clean the nozzles of the spray guns results in the nozzle tips having to be discarded, which is costly. The nozzle cleaning system **600** cleans the nozzles with high pressure water impinging surfaces of the nozzle tips from outside of the spray gun. This method and design of cleaning has been found more effective at dislodging residual coating material on the inside of the nozzle tips than conventional cleaning methods. With a nozzle cleaning system that can more effectively clean the nozzles, the useful life of nozzle tips is extended, and the tips need not be discarded with such limited use, thereby providing considerable cost savings.

(98) With reference to FIG. **18**, the nozzle cleaning system **600** includes a canister **602**, which may be of cylindrical or rectangular shape, having an opening **602***o* at the upper end. The view of the canister **602** is in cross section. The size of the opening may be substantially the area circumscribed by the perimeter along the upper end of the cylindrical or rectangular shape. The canister **602** comprises a series of water spray orifices **604** along the interior. Some or all of the orifices are shown positioned along the plane through which the view in cross section is taken. The orifices are positioned to eject sprays of water **606** at a high velocity within the interior of the canister **602**. As indicated in FIG. **18**, the orifices may be aligned in a plane, or they may be distributed circumferentially about the interior of the canister. The canister **602** may feature twelve or more, or as few as four, water spray orifices **604** distributed along the interior of the canister **602**. The illustrated number and configuration of orifices is exemplary. In an example embodiment, the canister **602** receives high pressure water, e.g., at 4,000 psi, from a pump which may be in the form of a hydraulic sprayer, referred to in the drawing as, for example, a pressure washer **412**. The pump draws water from the holding tank **414**. The needed water may also be provided directly from a local water source at a job site via a hose coupled to the pump. Water received in the canister from the spray collects at the bottom of the chamber **602***c* and can be removed through a drain **614** by gravity feed into a holding tank **418**.

(99) FIG. **19** provides a side perspective view of a spray gun **608** attached to a hose **230**, with an extension wand **610** positioned between the spray gun **608** and the nozzle **612**. With the paint spray gun nozzle **612**, including the nozzle tip, attached to the wand **610**, the nozzle can conveniently be extended through the opening **602***o* and into a chamber **602***c* within the canister for cleaning by the system **600**. Although FIG. **18** illustrates the nozzle **612** attached to a curved tube, it is to be understood that the structure as shown in FIG. **19** (i.e., a straight wand **610** with the nozzle axially aligned with the wand) can

(100) be conveniently be extended through the opening **602***o* and into a chamber **602***c*, with the nozzle extended in a downward direction. When the opening of the nozzle faces toward the bottom of the chamber, the orifices may be situated along lower portions and the bottom of the chamber **602***c* to direct spray to the interior of the nozzle at a variety of angles.

(101) The flow diagram of FIG. **21** illustrates a method **700** for cleaning the nozzles **612** of paint spray guns **608**. Step **702** is performed after a coating application during which coating is sprayed through a nozzle **612** on the end of a spray gun **608**, e.g., with the paint dispensing method **350**, described in FIG. **14**. As described in Step **368** of the paint dispensing method **350**, after pumping action of the hydraulic sprayer **210** is turned off, one or more of the primer flow control valves **278***a*-**278***c* are opened to release pressure and coating present (i) within feed lines between the tanks **12** and hydraulic sprayers **210** or (ii) within feed lines between the hoses **230** and hydraulic

sprayers **210**, to send material to the overflow tank **272**. It is not necessary to remove the nozzle **612** from the spray gun **608** in order to clean the nozzle. The cleaning process may also be performed expeditiously with the nozzle **612** attached to the extension wand **610** only, i.e., with the extension wand disconnected from the spray gun **608**. Generally, in Step **702**, the spray gun **608** or wand **610** is positioned to insert the nozzle **612** within the canister **602**. When the entire spray gun is connected, this may be conveniently effected by winding the associated hose **230** on a reel **228** (e.g., with a motorized drive) until about 15 feet (˜5 meters) of hose length extends from the hose reel. This provides a sufficient length of hose to permit bringing the spray gun to a position on or next to the coating operations vehicle where the canister **602** is located for nozzle cleaning with the system **600**. Integrally forming the nozzle cleaning system **600** with equipment associated with other systems on the coating operations vehicle **8** enables provision of a portable or mobile nozzle cleaning apparatus for use at the job site to effectively clean spray nozzles **612** immediately after use at the job site.

(102) In step **704**, with the pressure washer **412** activated, a first valve **616** is opened to inject pressurized water through the orifices **604** to create multiple high pressure, high velocity sprays in the interior of the canister **602**.

(103) The spray gun nozzle **612** is exposed to the multiple orifice sprays in the interior of the open canister **602** for a minimum time period which may range from one to two minutes.

(104) In step **706**, during the time period that spray gun nozzle **612** is exposed to the multiple orifice sprays the spray gun nozzle **612** is rotated within the interior of the container so that the pressurized water sprays are directed on the spray gun nozzle **612** from multiple angles to facilitate dislodging of residual coating from the spray gun nozzle **612**. The extension wand **610** and nozzle **612** may be rotated within the interior of the open canister **602**. In other embodiments, the canister and orifice assembly may be designed so that jets of pressurized water rotate about the nozzle **612**.

(105) In an advantageous design, multiple instances of ejected sprays **606** of water are simultaneously provided from multiple angles to dislodge the residual coating along the inside **612***i* of the nozzle **612**. This may involve rotating the nozzle **612** both clockwise and counterclockwise within the canister **602** to assure all portions of the nozzle **612** receive necessary amounts of the high pressure water sprays **606** from all relevant angles of incidence to assure complete cleaning of the nozzle **612**.

(106) In step **708**, water is drained from the open canister **602** to the holding tank **418**. Water may then be drained from the holding tank **418**.

(107) With the system **600** of FIG. **18**, when second valve **617** is open, the pressure washer **412** can be used to perform various tasks, such as cleaning components other than the spray nozzle **612**. For example, the pressure washer pump **412** provides pressurized water to the tank cleaning system **400**, for cleaning the inside surface **62** of the tanks **12** before the tanks **12** are filled with a different type of coating. The pressure washer **412** may also be used to clean in-line paint filters **618** that are removable from the hydraulic sprayer **210** of FIG. **8**.

(108) FIG. **20** is a side view of the paint filter **618** after removal from the hydraulic sprayer **210** for cleaning by the pressure washer **412** in the system **600**. The pressure washer **412** may be adjusted to a low velocity/pressure setting when it is used to clean the paint filter **618**. As the paint filter **618** is cleaned by the pressure washer **412**, water is also drained to the holding tank **418**.

(109) The hydraulic sprayers **210** used in the tank dispensing system **200** of FIG. **8** each include a gasoline powered engine **802** such as shown in FIG. **10**, and thus require regular oil changes, e.g., once per month. FIG. **22** is a block diagram of a system **800** formed on the coating operations vehicle for changing oil in a plurality of paint sprayer engines **802***a*-**802***c* on the vehicle **8**. As illustrated in FIG. **22**, the oil changing system **800** includes a quick change valve **808** for each engine **802**.

(110) FIG. **23**A is a perspective view of the quick change valve **808** including a hose **810** attached to the paint sprayer engine **802** with a threaded fitting on a first hose end that secures the hose to a

threaded oil discharge opening on the engine **802**. The threaded opening on the engine **802** is one which, in other applications, is used to secure a conventional drain plug.
(111) FIG. **23**B is a perspective view of a cut off valve **820** on a second end of the hose **810**. The cut off valve **820** opens or closes, by rotating the valve **820**, to drain oil from the engine **802**. In one embodiment, the cut off valve **820** may be secured to the second end of the hose **810** with a hose clamp **811**. FIG. **23**A shows the hose **810** in an initial retracted position **822**. In the retracted position **822**, the hose **810** is folded up and held by a clip **824**. The hose **810** is positioned in the retracted position **822** during the normal operation of the engine **802** and the paint sprayer **210**. FIG. **23**B depicts the hose **810** in an extended position **826** such as when the engine **802** is turned off and the oil in the engine **802** is to be changed, at which time the hose **810** is removed from the clip **824** and unfolded to move from the retracted position **822** shown in FIG. **23**A to the extended position **826**. When oil in the engine **802** is to be changed, the cut off valve **820** is positioned over a container or a drain (not shown) and the exemplary cut off valve **820** is rotated to an open configuration which allows discharge of the oil from the engine **802** into the container or the drain.
(112) The flow diagram of FIG. **24** describes a method **900** for changing oil in a plurality of paint sprayer engines **802***a*-**802***c* on the coating operations vehicle **8**. In step **902**, one or more coating sprayers **210** are mounted on the vehicle **8**. Although three paint sprayers **210***a*-**210***c* are illustrated on the vehicle **8** the embodiments are not limited to any specific number of paint sprayers.
(113) In step **904**, the first end of the hose **810** is connected to an oil discharge opening in the engine **802** of the paint sprayer **210**. In this example, the threaded fitting **812** on the first end of the hose **810** is connected to the threaded opening on the engine **802**.
(114) In step **906**, the second end of the hose **810** is moved from the retracted position **822** at the engine **802**, suitable during engine operation, to the extended position **826** to drain oil into a drain or a container. In step **908**, the cut off valve **820** on the second end of the hose is opened to discharge oil from the engine **802** into the drain or the container. In step **910**, after the oil has been discharged from the engine **802** into the drain or the container, the cut off valve **820** is rotated to a closed position.
(115) In step **912**, the second end of the hose **810** is moved from the extended position **826** to the retracted position **822**, e.g., by folding the hose **810** to the retracted position **822** using the clip **824**. In step **914**, oil is added to the engine **802** of the paint sprayer **210**.
(116) The oil changing system **800** provides a relatively clean and fast means for emptying oil from the engine **802** into a container or a drain. In contrast to this, conventional oil changing systems include a threaded oil change plug on the engine **802** housing which discharge oil around the engine **802** housing upon rotating the drain plug, and thus frequently require clean up. FIG. **22** illustrates multiple engines **802***a*-**802***c* on the vehicle **8**, where each engine **802***a*-**802***c* is fitted with the quick change valve **808** for permanent attachment to the threaded opening on the engine **802** for efficient discharge of the oil into a container or a drain.
(117) FIG. **25** is a block diagram of a system **1000** for refilling a reservoir **1004***a*-**1004***c* in the paint sprayers **210***a*-**210***c* on the vehicle **8**. To illustrate the system, operation of one paint sprayer **210** is described, but all of the paint sprayers **210***a*-**210***c* may include the same arrangement. FIG. **25** depicts the hydraulic sprayer **210** of the tank dispensing system **200** of FIG. **8**, with a piston **1022** and reservoir **1004** within the hydraulic sprayer **210**. With paint directed into the hydraulic sprayer **210** from the tanks **12** and paint directed out of the hydraulic sprayer **210** to the hoses **230**, FIG. **25** depicts the hydraulic sprayer **210** as including an upper chamber **1016** and a lower chamber **1014** separated by a gasket **1018**. The hydraulic sprayer **210** includes an input valve **1010** and output valve **1012** for each piston **1022**, where the input valve **1010** is opened and the output valve **1012** is closed when the piston **1022** moves up, to draw paint into the lower chamber **1014**. When the piston **1022** moves down, the input valve **1010** is closed and the output valve **1012** is opened, to push paint out of the lower chamber **1014** and through the hoses **230**. The gasket **1018** or seal separates the lower chamber **1014** from the upper chamber **1016** where a piston cylinder **1020** is

actuated and lubricating oil is delivered from the reservoir **1004** to the upper chamber **1016**. The gasket **1018** or seal separates the paint in the lower chamber **1014** to prevent the paint from mixing with the lubricating oil in the upper chamber **1016**.

(118) The reservoir refill system **1000** includes an auxiliary reservoir **1024** positioned above the three hydraulic sprayers **210***a*-**210***c*, each with a line **1026***a*, **1026***b* and **1026***c* connected to each reservoir **1004***a*-**1004***c* in each hydraulic sprayer **210***a*-**210***c*, for purposes of refilling each reservoir **1004***a*-**1004***c*. Thus, in an example embodiment, the reservoir refill system **1000** provides the vehicle **8** with multiple paint sprayers **210** and provides maintenance and service to the hydraulic sprayers **210** by simultaneously providing a larger auxiliary reservoir **1024** which feeds multiple reservoirs **1004** of the multiple paint sprayers **210**.

(119) As illustrated in FIG. **25**, in one example embodiment, valves **1032***a*, **1032***b* and **1032***c* are each positioned along one of the lines **1026***a*, **1026***b*, **1026***c* between the auxiliary reservoir **1024** and each hydraulic sprayer reservoir **1004***a*, **1004***b*, **1004***c*. In this example embodiment, the valves **1032***a*-**1032***c* are periodically actuated for a specific amount of time until the hydraulic sprayer reservoirs **1004***a*-**1004***c* are filled to a desired level. In an example embodiment, a worker actuates the valves **1032***a*-**1032***c* periodically during a day, on each occasion until observing that the hydraulic sprayer reservoirs **1004***a*-**1004***c* are at the desired level or full, such as by observing a reservoir overflow, for example. In one example embodiment, the reservoir refill system **1000** includes a drain to collect any reservoir overflow, such as a holding tank positioned beneath the reservoir on the vehicle, for example. A shelf may be formed above each hydraulic sprayer **210** with the auxiliary reservoir **1024** provided as an inverted bottle of lubricating oil secured on the shelf to discharge lubricating oil when the bottle is squeezed. In this example embodiment, periodically during the day, a worker squeezes the inverted lubricating oil bottle to top off each reservoir **1004** in each hydraulic sprayer **210**. Although FIG. **25** illustrates one auxiliary reservoir **1024** used to service all of the reservoirs **1004**, a respective auxiliary reservoir can be provided for each hydraulic sprayer reservoir.

(120) An advantage of the reservoir refill system **1000** is that in order to use the system **1000** the hydraulic sprayers **210** need not be moved during use. Moving the sprayers causes significant loss in throat seal. Thus, the lubricating oil and reservoir usage requirements for the pistons of the paint pumps is significantly lower than in conventional paint pumps, such as 75% lower, for example. A similar refill system can also be provided to refill hydraulic fluid of the sprayers **210**.

(121) FIG. **26** is a flow diagram of a method **1100** for refilling the oil reservoir **1004** in the plurality of paint sprayers **210** on the vehicle **8**. In step **1102**, one or more paint sprayers **210** are provided on the vehicle **8**. In step **1104**, the auxiliary reservoir **1024** of lubricating fluid is positioned on the vehicle **8** above the one or more paint sprayers **210**.

(122) In step **1106**, the auxiliary reservoir **1024** is connected to each reservoir **1004** of lubricating fluid in the one or more paint sprayers **210**. In an example embodiment, in step **1106**, the auxiliary reservoir **1024** is connected to each reservoir **1004** using respective feed lines **1026** with a respective valve **1032** in each line.

(123) In step **1108**, the valves **1032** in each feed line **1026** are opened to direct lubricating fluid from the auxiliary reservoir **1024** to the reservoir **1004** in the plurality of paint sprayers **210** until a level of lubricating fluid in the reservoirs **1004** reaches a desired level. In an example embodiment, step **1108** is performed by manually actuating the valves **1032** until the level of lubricating fluid visibly reaches a desired level. In an example embodiment, the determination of whether the level of lubricating fluid reaches the desired level is based on observing an overflow from the reservoir **1004**.

(124) FIG. **27** is a block diagram of a system **1200** for filling a tank **1204** on a second vehicle **1202** from the draw pump **28** positioned on a first vehicle, the coating operations vehicle **8**. In this example, the system **1200** fills one or more tanks **1204** on the second vehicle **1202**, such as a modular trailer, from the draw pump **28** and containers **24** of the system **10** on the vehicle **8**. In an

example embodiment, during use of the system **1200**, instead of connecting the output hoses **51** of the system **10** to the opening in the tops of tanks **12***a*-**12***f* on the vehicle **8**, the output hoses **51** are connected to openings in the tops of the tanks **1204** on the second vehicle **1202**. The system **10** is then operated in a similar manner as previously described, except the level of paint is monitored in the tanks **1204** on the second vehicle **1202** and the paint is drawn through the draw pump **28** into the tanks **1204** until the level of paint in the tanks **1204** reaches the desired level. In an example embodiment, the tanks **1204** include the sensor **29** that is used in the system **10** to monitor the level of paint and transmits a signal to deactivate the draw pump **28** if the level of paint reaches the desired level.

(125) As illustrated in FIG. **27**, the second vehicle **1202** may include a tank dispensing system **1206** including a hydraulic sprayer **1208** and hose reels **1210**, **1212** that operate in a similar manner as the tank dispensing system **200** discussed above. Although the tank dispensing system **1206** on the second vehicle **1202** depicts one hydraulic sprayer **1202** and two hose reels **1210**, **1212**, the tank dispensing system **1206** is not limited to this arrangement and can include more than one hydraulic sprayer or more than two hose reels. Additionally, although the second vehicle **1202** is depicted as including one tank **1204**, the second vehicle can include more than one tank, where each respective tank is connected to the pump **28** with a respective output hose **51**, as described in the system **10** on the vehicle **8**. In one example embodiment, the second vehicle **1202** remains at the location of the vehicle **8** after the tanks **1204** have been filled and the tank dispensing system **1206** is used to spray paint at a job site of the location of the vehicle **8**. In another example embodiment, the second vehicle **1202** is transported to a location other than the location of the vehicle **8** after the tanks **1204** have been filled, such that the tank dispensing system **1206** is used to spray paint at a job site other than the location of the vehicle **8**.

(126) FIG. **28** is a flow diagram of a method **1300** for filling tanks **1204** on the second vehicle **1202** from the pump **28** positioned on the first vehicle **8**. In step **1302**, multiple containers **24** of coating material are delivered to a location of the first vehicle **8**. In an example embodiment, in step **1302** a quantity of containers **24** are delivered which is sufficient to fill the tanks **12***a*-**12***f* on the first vehicle **8** and the tanks **1204** on the second vehicle **1202**. In step **1304**, the draw tube **26** is inserted into the container **24** of paint, in a similar manner as step **104** of method **100**. In step **1306**, paint is pumped using the draw pump **28** on the first vehicle **8** and into one or more tanks **1204** on the second vehicle **1202**. In steps **1308** and **1310**, the residual paint is removed from the container **24** and added to a container **24**, after which the residual paint is pumped from the container **24** to the one or more tanks **1204** on the second vehicle **1202** using the draw tube **26** and pump **28**, in a similar manner as steps **108** and **110** of method **100**. In step **1312**, the level of paint in the tank **1204** is monitored and a determination is made whether the level of paint is at a desired level, in a similar manner as step **112** of the method **100**. If the determination in step **1312** is positive, then the method **1300** ends. If the determination in step **1312** is negative, the method **1300** proceeds to step **1314**, where the draw tube **26** is inserted into a next container **24** of paint and steps **1306**, **1308**, **1310**, **1312** are repeated. In an example embodiment, if the determination in step **1312** is positive, water can be pumped through the draw pump **28** into the tanks **1204** to form the layer **60** of water over the paint in the tanks **1204**, in a similar manner as step **116** of the method **100**.

(127) Although the flow diagrams of FIGS. **7**, **13**, **14**, **17**, **21**, **24**, **26** and **28** are each depicted as integral steps in a particular order for purposes of illustration, in other embodiments one or more steps, or portions thereof, may be performed in a different order, or overlapping in time, in series or in parallel, or are deleted, or one or more other steps are added, or the method is changed in some combination of ways.

(128) The invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments but it will be evident that various modifications and changes may be made thereto without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the invention. The specification and drawings are, accordingly, to be regarded as illustrative rather than restrictive. Throughout this specification and the claims, unless

the context requires otherwise, the word “comprise” and its variations, such as “comprises” and “comprising,” will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated item, element or step or group of items, elements or steps but not the exclusion of any other item, element or step or group of items, elements or steps. Furthermore, the indefinite article “a” or “an” is meant to indicate one or more of the item, element or step modified by the article. As used herein, unless otherwise clear from the context, a value is “about” another value if it is within a factor of two (twice or half) of the other value.

Claims

1. A method of acquiring and applying multiple different paint coating materials to surfaces of a structure, comprising: a) providing a mobile road vehicle having a bed on which a plurality of tanks are mounted for use on the vehicle, the combined holding capacity of the tanks being at least 300 gallons, multiple ones of the tanks fillable with different paint coating materials, the vehicle further comprising a plurality of hydraulic sprayers mounted for powered operation on the vehicle and a plurality of feed lines connected to extend from the mounted sprayers to dispense coating material at least 200 feet away from the vehicle; moving the vehicle to a location at which a supply of at least a first coating material is present for transfer into some or all of the tanks; transferring coating material from the supply of at least the first coating material into a first tank in at least a first subset of the tanks with a pumping system comprising at least a first draw pump with one or more draw tubes connected to one or more of the supplies of coating material according to the following steps: (a) with a plurality of fill lines and a tank-fill manifold having (i) an inlet connected to the pumping system to receive at least the first coating material from at least the first draw pump and (ii) multiple tank-fill outlets for transferring received coating material to multiple tanks via one or more of the fill lines, each fill line connected for passing first coating material through one or more tank-fill outlets in a first subset of the tank-fill manifold outlets to fill at least the first tank in the first subset, where flow of first coating material through each fill line connected between the tank-fill manifold and at least the first tank in the first subset is controllable with one or more first valves; and (b) controlling, with the one or more first valves, flow of first coating material passing through one or more tank-fill outlets in the first subset of the tank-fill manifold outlets to selectively fill one or more tanks in the first subset; and b) providing a first sprayer input manifold connected between multiple ones of the tanks containing different paint coatings and at least a first of the hydraulic sprayers, the first sprayer input manifold including a plurality of manifold sprayer input lines, each connectable to receive flow of a different paint coating material from a different one of the tanks, and at least one output line connected between the manifold sprayer input lines and at least one of the hydraulic sprayers to selectively carry flow of one of multiple ones of the paint coating materials from one of the manifold sprayer input lines to at least one of the hydraulic sprayers.
2. The method of claim 1 including providing one or more additional input manifolds, each additional input manifold including a plurality of additional manifold input lines and at least one output line, each additional input manifold also connected to receive flow of coating material from at least one of the tanks, and the at least one output line connected between at least one of the additional manifold input lines and at least one hydraulic sprayer to carry flow of coating material from at least one of the additional manifold input lines to at least said one of the hydraulic sprayers.
3. The method of claim 1 further including providing one or more second valves to control flow from one or more input lines in the first input manifold to enable selection of flow of coating material into the at least one of the hydraulic sprayers.
4. The method of claim 1 further including controlling flow of coating material with one or more second valves to selectively deliver the coating material between different input lines and at least one of the hydraulic sprayers.