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(54) **SYNCHRONIZATION IN A WIRELESS MESH NETWORK**

SYNCHRONISIERUNG IN EINEM DRAHTLOSEN MESH-NETZWERK

SYNCHRONISATION DANS UN RÉSEAU MAILLÉ SANS FIL

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(73) Proprietor: **Industrial Scientific Corporation**

Pittsburgh, PA 15205-7500 (US)

(72) Inventors:

- **CROUTHAMEL, L. Robert**
Mars, Pennsylvania 16046 (US)
- **ARUNACHALAM, Raghu**
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15217 (US)
- **HAAS, Benjamin**
Monaca, Pennsylvania 15061 (US)
- **XIN, Henry**
McDonald, Pennsylvania
15071 (US)
- **MCCRACKEN, Lisa**
Oakdale, Pennsylvania 15071 (US)

• **JUBECK, Scott**

Sewickley, Pennsylvania 15143 (US)

• **TIMCO, Daniel, James**

McDonald, Pennsylvania 15057 (US)

(74) Representative: **Findlay, Alice Rosemary**

Reddie & Grose LLP

The White Chapel Building

10 Whitechapel High Street

London E1 8QS (GB)

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- **SOMAPPA ADMAR AJITH KUMAR ET AL: "A formal executable specification of the GinMAC protocol for Wireless Sensor Actuator Networks", INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON WIRELESS AND PERVASIVE COMPUTING (ISWPC), IEEE, 20 November 2013 (2013-11-20), pages 1-7, XP032544821, DOI: 10.1109/ISWPC.2013.6707433 [retrieved on 2014-01-08]**

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Description

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 **[0001]** This disclosure relates to ad hoc, mesh wireless networks for communication between safety instruments, communication approaches from instruments to a remote location, and end use applications that use data from the instruments.

BACKGROUND ART

10 **[0002]** US 2010/098102 A1 discloses systems and methods for reducing power consumption in communication networks, with one embodiment comprising a leader node in communication with a plurality of follower nodes wherein the leader node causes the leader and follower nodes to transition from an awake mode to a sleep mode where they consume less power.

15 **[0003]** US 2014/313966 A1 discloses methods, devices and computer program products for synchronization of wireless devices in a peer-to-peer network. A method of communicating in a neighborhood aware network (NAN) is disclosed wherein a subset of nodes can be designated master nodes which may transmit synchronization messages.

SUMMARY

20 **[0004]** The invention is defined in the independent claims to which the reader is now directed. Embodiments are set out in the dependent claims.

[0005] In an aspect, a network for connecting a plurality of network nodes with features as described herein includes a leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits a sync message to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of a network interval, wherein the leader node and the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period of the network interval and do not transmit information during a sleep period of the network interval, the leader node and plurality of follower nodes using less power in the sleep period than the transmission period, the plurality of follower nodes each comprising a timer, the timer adapted to time the transmission period and sleep period of a plurality of future network intervals in an absence of continued receipt of the sync message from the leader node during the plurality of future network intervals. When any of the plurality of follower nodes receive a sync message, the follower node transmits a message advertising one or more properties of the leader node during a predetermined period of the network interval. The one or more properties of the leader node includes at least one of a channel hopping sequence and a total number of the network nodes on the network. When any one of the plurality of follower nodes fails to receive a receive a sync message from the leader node, the follower node refrains from transmitting a message advertising a property of the leader node during the network interval.

[0006] The plurality of nodes are adapted to communicate with one another to determine the leader node of the plurality of nodes within communication range and a plurality of follower nodes. Optionally, the follower nodes each comprise a counter for tracking the receipt of sync message from the leader. The counter is incremented when a sync message is received and decremented when a sync message is not received. When the counter of any one of the follower nodes reaches a predetermined value, the follower node initiates a procedure for finding a new leader node. Optionally, when the timer is further adapted to time an expected receipt of future sync messages of future network intervals and when an actual receipt of the future sync message deviates from an expected receipt of the future sync message by a predetermined amount of time for a predetermined number of network intervals, the follower node adjusts the timer to more closely correspond with the actual receipt of the future sync message. The sync message may include data indicating the number of network nodes in the network. The length of the transmission period may be determined by the number of network nodes in the network. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices. The information may be assigned by reading an NFC tag. The information may relate to a concentration of gas or an environmental attribute. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices, and the one or more properties may be assigned by reading an NFC tag.

50 **[0007]** In an aspect, a network for connecting a plurality of network nodes with features as described herein includes a leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits a sync message to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of a network interval, wherein the leader node and the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period and do not transmit information during a sleep period of the network interval, and wherein during a predetermined time of the transmission period of the network interval each of the follower nodes that received the sync message transmit a message advertising one or more properties of the leader node. The one or more properties of the leader node includes at least one of a channel hopping sequence and a total number of the network nodes on the network. When any of the plurality of follower nodes fails to receive a receive a sync message from the leader node, the follower node refrains from transmitting a message advertising a property of the leader node

during the network interval. Optionally, the message advertising a property of the leader node is broadcast on a predetermined subset of channels. A new follower node attempting to join the network may listen on the predetermined subset of channels to receive the message advertising at least one property of the leader node to learn the at least one property of the leader node to facilitate the new follower node to join the network. At least one property may comprise the total number of network nodes already on the network and the new follower node will refrain from attempting to join the network when the total number of network nodes exceeds a predetermined value. After a predetermined interval, the leader node can refrain from sending the sync message and entering the sleep period for at least one network interval and listens for messages advertising at least one property of a different leader node. Optionally, the leader node is a gas sensor. If the leader node receives a message advertising at least one property of the different leader node, the leader node may start a process to cease performing as the leader node and begin performing as a follower node of the different leader node. If the leader node does not receive a message advertising at least one property of another leader node, the leader node may continue to perform as the leader node. The leader node and plurality of follower nodes use less power in the sleep period than the transmission period, the plurality of follower nodes each comprising a timer, the timer adapted to time the transmission period and sleep period of a plurality of future network intervals in an absence of continued receipt of the sync message from the leader node during the plurality of future network intervals. When the follower nodes transmit the message advertising the one or more properties of the leader node, the message may be transmitted with a single hop such that a node receiving the message does not retransmit the message.

[0008] In an aspect, a network with features as described herein for connecting a plurality of network nodes comprising: a first leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the first leader node transmits a sync message to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of a network interval, wherein the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period and do not transmit information during a sleep period of the network interval, and wherein during a predetermined time of the transmission period of the network interval each of the follower nodes that received the sync message transmit a message advertising one or more properties of the first leader node. Optionally, during the transmission period, the first leader node listens for information advertising one or more properties of a second leader node. The message advertising a property of the second leader node may be transmitted on a predetermined channel. The first leader node may listen on the predetermined channel. The message advertising a property of the second leader node may also be transmitted on a second predetermined channel. The first leader node may also listen on the second predetermined channel. The first leader node may listen for a period of time greater than the length of the network interval. When the first leader node receives for information advertising one or more properties of a second leader node, the first leader node may cease performing as a leader node and is adapted to begin a sequence to join the second leader node as a follower node. In this case, the plurality of follower nodes are adapted to detect an absence of the first leader node and begin a sequence to join a new leader node. The leader node and plurality of follower nodes use less power in the sleep period than the transmission period, the plurality of follower nodes each comprising a timer, the timer adapted to time the transmission period and sleep period of a plurality of future network intervals in an absence of continued receipt of the sync message from the leader node during the plurality of future network intervals. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices. The information may be assigned by reading an NFC tag. The information may relate to a concentration of gas. The information may relate to an environmental attribute. The one or more properties may be assigned by reading an NFC tag.

[0009] In an aspect, a network with features as described herein for connecting a plurality of network nodes comprising: a leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits a sync message to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of a network interval. Optionally, the plurality of follower nodes each comprise a counter for tracking the receipt of sync messages received from the leader node and the counter is incremented when a sync message is received and decremented when a sync message is not received, wherein any of the plurality of follower nodes will begin a process of electing a new leader node when the counter decreases to a predetermined value. The leader node and the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period and do not transmit information during a sleep period of the network interval. The follower node whose counter has decremented to the predetermined value may transmit a first nominate message to begin the process of electing a new leader node. The first nominate message may be transmitted on a predetermined channel. The first nominate message may also be transmitted on a second predetermined channel. The first nominate message may include data related to the suitability of the follower node sending the first nominate message to act as a leader node. The data may be calculated from a strength and reliability of signals received from other network nodes on the network. The data may be calculated by utilizing at least one of an instrument type of the follower node, a battery state of charge, and past signal quality. The first nominate message and data may be received by other network nodes and the data compared by the receiving network nodes to data related to a suitability of the receiving network nodes to act as a leader node, wherein the receiving network nodes can reply with either a reply nominate message with data indicating a higher suitability to act as a leader node or a concede message if the receiving network node does not have a higher suitability to act as a leader node. When the follower node sending the first nominate message receives only concede messages, that follower node may assume the role of leader node and advertises at least one property of itself as a leader node for other network nodes

to become follower nodes. When the follower node sending the first nominate message receives a nominate message with data indicating a higher suitability to act as a leader node, that follower node may send a concede message. The concede messages may be transmitted on the predetermined channel. The concede messages may also be transmitted on the second predetermined channel.

[0010] In an aspect, a network with features as described herein for connecting a plurality of network nodes comprising: a leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits sync message to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of successive network intervals. Optionally, upon nonreceipt of a predetermined number of sync messages by a follower node that follower node initiates a process of electing a new leader node by a sending a first nominate message that includes data related to the suitability of the follower node to act as a leader node. The plurality of follower nodes may each comprise a counter for tracking the receipt of sync messages received from the leader node and the counter may be incremented when a sync message is received and decremented when a sync message is not received, wherein any of the plurality of follower nodes may begin a process of electing new leader node when the counter decreases to the predetermined value. The first nominate message may be transmitted on a predetermined channel. The first nominate message may also be transmitted on a second predetermined channel. The data may be calculated from a strength and reliability of signals received from other network nodes on the network. The data may be calculated by utilizing at least one of an instrument type of the follower node, a battery state of charge, and past signal quality. The first nominate message and data may be received by other network nodes and the data compared by the receiving network nodes to data related to a suitability of the receiving network nodes to act as a leader node, wherein the receiving network nodes may reply with either a reply nominate message with data indicating a higher suitability to act as a leader node or a concede message if the receiving network node does not have a higher suitability to act as a leader node. When the follower node sending the first nominate message receives only concede messages, that follower node may assume the role of leader node and advertises at least one property of itself as a leader node for other network nodes to become follower nodes. When the follower node sending the first nominate message receives a nominate message with data indicating a higher suitability to act as a leader node, that follower node may send a concede message. The concede messages may be transmitted on the predetermined channel. The concede messages may also be transmitted on the second predetermined channel. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices. The information may be assigned to the node by reading an NFC tag. The information may relate to a concentration of gas. The information may relate to an environmental attribute. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices.

[0011] In an aspect, a network with features as described herein for connecting a plurality of network nodes comprising: a leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits a sync message to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of a network interval. Optionally, the sync message contains data indicating the number of network nodes in the network. The leader node and the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period of the network interval and do not transmit information during a sleep period of the network interval. Optionally, the network interval is of a fixed length of time, the transmission period is of a variable length of time based upon the number of network nodes in the network, and the sleep period comprises remaining time of the network interval after the transmission period. The transmit time may be divided between a first transmit time for transmitting high priority data and a second transmit time for lower prior data. The first transmit time and the second transmit time may be equal length periods of time. The leader node and plurality of follower nodes use less power in the sleep period than the transmission period, the plurality of follower nodes each comprising a timer, the timer adapted to time the transmission period and sleep period of a plurality of future network intervals in an absence of continued receipt of the sync message from the leader node during the plurality of future network intervals. When any of the plurality of follower nodes receive a sync message, the follower node transmits a message advertising one or more properties of the leader node during a predetermined period of the network interval. The one or more properties of the leader node includes at least one of a channel hopping sequence and a total number of the network nodes on the network. Optionally, when the timer is further adapted to time an expected receipt of future sync messages of future network intervals and when an actual receipt of the future sync message deviates from an expected receipt of the future sync message by a predetermined amount of time for a predetermined number of network intervals, the follower node adjusts the timer to more closely correspond with the actual receipt of the future sync message. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices. The information may be assigned to the node by reading an NFC tag. The information may relate to a concentration of gas. The information may relate to an environmental attribute.

[0012] In an aspect, a network with features as described herein for connecting a plurality of network nodes comprising: a leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits a successive plurality of sync messages to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of successive network intervals, wherein the leader node and the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period of each network interval. Optionally, the leader node changes a channel of the sync message in subsequent network intervals according to a channel change schedule and the plurality of follower nodes change a channel to receive the sync messages of successive network intervals according to the same channel change schedule, and the leader node does not change a channel of transmission

during the transmission period of the network interval. The channel change schedule may change the channel for each successive network interval. The channel change schedule may change the channel after a plurality of network intervals. The channel change schedule may be changed according to a linear congruential generator. Optionally, when any of the plurality of follower nodes receive a sync message, the follower node transmits a message advertising one or more properties of the channel change schedule. The channel change schedule may be changed according to a linear congruential generator. The one or more properties of the channel change schedule may comprise a seed, a multiplier and an intercept for the linear congruential generator. The channel change schedule may further indicate channels that are unavailable to broadcast the sync message. The channel change schedule may further indicate channels that are available to broadcast the sync message. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices. The information may be assigned to the node by reading an NFC tag. The information may relate to a concentration of gas. The information may relate to an environmental attribute.

[0013] In an aspect, a network with features as described herein for connecting a plurality of network nodes comprising: a leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits a sync message to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of a network interval. Optionally, the sync message contains data indicating the number of network nodes in the network. The leader node and the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period of the network interval and do not transmit information during a sleep period of the network interval. Optionally, each of the plurality of the follower nodes randomly select an interval during the transmission period to transmit data and without respect to a time selected by any of the other follower nodes. The time randomly selected may be with reference to a beginning of the transmission period. The network interval may be of a fixed length of time, the transmission period may be of a variable length of time based upon the number of network nodes in the network, and the sleep period may comprise remaining time of the network interval after the transmission period. The transmission period may be divided between a first transmit time for transmitting high priority data and a second transmit time for lower prior data and wherein the time randomly selected to transmit data is with reference to the beginning of the first transmit time and the second transmit time. The first transmit time and the second transmit time may be equal length periods of time. The leader node and plurality of follower nodes may use less power in the sleep period than the transmission period. The plurality of follower nodes each comprise a timer, the timer adapted to time the transmission period and sleep period of a plurality of future network intervals in an absence of continued receipt of the sync message from the leader node during the plurality of future network intervals. When any of the plurality of follower nodes receive a sync message, the follower node transmits a message advertising one or more properties of the leader node during a predetermined period of the network interval. The one or more properties of the leader node includes at least one of a channel hopping sequence and a total number of the network nodes on the network. Optionally, the timer is further adapted to time an expected receipt of future sync messages of future network intervals and when an actual receipt of the future sync message deviates from an expected receipt of the future sync message by a predetermined amount of time for a predetermined number of network intervals, the follower node adjusts the timer to more closely correspond with the actual receipt of the future sync message. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices. The information may be assigned to the node by reading an NFC tag. The information may relate to a concentration of gas. The information may relate to an environmental attribute.

[0014] In an aspect, a network with features as described herein for connecting a plurality of network nodes comprising: a leader node; and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits a sync message to the plurality of follower nodes indicating a beginning of a network interval. Optionally, the sync message contains data indicating the number of network nodes in the network. The leader node and the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period of the network interval and do not transmit information during a sleep period of the network interval. Optionally, the transmission period is divided between a first transmit time for transmitting high priority data and a second transmit time for transmitting lower prior data. Each of the plurality of the follower nodes may randomly select an interval during the transmission period to transmit data and without respect to a time selected by any of the other follower nodes and wherein the time randomly selected to transmit data may be with reference to the beginning of the first transmit time and the second transmit time. The network interval may be of a fixed length of time, the transmission period may be of a sync message. The follower node transmits a message advertising one or more properties of the leader node during a predetermined period of the network interval. The one or more properties of the leader node includes at least one of a channel hopping sequence and a total number of the network nodes on the network. Optionally, the timer is further adapted to time an expected receipt of future sync messages of future network intervals and when an actual receipt of the future sync message deviates from an expected receipt of the future sync message by a predetermined amount of time for a predetermined number of network intervals, the follower node may adjust the timer to more closely correspond with the actual receipt of the future sync message. The network nodes may be environmental sensing devices. The information may be assigned to the node by reading an NFC tag. The information may relate to a concentration of gas. The information may relate to an environmental attribute.

[0015] These and other systems, methods, objects, features, and advantages of the present disclosure will be apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment and the drawings.

[0016] References to items in the singular should be understood to include items in the plural, and vice versa, unless explicitly stated otherwise or clear from the text. Grammatical conjunctions are intended to express any and all disjunctive and conjunctive combinations of conjoined clauses, sentences, words, and the like, unless otherwise stated or clear from the context.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0017] The disclosure and the following detailed description of certain embodiments thereof may be understood by reference to the following figures:

- Fig. 1 depicts an overview of the worker safety system.
- Fig. 2 depicts a challenging environment for networking.
- Fig. 3 depicts a system for propagating an alarm in a mesh network.
- Fig. 4 depicts frequency channel overlap.
- Fig. 5 depicts a shared memory interface.
- Fig. 6A depicts a list of instruments on a display.
- Fig. 6B depicts a shadow gas display.
- Fig. 7 depicts a script process for the wireless network.
- Fig. 8 depicts a synchronization scheme and Fig. 8A depicts a method for choosing a leader from members of a network.
- Fig. 9 depicts a leader election process.
- Fig. 10 depicts a sleep cycle process.
- Fig. 11 depicts the wireless network mesh architecture.
- Fig. 12 depicts how the hardware enabling wireless network-compatibility can be extended to a platform using gateways to the Internet.
- Fig. 13 depicts the wireless network fitting in a 7-layer OSI Model.
- Fig. 14 depicts a method of the disclosure.
- Fig. 15 depicts a block diagram of an embodiment of the disclosure.
- Fig. 16 depicts a method of providing safety alerts.

[0018] The scope of the present invention is defined by the scope of the appended claims. All embodiments which do not fall under the scope of the appended claims are examples which are useful to understand the invention, but do not form part of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0019] Referring to Fig. 1, in order to provide various services and monitoring in a real-time or near-real time fashion with respect to portable environmental sensing devices, hazard detection devices, and other safety instruments and devices, instruments and devices is such a system need reliable methods communicate with each other and/or with a remote location, all while in a challenging environment. This disclosure describes various aspects of a worker safety system, general components of which are shown in Fig. 1. The disclosure describes various communications strategies and technologies to enable various applications and services related to worker safety. In addition to showing the general components of such a system, Fig. 1 and the accompanying description provide an overview of the communication approaches and strategies, certain useful accessories, and various applications enabled by the worker safety system.

[0020] Fig. 1 illustrates certain portable environmental sensing devices 108 and area monitors 110, but it should be noted that other safety devices may be used with the system such as, multi-gas detection instruments, a gas detection instruments, a portable electrochemical gas sensing apparatuses, respirators, a harness, lighting devices, fall arrest devices, thermal detectors, flame detectors, or a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosives (CBRNE) detector. In embodiments, environmental sensing device may be as described in "VENTIS PRO" U.S. Patent Nos. 9,000,910, 9,575,043, 6,338,266, 6,435,003, 6,888,467, and 6,742,382. In embodiments, area monitors such as described herein as well as in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2016/0209386, entitled MODULAR GAS MONITORING SYSTEM and filed on January 15, 2016. Throughout this disclosure, the terms environmental sensing devices (or instruments) 108, area monitors 110, and it should be understood that any of methods, systems, applications, interfaces, and the like described herein may be used by any of the environmental sensing devices (or instruments) 108, and area monitors 110. In addition, the disclosure may refer to environmental sensing devices and area monitors collectively as "instruments". In embodiments, the environmental sensing devices 108 and area monitors 110 may communicate with one another using a mobile ad hoc wireless network (MANET) 104. As used herein, the term MANET is a continuously self-configuring, infrastructure-less network of mobile devices connected wirelessly. One such MANET that may be

implemented is a mesh network. As used herein a mesh network is a network topology in which each node relays data for the network and all mesh nodes cooperate in the distribution of data in the network. Embodiments of the mesh network between environmental sensing devices 108 and area monitors 110 will be described further herein. In embodiments, the mesh network can enable communication between components of the system without the need of other conventional communications technology for wireless communication, such as WiFi, satellite, or cellular technologies. Because the mesh wireless network overcomes the challenge of operating a computer network where devices communication solely with a centralized device, such as a hub, switch or router, the network better operates in challenging environments where obstructions or distance prevent wireless communication from a device to a hub. By utilizing the mesh network, devices can communicate with one another to transmit messages from devices to other devices to communicate with one another or to pass information among devices or to eventually transmit the message to a device on the perimeter of the network for forwarding to another network, such as a device in the cloud. Industrial environments also typically represent challenging environments because sensors may be constantly moving or regularly changing location, the environment can be large or remote from public wireless infrastructure, large obstruction such as metal tanks may block signals, and the environment may be underground. This disclosure may also include devices, nodes, and the like communicating on a peer-to-peer network (P2P), which may be part of a mesh network. It should be understood that the embodiments described herein may operate on a mesh network, P2P network, or similar type of network. Fig. 1 also depicts various approaches to ultimately communicate data from the instruments to the cloud or remote server, such as via an API 114, smart device 118 or other mobile gateway 131, a gateway 112, and a dock 122.

[0021] In embodiments, the mesh network 104 of this disclosure delivers "ready to use" wireless functionality to instrument platforms. When equipped with hardware to be compatible with the mesh network 104 and embedded firmware, instruments are able to communicate wirelessly with one another. Mesh wireless networking provides instrument features such as peer alarms, or "shadowing" readings from one instrument on another instrument's screen-all within challenging environments typical to industrial safety. The mesh networking feature set is available for area monitors and portable instruments and enables interoperability, allowing a mixed network of portable and area monitor instruments to share readings and alarms.

[0022] Instruments 108 also communicate, via the mesh network with other mesh network-enabled infrastructure devices that further enable live monitoring, automated messaging, and location awareness, such other mesh network-enabled infrastructure devices including network gateway device (also referred to herein as "gateway") 112 and docks 122. For example, a network gateway device 112 may be placed in location in proximity to instruments, devices, computers, vehicles, equipment, and the like to enable communication with a network infrastructure. The instruments may communicate with the network gateway device 112 through the mesh network 104, and in embodiments, the data may be ultimately communicated, to a cloud server, via networking technology, such as WiFi, cellular, satellite, and the like, for downstream uses, for example by a remote server as described herein. There may be two-way communication through the gateway 112 such that remote servers or applications running in the cloud may be used to control, configure or otherwise communicate with the instruments 108, 110 through the gateway 112.

[0023] In embodiments, the dock 122, or docking station, may be used with the instrument to provide predictive diagnostic information, as described in U.S. Patent No. 6,442,639, entitled *Docking Station for Environmental Monitoring Instruments*. The docking station or gateway 112 (or API 114/Smart Device 118 / mobile gateway 131 as described herein) may be connected, typically via the Internet, to a remote server 130, and exposure data, calibration data and diagnostic data are communicated from the instrument to the docking station and from the docking station to the remote server 130. Mathematical analysis of the collected data from all available sources is performed by the remote server 130 to, among other things, generate predictive warnings to alert the users of potential instrument faults, thus allowing preemptive maintenance, incident management, and the like. The analysis methods include principle component analysis and other statistical methods, fuzzy logic and neural networks. In embodiments, the worker safety system can take data from components of the system, store such data, generate reports to be sorted based on the data and communicate the data to a user. Such data communicated to a user can include, for example, events, need for calibration/bump testing, maintenance record, alert that settings are incorrect or sub-optimal, and error codes. The remote server 130 may also generate alerts to send to users, can change settings remotely, can alert a user if another user has an alarm and provide information on where to respond, and other end use applications as described herein.

[0024] The mesh network may be tailored to the unique needs of worker-to-worker communication. In an embodiment, the wireless network may be applied to the challenge of hazardous gas detection - relaying alarms and readings among a group of gas detection instruments in the challenging environments described herein. Referring to Fig. 2, a particular challenging environment is shown. Instruments 108 and 110 communicate with a beacon 102, a tag 132, a wearable 134 and to a gateway 112 through an external cellular, satellite, or WiFi network 136 to the cloud 138. A large metal tank 140 is present in the environment though which signals will not pass. Fig. 2 illustrates that instruments 108 and 110 either communicate with nearby instruments 108 and/or 110 and not with remote instruments or instruments blocked by obstructions, such as tank 200. Instruments 108 and 110 interoperate to create paths for data between instruments 108 and 110 which are not directly connected.

[0025] True mesh communications allowing sensors to communicate directly with one another is novel in portable gas detection. Daisy-chain alarms, such as perimeter or fence line, for area monitoring exist, but current wireless implementations for portable devices 108 only relay information to a central display or "controller", such as a laptop computer or a dedicated display device.

[0026] This disclosure describes the features of the wireless network, and how these features work in concert to address the challenges of worker-to-worker communications. These challenges include ease of use, difficult environment, dynamic network topologies, and power consumption.

[0027] The mesh wireless network 104 may relay an alarm notification from one instrument to another instrument. "Peers" could be, for example, two portable instruments worn by two members of a crew, three area monitors surrounding a work zone, or some combination thereof. Peers are equals in the network and information may be exchanged in both directions.

[0028] Points in a network are called nodes. Nodes in the mesh wireless network 104 may include instruments 108, 110, devices 118, beacons 102 (which are described further herein), gateways 131, 112, docks 122, and the like. Most wireless networks have a coordinator node, a single entity in the network to coordinate the activities of others. In star network topologies such as WiFi, the coordinator node is the access point. In Bluetooth, the coordinator node is the master (smartphone or PC). In other mesh protocols like Zigbee and WirelessHART, a dedicated coordinator node is used. ZigBee is a registered trademark of Philips Electronics North American Corporation. WirelessHART is a registered trademark of Hart Communication Foundation. In all of these cases, the coordinator role is necessary for the network to operate and is a dedicated device for performing the coordinator function. The coordinator manages routing tables, sets Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA) slots, coordinates frequency hopping, etc. The coordinator may be line-powered for reliability and availability for communication. For example, in WirelessHART, the role of the coordinator is vital, a backup coordinator is held in reserve, just in case the primary coordinator fails.

[0029] A coordinator node is not required with the mesh wireless network 104 of the present invention, as it is a truly ad-hoc network. Any collection of two or more instruments may form a network, without the need for any infrastructure. The mesh network 104 can tolerate the loss of any member, at any time, without warning because each device communicates with all other devices within range and maintains a database of devices from whom communications have been received. When messages from a device have not been received within a predetermined period of time, the device is removed from the database.

[0030] For security, every node has a default private encryption key which may be changed. By changing the encryption key, a network can be kept secure but also can be altered to keep mesh networks intended to operate separately in the same space from communicating with one another, such as keeping the network of different contractors in an industrial environment from contacting one another. The network is blind to nodes operating on a different encryption key. Also for security, dynamic frequency hopping, as described below, is implemented so that the channel on which the network will be communicating is pseudo-random and constantly changes. Finally, security may be implemented by bringing a node into contact or near-contact with a near field communication device ("NFC") to identify and authorize that node on the network, as described below.

[0031] High bandwidth, low latency MANETs, like those used on the battlefield, are extremely sophisticated. They involve multi-radio units and significant communications processing hardware, but wireless environmental sensing such as gas detection may not require this level of performance. The mesh network 104 excels at sharing a small amount of information, with a plurality of other instruments, with relatively low (such as a few seconds) delay without the complexity of existing high-bandwidth, low latency MANETs. One feature eliminating the complexity of other MANETs is that the mesh network 104 assumes messages reach their destination

[0032] In embodiments, the mesh network 104 emphasizes energy efficiency using power-efficient broadcasts of information. The network 104 operates on a constant network interval, for example 1 second. Within the network interval is a period of broadcasting and a period of sleep cycling. Moreover, the length of the period of broadcasting is altered in the mesh network 104 based upon the number of devices currently joined to the network, such that a network with few devices can be even more power efficient by increasing the period of sleep cycling within each network interval, as further described below.

[0033] In embodiments, the mesh network 104 may not be a long-range link. The mesh network 104 may typically operate at distances of 100-200m between individual nodes, and is not intended for remote monitoring of a distant site. The mesh network 104 feature set is meant to communicate between, and alert workers within, the same group and working in the same vicinity. It provides acceptable range and coverage by leveraging the mesh topology.

[0034] The mesh network 104 shares information and alarms with other instruments without a dedicated coordinator node, or any fixed nodes for that matter.

[0035] In embodiments, the mesh network 104 provides a setting-free, self-forming, self-healing, resilient wireless network without a dedicated coordinator node. As described below, there are no user settings required, no channel selection, and no PAN id to enter. In one embodiment, with the intuitive action of touching two instruments together, a network may be formed. Touching another instrument to an existing member of a network joins the new instrument into

the network if the instrument is not already in a network itself. Touching the instruments may be a tap, double tap, bump, both being shaken together, a touch of the tops of the instruments, a touch of the bottoms of the instruments, and the like. In embodiments, if when the instruments are tapped it is determined that they are each already members of a different network, each instrument may be prompted to leave their network, and if one leaves, upon re-tapping, the network joining may be successful. In a distributed fashion, the network is maintained and adapts as member instruments come and go and move about the challenging RF environment typical of industrial settings.

[0036] The wireless network's adaptability and resilience is a result of an emphasis on wireless diversity. This diversity takes three forms: space diversity, frequency diversity, and time diversity. Space diversity involves transmitting a wireless signal over several different propagation paths, with the understanding that different paths experience radically different RF impediments. Space diversity is the reason most WiFi access points have more than one antenna - even separating two antennas by a few inches significantly reduces "dead spots" in coverage caused by reflections off walls and other objects. Instruments operating on the mesh network 104 are too small to benefit from multiple antennas; however a mesh network such as 104, where messages can take alternate paths through a network provides the same effect, even with as few as three nodes- as illustrated by the example above.

[0037] Frequency diversity, also known as frequency hopping, is a scheme where a communication system regularly changes the frequency (channel) used for communications. Frequency diversity helps overcome some sources of dead zones because areas of destructive interference due to RF reflections (called multi-path fading or multi-path interference) occur at different locations at different frequencies. Frequency diversity also helps avoid interference with other users of the wireless spectrum. If a nearby device is using only a portion of the spectrum, only some transmissions are impacted. In embodiments, the mesh network 104 may implement a slow-hopping scheme. Each network interval (for example, about once per second), the network may switch frequencies, preferably using a pseudorandom sequence. This is in comparison to a "fast-hopping" system like Bluetooth, which changes frequencies 1,600 times per second. Fast-hopping is appropriate when an interruption of just milliseconds would matter - like streaming audio from a phone to a stereo. Slow hopping requires less computational horsepower (saving power) and simplifies the process of locating and joining networks.

[0038] Time diversity involves transmitting the same information at different instances of time. The chances of a message getting blocked multiple times is far lower than if the message is sent just once. In the mesh network 104, time diversity may be achieved by at least two means. First, instruments on the mesh network 104 may transmit their information quite often - at least once every few seconds. Second, each regular transmission from an instrument on the mesh network 104 may be a complete (yet compact) snapshot of the instrument's current condition (called state-based communications). For example, an instrument on the network 104 may be a gas sensor which transmits its current state to the network, including information identifying it as a gas sensor, a gas reading, an alarm status, whether a panic button has been pressed, instrument status, etc. In embodiments, nothing important is sent just once (event-based communication), for example in a gas sensor the snapshot of the device's current condition may be sent every network cycle, for example. If one transmission is lost, for example due to a collision with another instrument's transmission, the next message is likely to make it through. Time diversity is particularly effective when combined with frequency diversity, as the next transmission will use a different part of the RF spectrum that has different RF impediments.

[0039] In embodiments utilizing mesh networking, which is a collection of wireless nodes that communicate with each other either directly or through one or more intermediate nodes, the nodes may operate in harmony, cooperatively passing information from point A to point B by making forwarding (routing) decisions based on their knowledge of the network. Through this collaboration, a mesh network can extend over long distances and operate in spite of very poor RF "line of sight" conditions between some of the nodes of the network.

[0040] Through the process called binding, which relates to the process of placing two or more nodes into the same network, the wireless network 104 may automatically correct settings mismatches between instruments, such as the timing of the network interval and the frequency hopping sequence. In this way, any errors made in network setting that a user, for example entered by an industrial hygienist, or administrator can be corrected automatically when two instruments bind.

[0041] The wireless network may implement a radio incorporating mesh networking technology. The radio uses relatively common IEEE 802.15.4 radios similar to those used in ZigBee. The radio adds a network operating system layer that implements a self-forming mesh routing layer. Networking functions are distributed with the network, it requires no central coordinator node for operation. All nodes can forward packets, creating and updating their own routing tables.

[0042] In embodiments, the end application, such as a gas detection instrument 110 or 108, interacts with the networking layer using a novel approach. The radio module implements a virtual machine, with access to nearly all radio module and networking functions. The behavior of the radio and network can be tailored and highly optimized by the application layer to operate the mesh network 104 of the present invention to the specific needs of the application using custom scripts. The wireless network behaviors can be highly tailored to the unique needs of gas detection.

[0043] In embodiments, the wireless network may be implemented in scripting ("radio scripts", or "script" herein). Wireless network scripts run within the network operating system (also referred to as "radio firmware" or "firmware").

[0044] The network operating system platform also includes a hardware abstraction layer (HAL) that insulates the application from radio hardware specifics. This allows the same script to run on different supported radio hardware without modification.

[0045] The radio modules use radios compliant with IEEE 802.15.4. These radios can be operated at different frequencies. The wireless network uses the 2.4GHz band due to its nearly universal world-wide acceptance (without the need for end-user licenses) and improved performance in industrial environments with lots of metal obstructions. In embodiments, there may be 16 available channels, each 2 MHz wide, in a 2.4GHz 802.15.4 system.

[0046] Referring to Fig. 4, the channels may overlap with the same spectrum used by Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and other consumer and industrial systems, so the wireless network may be designed to coexist with other wireless systems through the diversity schemes introduced herein, particularly frequency diversity.

[0047] With respect to power conservation, sleep cycling is a process where the entire mesh network communicates with one another during a regular, but small window of time. It is important to understand that the *entire network* wakes and sleeps at the same time. The advantage of sleep cycling is reduced power consumption. By allowing nodes to sleep while they are off the air, the average current consumption is reduced. The ratio of communication time to sleep time may be directly proportional to average current consumption. If radios only spend 10% of their time in the communication period, their average current consumption will be roughly 10% of their on-state current (sleep current is negligible). The advantage of sleep cycling in a mesh network is its simplicity - when it is time to talk, the mesh network behaves as if it were always on. There is no need to plan time slots for each pair of nodes or understand the physical topology of the network, which would be easier to do with a dedicated coordinator. The challenge in sleep cycled networks is keeping everyone on the same schedule, but can be overcome with synchronization techniques as described herein.

[0048] Both the instrument itself (for example, a gas detector) and the wireless network radio may employ sleep cycling. Most instruments wake once a second (or two seconds in some cases) to measure an environmental parameter, such as gas, and perform housekeeping functions before going back to sleep to reduce average power consumption. As discussed herein, the wireless network sleeps too, under the direction of the network leader. In embodiments, these two sleep cycles cannot be synchronized. Different instruments have different wake/sleep schedules, and the rates at which gas concentrations are measured are subject to considerable regulation. A system where gas measurement rates are not deterministic would be difficult to certify. Communicating between these two sleeping systems is difficult.

[0049] To address the challenge of the radio and the instrument operating on different wake and sleep cycles, nodes of the mesh network 104 may employ a shared memory interface between the radio and instrument. Described functionally, the shared memory interface may be analogous to a mailbox. Anyone can stop at the mailbox and insert items for someone else, while at the same time checking to see if any in-bound mail has arrived. A second person can do the same. The two people don't need to be at the mailbox at the same time to exchange information. If there is something urgent in the mailbox for the other person, the indicator flag may be raised to ensure they pick it up at the next opportunity. If two people arrive at the same time and try to check/deliver mail simultaneously, they could end up dropping some mail on the ground in the confusion. The shared memory interface uses "Request" and "Grant" lines, one each for the radio and instrument to ensure two people don't reach into "the mailbox" at the same time. The arbiter is a special circuit that prevents two "Grants" from being active at any moment in time. The shared memory also implements an "Urgent" line that is the equivalent of the indicator flag on the mailbox.

[0050] Referring to Fig. 5, the shared memory is described structurally. The shared memory is a simple 32kB static RAM chip 502. Within this memory space, the wireless network implements different storage locations for different types of information. Commonly sent messages have dedicated memory locations (Static Messages 504). An example of a static message would be a message indicating the type of instrument attached to the node. The radio's 520 configuration and status may be communicated using a bank of registers 508. Incoming 510 and outgoing 512 mailboxes handle all messaging not covered by a Static Message type. Finally, some memory is allocated to the radio module, a radio internal buffer 514, for its internal use, because the memory structure available within the network OS may be limited.

[0051] Furthermore, every node (for example, portable environmental sensing devices 108 and area monitors 110 in the mesh network 104) include a precision timer integrated circuit 522, as described below.

[0052] In embodiments, the host instrument 518 may control nearly everything about the wireless network radio. Configuration messages may be provided to modify the vast majority of the radio settings. In a couple of cases, the instrument 518 may modify settings through registers as well. The instrument 518 may also control the state of the wireless network radio 520 and can place the radio 520 into Sleep or Off Air modes at will.

[0053] In embodiments, instruments compatible with the mesh network 104 may send a surprisingly small variety of messages. The most common message is instUpdt(). The payload of this message is a snapshot of the instrument status.

[0054] In order to minimize network traffic, the wireless network may implement two different flavors of instUpdt() message. If all is normal with the instrument, and all sensor readings are near "zero", a short ("terse") version of the instUpdt() message is sent. The terse version essentially says "I'm Ok". If the instrument is detecting gas or experiencing any alarm, the more detailed "verbose" format is sent, which includes all sensor readings and alarm details.

[0055] In embodiments, a verbose message with 6 sensors may be around 40 bytes. The terse form of the message

may only be 10 bytes long. An instrument may send status messages in the terse format unless: another instrument requests it to go verbose (for example if it wants to display real-time gas readings for a confined space entry), a gas reading is above the wireless deadband (currently set at 25% of the low alarm level), or the instrument is in alarm for any reason (including panic and man-down).

[0056] When one instrument wants to see all information from another instrument (for example, when an attendant wants to display real time readings from a confined space entrant), even near-zero readings, it can request the instrument send the verbose format by issuing the setVerbose() message. For example, an instrument may be requested to go into a verbose mode when the instrument is being shadowed, such as when the instrument wearer enters a confined space. The payload of this message may include the number of seconds for which the sender is requesting verbose messages be sent.

[0057] A set of messages termed "identify" may provide the relatively static information needed to correctly interpret the payload of the instUpdt() message. These messages may contain configuration details about the instrument, including numbers and types of sensors, instrument type, serial number, current user and current site. When an instrument first joins a network, it may broadcast this information for other instruments already in the network to save. Instruments that join later, or for any reason need to fill in their details about another instrument can request an instrument resend this data (broadcast or unicast) using the idReq() message.

[0058] Using the information found in instUpdt() and the identify messages, a relatively complete picture may be generated to reflect the current status of any instrument in the network.

[0059] Referring to Fig. 6A, as instUpdt() messages arrive, receiving instruments are expected to extract the relevant information, correlate it to the correct instrument, and update their internal peer status list accordingly. When a message arrives from a new instrument, as indicated by a new media access control ("MAC") address, the instrument is added to the peer list and missing information is filled in from the identify messages. A MAC address is a unique identifier assigned to network interfaces for communications at the data link layer of a network segment that uniquely identifies the device on the network. When an instrument leaves the network (e.g., user selects "disconnect", or powers down the instrument), it sends a special "disconnecting" message, which may be sent repeatedly, and should be removed from the peer list of other nodes on the network. Instruments expect to hear an instUpdt() message from each peer in each network cycle. If these messages stop after the expiration of a predetermined number of network cycles, the peer instrument may be marked "lost" and a warning may be sounded (if enabled).

[0060] Referring to Fig. 6B, shadow gas is a term used to describe the instrument feature where one instrument can display the real-time readings of another instrument remotely, which may be particularly helpful for confined space use cases. Shadow gas feature is activated by selecting a peer instrument from the List of Instruments, as shown in Fig. 6A. A screen representing the remote instrument may be displayed and update in near real-time. In this case, even near zero gas readings may need to be displayed, to provide confidence to the user that the readings are indeed being relayed to the observer. In addition to the shadow gas readings, the other instrument's location may be displayed, such as on a map.

[0061] To enable this functionality, some combination of the identify messages and setVerbose() are used. When a remote instrument is selected, the instrument will gather information such as the username, sensor details, and the like to populate the Shadow Gas display. The remote instrument will be set to transmit verbose readings.

[0062] One of the ways to improve robustness of a wireless network is to enlist the help of the end user such as by displaying a relevant signal quality indicator on the user's screen, analogous to the "4 bars" displayed on most cellular phones. The signal quality indicator helps users diagnose connection issues themselves, reducing support calls. It also warns users of an impending loss of communication, so they can address it. Preferably, the signal quality indicator displays an indicator of the quality of connections of all of the nodes on the network. Alternatively, the signal quality indicator displays the quality of the connection between the instrument and a predefined node on the network. Alternatively, the signal quality indicator displays the quality of a connection between the instrument and the strongest direct connection with another node.

[0063] For the mesh network 104, the signal quality indicator may be derived from a combination of the received signal strength (RSS) and packet receive ratio (PRR, or "Health Counter") of all the instruments in a given network. This is unlike a cellular phone, which displays only the signal quality between a phone and the nearest tower.

[0064] The RSS is available from the MAC layer of the radio for each received packet. The instrument records the RSS from the last message received from each peer instrument. The signal strengths represent the last network hop taken by the message and do not necessarily reflect the weakest link in the path taken. The PRR or health counter is a measure of the recent number of received messages versus the number of expected messages (based on the network interval). The PRR or health counter is tracked for each peer. The PRR or health counter is a counter that begins at a predetermined number, such as 10, and is incremented and decremented when expected packets are received or not received, respectively. The increment and decrement values may not be the same, such as incrementing by 3 and decrementing by 2. When the health counter reaches zero, the node presumes that it is lost from the network.

[0065] The signal quality indicator is based on the product of $RSS * PRR$ for each node, summed and divided by the

number of instruments in the network. Alerts may be set for one or more remote nodes to monitor signal strength, and a warning may occur when the strength drops below a threshold and an alarm may issue when signal drops out. A critical alert may be set when the signal being monitored is a safety monitoring point.

[0066] The wireless network feature set may be implemented in several parts and layers of an instrument, including the instrument firmware, radio scripts, and radio firmware. As features evolve, each part of the system may need to be updated. A robust system may be needed to allow for field updates while ensuring all the pieces remain compatible.

[0067] Referring to Fig. 7, wireless network scripts may be written in a scripting language developed using the portal IDE 703. The script 702 (Script.py) can then be "compiled" to bytecode for a specific radio module (or "platform") into a .spy file 704 (e.g., SM200 radio module and an SM220 radio module have different .spy files). The Portal IDE also provides a checksum for the compiled script (used later). A converter application 708, such as the Windows-based PC application SpyConverter may be used to convert the .spy file type 704 into a .bin file 710. The .bin file 710 is converted to a .hex file using the programming utility (e.g., JFLASH) and merged with other parts of the instrument firmware. The script's checksum (from the Portal IDE), Radio Hardware Version (e.g., SM200=0x01 ...), and the script version (3 bytes - Major.Minor.Build) may be appended to the script file, again using the programming utility, for use by the instrument in checking the radio's programming. The checksum and version (including hardware and script) should match what is reported by the radio module, or an error may be generated. The complete .hex file may be loaded into instrument memory by the instrument bootloader, like any other part of instrument firmware. Accessory Software, iNet, servers, worker safety system, and the docking stations have no knowledge that the instrument firmware image actually also contains firmware for the radio.

[0068] At power up, the instrument may check the radio module's script version, which may be displayed on the startup screen and available through Modbus. When the instrument detects an out of date script, it may begin the script update process. This process uses a special communications port between the radio and instrument. The instrument uses an embedded Script Uploader utility (similar to a bootloader) to transfer the file (in blocks) from instrument memory to radio memory. When complete, the new script is checked for validity before the radio module is rebooted and normal operation commences.

[0069] Once the wireless network script is running, the instrument may also check the radio module's firmware version that comes preloaded on the radio module. It is displayed on the startup screen, and available through Modbus. The instrument checks to see that the radio module firmware version is same or newer than the revision the instrument firmware and script are expecting (this value is hard coded in instrument firmware). This approach is based on the understanding that, in embodiments, features may be added, but not removed, from the radio network operating system. If the radio module version is out of date (not supported), the instrument may disable wireless network functionality (instrument continues to operate) and instruct the user to get the radio module firmware updated.

[0070] Once the wireless network script is running, the Radio module type (or Platform, e.g., SM200, etc.) may be read by the Radio module, translated into a single-byte value (e.g., SM200=0x01 ...) and posted to the host interface as the Radio Hardware Version. The instrument may post this value to modbus. At power up, the instrument may compare the Radio Hardware Version to the value appended to the programmer hex file. This may allow the instrument to confirm any future instrument firmware or radio script updates are compatible with the radio hardware installed.

[0071] Instruments compatible with the mesh network include any described herein as well as a barometer, which may be operable in an indoor location. The readings may be available using the host interface. The barometer reading may be saved to a Modbus register to enable factory testing. Using the barometer the altitude of the instrument can be detected. This feature can be used, for example, to determine the floor level of the instrument, such as in an underground facility. A compensation barometer, implemented as an instrument on the network located at, for example, ground level can be used to determine atmospheric pressure at the reference level. Using the detected atmospheric pressure and the reference atmospheric pressure, the floor level of the instrument can be determined. This information may be relayed through the network, and possibly through a gateway and to an external network, where the location of instruments can be displayed on a computer to show the location of instruments in latitude, longitude and elevation.

[0072] While the wireless network is operating normally, it is sleep-cycling, frequency-hopping, and encrypted. In this mode, it may be difficult to perform certain activities like testing the radio in manufacturing or performing an over the air update of radio module firmware. For this reason, a Test Mode may be implemented. In test mode, the radio stops sleeping and frequency hopping, and switches the encryption key to one that can be shared with service centers, manufacturing applications, etc. In test mode, the radio may respond to several external wireless commands that allow factory testing of the radio and over-the-air updates to radio firmware. Test mode may be accessible, in embodiments, by writing a special password to the test mode Modbus register (using software like DUSS, or a manufacturing application).

[0073] In embodiments, every node (for example, portable environmental sensing devices 108 and area monitors 110) in the mesh network 104 may include a precision timer integrated circuit 522. This timer 522 should be a stable timer, for example, stable to within a few milliseconds over an hour or more.

[0074] In most networks, synchronization is handled by a dedicated coordinator node. In the mesh network 104, this job is performed by one of the members of the network, called the leader. The most important job of the leader is to

synchronize the mesh. The leader regularly broadcasts a wireless synchronization message to members of the network that marks the beginning of the period that the network is able to actively communicate, otherwise known as a "sync message" or sync() message. Follower nodes maintain synchronization with the leader's instructions. The leader node becomes the "master timekeeper" and all other nodes adjust their internal timers' interval and phase to match the leader's timer.

[0075] These synchronization messages issued by the leader may also contain a value that represents the number of nodes the leader believes are currently in the network. The leader bases this value on the number of instruments that are reporting messages, such as status messages or readings messages, such as gas status readings. The amount of time the network remains awake is preferably dependent on the size of the network to save power. Each node calculates its awake time, based on the value in the last synchronization message it received. For example, a network with only 3 instruments will spend much less time awake than a network with 20 instruments, saving power.

[0076] In embodiments, if a follower node doesn't receive a sync() message, it may still wake up at the prescribed time and exchange messages with other nodes. Because the hardware timers are so stable, even if several synchronization messages are missed or corrupt, the nodes continue to wake at the right time. Followers are not dependent on the leader for second-to-second transmissions, however, if synchronization messages stop altogether, a follower may eventually decide that it has lost the leader and will begin the process of rejoining the network, as described herein. Each time the network wakes, it uses the next channel in the frequency hopping sequence, as described herein with respect to frequency diversity.

[0077] In summary, by synchronizing the clocks of the mesh, the wireless network is capable of sleep cycling and frequency hopping, even without a dedicated coordinator.

[0078] Because the mesh network 104 is sleep-cycling and frequency hopping, it is only operating on a given channel about once every 14 seconds and there is little certainty regarding what set of channels a given wireless network is using. As a result, it may be difficult to join a new instrument into an existing network without considerable delay.

[0079] The mesh network 104 solves this problem by using advertising messages on the public channels. Members of a network allow others to join (or re-join) a network by "advertising" on pre-defined public channels. New (or lost) nodes can locate an existing network by listening on these channels. During every network cycle, the leader and all followers advertise the current network parameters on both public channels using a message, an example of which is called boPeep(). The boPeep() message may include all information needed to synchronize with an existing network, including synchronization of timers, the number of devices on the network and the identity of the frequency hopping sequence. New members or members that have lost synchronization with the network may use these network parameters to join the network and re-synchronize with the leader. boPeep() messages (unlike most other wireless network messages) may be sent only with a single network hop. This is done to prevent flooding the network with retransmissions. Further, followers may only send boPeep() messages in network intervals when they have received a sync() message from their leader. Therefore, each follower helps identify only the current network leader.

[0080] Referring now to Fig. 8, most routine wireless messages are broadcast without collision avoidance or collision detection measures enabled, which is a byproduct of the mesh network's 104 synchronization scheme. During a first time interval (T0 to T1), followers listen for the leader to broadcast a sync() message. When the sync() is received, the followers calculate a time for the next expected network interval. If a sync() message is not received and has not been received for a predetermined number of network intervals, the node determines that it has lost the network and begins a network rejoin sequence, as described below.

[0081] In embodiments, to compensate for the negative aspects of lack of collision avoidance or detection, the awake time during the network interval is divided into sections (S0, S1, S2, ..., Sm) during which nodes choose a turn to broadcast to help spread out the network traffic over the time the network is active (thus reducing the probability of collisions). Messages of the highest priority, such as instrument status messages, are sent first during period T1 to T2. All other messages are sent after each instrument has been given an opportunity to send its status message (T2 to T4). Transmissions will stop, and then a suitable time is left to allow all messages to propagate the network (T4 to T5). Finally, if a sync() message was heard in that network cycle, nodes go to each public channel and send a boPeep() message to advertise the network's parameters for lost nodes or new nodes wanting to join (T5 to T6). After T6, the node goes to sleep until the next network interval.

[0082] In embodiments, the number of slots (S0-Sm) may be proportional to the number of instruments in the network (n), and when number of slots is proportional to the number of instruments in the network, the leader broadcasts (n) in each sync() message. Each node calculates the network timing and selects a slot for broadcast at random. While this does not guarantee a dedicated slot, this mechanism may still be effective at spreading network traffic. Consider also that each node's clock may be slightly out of phase with the other nodes - the clock synchronization allows nodes to be as much as 10mS out of phase with the leader. A typical wireless transmission may take less than 4mS. Another key point is that each node's slot for broadcasting is randomly reselected on each network interval. Even if a node happens to transmit at the same time as another node, those two nodes are highly unlikely to select the same slots in the next network interval. Even with large networks, most messages get through and any one node is unlikely to be blocked for

several back-to-back messages. Further, by increasing the number of slots available for transmission versus the number of devices in the network, the chance for collision is reduced.

[0083] In embodiments and referring to Figure 8A, the wireless network chooses a "leader" from the members of a network. Any node must be prepared to do the job of the leader. In the event that the current leader suddenly disappears, a different node performs the job of the leader. The process of picking a leader consists of nominations, elections, and ongoing monitoring.

[0084] In embodiments, in a first step 800, when a new node goes to the public channel to search for a network, it listens (such as for 4 seconds) for a boPeep() message on a first public channel, which indicates there is already an active leader. In a step 802, if a boPeep() is heard, the node assumes the role of a follower of the node from which the boPeep() was received. In a step 804, if no boPeep() is heard, the new node switches to the secondary public channel and listens again (such as for 4 more seconds). If a boPeep() is heard, the node assumes the role of a follower of the node from which a boPeep() was received in the step 804. If no boPeep() is heard on either public channel, the node returns to the primary public channel and begins the election process in a step 806.

[0085] In embodiments, in the step 806, the node sends a nominate() message, which may include a leader qualification score. The leader qualification score may be calculated based upon instrument type, battery state of charge, and past signal quality. Instrument type may be a relative measure of suitability as a leader -- e.g., a fixed area monitor makes a better leader than a portable instrument. These parameters determine which radio will eventually be selected for the leader role. As further example, instrument types with large battery capacity make the best leaders because leaders consume more power than followers and a large battery leads to less leader interruption. Some instrument types may be larger and have greater range due to power and antenna size. Some instruments, for example fixed area monitors, make good leaders because they do not move, may have higher power and are typically located near the center of the mesh.

[0086] In embodiments, in a step 808, the nominating node may listen for a period of time on a public channel, such as for 1 second. Any other node listening may compare the nomination message and send a concede() or nominate() message depending on how the node's own leader qualification score compares to the nominating node's leader qualification score. Next, one of the following cases occurs: 1) in a step 810, if the nominating node hears concede() messages, but no nominate() messages, it declares itself leader by issuing a boPeep(); or 2) if the nominating node hears any nominate() message, it compares the sender(s) leader qualification score to its own and in a step 812, if the sender's score is better, it sends a concede() message, or 3) in a step 814, if the sender's score is worse, it sends another nominate() message and waits an additional period of time, such as for 1 more second. If the qualification scores are the same, the lower MAC address is considered better. In a step 816, if the nominating node hears no messages after 1 second, it sends another nominate() message in step 806, which may be sent repeatedly, such as up to 4 more times if the nominating node hears no message. If, after 5 seconds or a predetermined number of nominate() messages, for example, the nominating node has heard no messages, it goes back to listen on the public channels in step 800 for an additional period of time, such as 8 more seconds, before repeating the election process.

[0087] After being selected as the leader of a network, the leader will begin to frequency hop by changing the broadcast channel in each successive network interval. By broadcasting the boPeep() in the public channel, it will allow the nodes that lost the election to join its network and follow its frequency hop sequence.

[0088] In embodiments, certain area monitors on the wireless network may continue this process indefinitely, so that whenever a second area monitor is powered on (and on the same channel), they will connect automatically. Certain portable gas detectors may be expected to stay in this searching mode only for a limited time (e.g., minutes), before the radio is powered off to save power.

[0089] In addition to synchronizing the network, the leader has a couple of other important jobs. One may be a process that prevents multiple leaders of a given network. This step is important in resolving cases where the leader becomes separated from the network, or one half of a network becomes separated from the other, such as when the leader moves away from multiple devices. In such a circumstance, the devices separated from the leader will nominate a new leader. However, if the two leaders come into proximity with devices that had previously followed a different leader, confusion can result from the existence of two network leaders with the same network ID. These cases can result in multiple leaders of the same network, which in turn can lead to erratic behavior. Therefore, it is necessary for leaders to occasionally stop to listen for other leaders in the network.

[0090] In that regard and referring now to Fig. 9 and Fig. 10, at a regular interval (such as every 60 seconds), just after the network wake period ends, instead of going to sleep the leader remains awake (step 902) and goes to the public channels and listens for advertising messages to determine whether other nodes are leaders of other networks that are in range (step 904). During this time, the leader intentionally skips sending a sync() message for the next network cycle. This causes the leader's own followers not to send boPeep() messages in that cycle. During this time, the leader listens for any boPeep() messages on the public channels. If the leader hears one, it means that there is another leader within range operating under the same network name. The leader relinquishes leadership and begins to follow the other leader (step 906). The leader's old followers (through leader health monitoring) will realize their leader is gone, and will

also go to listen on the public channels and will find a new network. To maintain the leader health monitoring, a leader health counter is maintained and incremented by one when the leader is heard in a network interval and decremented by one in a network interval where the leader is not heard. When the leader health counter reaches zero, the node presumes that it has lost its leader and begins the process of finding a new leader. Therefore, this handles the difficult case where a network is split in two. Each half elects its own leader but is still operating under the old network name. When these two groups come back into range of one another, the behavior described above causes them to be rejoined. The new leader also sets a new awake time interval for the network by including the network size $n = \#peers + 1$ in the payload of the sync() message. The leader's radio bases the network size on the number of peer instruments reported by its instrument software (active or lost) plus 1 (the leader). The network size (peers + 1) is also sent in each boPeep() to prevent more than the allowed number of instruments from joining one network.

[0091] If a new leader is not elected (step 908), the leader continues in its role as leader and resumes sending sync() messages at the beginning of network intervals.

[0092] The leader also needs to be aware of a special situation called "Leader of none." Considering the case where all peers have left a network (no active or lost peers), the leader should not continue to operate the network without followers. Instead, the instrument will relinquish leadership and will return to listening on the public channels, ready to form a new network when another instrument is detected.

[0093] In embodiments, the wireless network may use frequency hopping, where every network interval occurs on a different channel, or frequency. An exemplary process and architecture for frequency hopping is described herein. In an embodiment, the channels (16 channels in the case of an IEEE 802.15.4 network) may be divided between active channels and public channels. Preferably there are two public channels and the remainder of available channels are active channels. The active channels may be used in the hopping sequence, whereas the public channels are used for forming/joining/rejoining networks, as described above. Preferably, public channels will be non-adjacent and should utilize frequencies that are not heavily utilized (e.g., between WiFi bands, managed spectrum, etc.)

[0094] Active channels may be, by default, all channels other than the public channels; however, channels can be "blacklisted" by using an active channel mask. Some active channels may be blacklisted due to local regulations or due to high traffic levels known to be on the channel. For example, a wireless video camera operating on a channel will create heavy traffic on that channel, and therefore it may be desirable to avoid that channel.

[0095] During operation, a different active channel may be used for each network cycle, called frequency hopping. The order of the hopping may be a repeating nonrandom sequence or a pseudorandom sequence, such as one calculated using a linear congruential generator (LCG).

[0096] The inputs to the generator ("hopping parameters") are a multiplier, intercept and a seed. At power up, each node randomly chooses a valid set of hopping parameters and saves them, in case it is ever called on to lead a network. In an embodiment, using the recommended settings with public channels 4 and 9 in a 16 channel environment, and no channels blacklisted, the algorithm generates hopping sequences where the next channel is always at least 2 channels away from the current channel (non-adjacent). If either the public channels or masks are modified, this may not always be the case.

[0097] When a node wins a leader election, it sends its hopping parameters in the advertising message (boPeep). Followers compute the sequence, using the leader's parameters, and advance to the next channel, waiting to hear the leader's sync() message. With each network interval, the leader and all followers advance one step in the sequence.

[0098] Leaders and followers transmit the hopping parameters on both public channels in the advertising message (boPeep) near the end of every network cycle, to allow other instruments to find the network. An instrument wanting to join a given network, need only listen on one of the public channels to compute the proper sequence and next channel. The node advances to the next channel and waits for the leader's sync() message to begin hopping.

[0099] The LCG calculates the next channel using the formula:

$$X_{n+1} = (aX_n + c) \bmod m$$

where X is the sequence of pseudorandom values, and

$m, m > 0$ the "modulus"

$a, m > a > 0$ the "multiplier"

$c, m > c \geq 0$ the "intercept"

$X_0, m > X_0 \geq 0$ the "seed"

[0100] These values are all integers that define the sequence. In a sequence where the modulus is known, for example a network with 16 total channels, the modulus may be assumed by all of the nodes rather than transmitted in a sync() message. Further, when a public channel or a backlisted channel is the result of the sequence the node can either

choose the next non-reserved channel or the next channel in the sequence.

[0101] Using wireless technology introduces certain information security risks. The system may include measures that prevent unauthorized listening-in to instrument readings and status, prevent injection of false/misleading information into a network (like false alarms), and prevent jamming or other denial of service attacks that would prevent effective use of the wireless feature set.

[0102] Wireless message contents may be encrypted by default. Encryption means that the contents of a wireless message are garbled and unrecognizable unless a receiver knows the secret password, called a "key." The wireless network may use Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) encryption with a 128 bit key length for messages sent wirelessly. This encryption is standard for the 802.15.4 radios used. These radios may have built-in hardware encryption engines, so using encryption has minimal impact on throughput or power consumption.

[0103] Multiple approaches to wireless network security may be possible. In one approach, each wireless network-compatible device may leave the factory with a default key. The key is kept private, and it is not visible to the end user in any device or software -- it is embedded (and, in embodiments, hidden) within the instrument source code. Since all instruments have the same default key, there is no need to transmit it between devices, just a need to agree to use the default key. In another approach, if the user wishes, they can enter a customer key into their devices, using the instrument UI, iNet, or other maintenance tool -- again, once entered, this key is never displayed. To ensure that new instruments can be added to a network using a custom key, the key may be shared as part of the binding process.

[0104] The wireless network's system of binding also helps protect from unauthorized access to a given network. To participate in a given network, a user first learns the network's unique name through close contact with an instrument that is already a member of the group (via IR or Near-Field Communications).

[0105] Binding is the process of joining two or more wireless devices into the same wireless network. Implied within binding is the understanding that the devices want to share alarms and/or information - that is, there is no network without intent to share information. The binding process of the present disclosure does not include the concept of being connected for future use. If a node is connected to the network, it is sharing and broadcasting. No further authentication is needed if the devices are bound to the network using the touch process, described further below. Anyone in the network is trusted with allowing a new entry. Binding is similar to the process of "pairing" used in point-to-point networks, including Bluetooth. However, the network 104 is a mesh network, so more often than not, binding is actually bringing a new device into an existing network including several other devices, so "pairing" is not entirely accurate because it implies only two devices are involved. That said, any reference to "pair" or "pairing" herein can encompass the binding described herein. In certain embodiments, the mesh network 104 may be established in instruments 110 and/or 108 and/or gateways by an NFC binding process where the network parameters are passed and peer networks in area monitors may be established by choosing the same named network.

[0106] The wireless network may have multiple binding methods, such as Named Network and Secure Simple Binding.

[0107] Named Network is implemented in the wireless network as a list of predefined networks, say "A" through "J", which will be called "Channels" in this example, though they may have nothing to do with the frequencies used. Each wireless network-compatible device may come pre-programmed for these Channels when they leave the factory. Connecting two devices may be as simple as making sure they are both set to the same Channel (letter). Two instruments set to the same Channel may connect automatically at power up if they are within range of one another.

[0108] With Named Networks, the selected channel is defaulted at the factory, and remembered through power cycles. At power up, a device may seek out and connect to any other devices in range and set to the same channel. Because their primary wireless network use case is replacement of daisy chain cables, area monitors may use Named Network as their primary binding mechanism. Area monitors may ship with a default network setting and connect "out of the box". More sophisticated users can set up different groups of area monitors by using different channels for different groups.

[0109] Area monitors may remember their network settings and try to reconnect every time they are powered up. This means that area monitors could connect unintentionally with an existing network. This problem should be manageable, given the smaller number of these devices and the generally-higher level of user expertise, instruction, and training.

[0110] Secured Simple Binding (SSB) may be implemented in the wireless network by passing network "secrets" (like the PIN in Bluetooth). SSB takes advantage of a second, simple, short-range communications technology, called an Out-Of-Band (OOB) link, to pass a network's credentials to a joining member. In the case of the wireless network, an instrument's infrared may be used (e.g. IrDA) and Near Field Communications (NFC) for the OOB link.

[0111] Portable instruments with the wireless network compatibility may use Simple Secure Binding (SSB) as their primary mechanism. Near Field Communication (NFC) may be used for the out-of-band (OOB) link. The portable binding implementation may be biased towards 1) preventing unintended connections and nuisance alarms, and 2) ease of connection. In embodiments, portables may forget their network associations at power down. When the instruments power up, they are in a disconnected state but are always watching the NFC interface for another instrument. When two portables are placed together, they connect to the same network, with no other user intervention required. The simple action of touching the instruments together ensures the connection is deliberate.

[0112] There are three scenarios to consider: 1. If neither device is currently in a network, the two devices may form

a new network and connect.; 2. If one device is already participating in a network, it passes the existing network credentials to the new instrument and allows it to join the existing network.; and 3. If, on the other hand, both devices are already part of different networks, the binding process fails and both instruments display a screen asking the user if they want to leave their old network. After at least one of the users leaves their existing network, the binding process can be repeated with success.

[0113] Area monitors may also implement Simple Secure Binding (SSB) as a secondary mechanism. This is a robust method for connecting any two area monitors. Regardless of how their configurations have been changed (custom encryption, different channel settings, etc.), performing SSB will arbitrate these settings so they connect. In the same way, a rental or replacement monitor can be added to the network without the need for an expert user, specialized software (e.g. ISAS software or iNET), and the like. SSB on the area monitor may also be used to connect a portable instrument to join into an existing area monitor network.

[0114] The following information may be communicated during the Secure Simple Binding process: Low 3-bytes of the MAC Address, Proposed Network Name, Active Channels to be Used, Primary Public Channel, Secondary Public Channel, and Custom Encryption Key (if used).

[0115] Once this information is exchanged, the instruments may have all the information they need to complete a connection. A confirmation tone (and/or vibratory signal) may be emitted to indicate that the instruments no longer need to be held together.

[0116] After two instruments exchange the binding information, they must decide which instrument's settings will be used in the network. If one instrument is already part of a network (i.e., it sent an "Allow" message), its settings are used. If neither instrument is part of a network, the settings of the instrument with the lower MAC address are used, except in the case where one instrument has custom encryption enabled and the other has default encryption enabled. In this case, custom encryption is considered more robust and will be used.

[0117] After arbitration, the instruments apply the appropriate settings to the radio module and attempt to connect. When the connection is successful (indicated by receipt of at least one other instrument's status message), a confirmation tone may sound and the wireless icon may be illuminated. The connection process is expected to complete within a few seconds.

[0118] With respect to performance, range is a function of link budget minus path loss. Link budget is the difference between transmitter output power (including antenna gain/loss) and receiver sensitivity. Output power is limited by regulations and/or battery life, while receive sensitivity is a function of electronics design quality and data rate.

[0119] Shown below is the free-space path loss equation that predicts range (d) of a RF signal.

$$d = \frac{\lambda}{4\pi} \sqrt{\frac{P_t G_t G_r}{P_r}}$$

- P_t is the transmitted power, P_r is the received power
- G_t is the transmitter, G_r is the receiver antenna gain
- d is the distance between transmitter and receiver, or the range

$$\lambda = \frac{c}{f} = \frac{\text{Speed of light}}{\text{Frequency}}$$

- Lambda is the wavelength

Eqn. 1

[0120] Using a radio module as example: $P_t = 3\text{dbm}$; $P_r = -100\text{dbm}$; and $d = 250\text{m}$, including a conservative fade margin of 15db. Fade margin captures the practical sensitivity of the receiver, and includes antenna polarization, reflections, multi-path interference, etc. A fade margin of 6dB would represent ideal conditions (clear weather, antennas aligned, etc.); a more conservative number might be 15dB.

[0121] Practical range in an industrial setting is different from a free-space environment. Through a typical warehouse environment, actual range for the radio modules may be about 75m. Line of site through a large factory may be approximately 100m. Actual range may vary widely depending on the environment, and the mesh topology extends the effective range dramatically. Height off the ground may also impact range.

[0122] In embodiments, the mesh network 104 may be designed to operate with between 2 and 25 instruments in a given network. If there are too few nodes for an environment, the network may not have enough paths to be effective. When networks grow too large, the individual nodes have to compete for the shared resource of network bandwidth. Therefore, in embodiments, the optimum network size is typically between 8 and 15 instruments.

[0123] Because of the frequency hopping and the short transmission time of 802.15.4 radios, hundreds of instruments can operate within the same area without interference, provided they are operating on different networks, as described herein. The discussion herein with respect to joining/re-joining a network provides details on how network size is controlled.

[0124] Hardware enabling wireless network-compatibility may include: An 802.15.4 Radio system on a chip ("SoC"), supported by a network operating system (typically a pre-certified module); memory IC and circuitry that implements a shared memory interface; and a precision timer used to maintain network synchronization. In some embodiments, a barometer may also be included.

[0125] Hardware enabling wireless network-compatibility may be implemented directly on the portable gas detecting instrument mainboard. For models of the portable gas detecting instrument without wireless functionality, these parts are depopulated. In other embodiments, such as for area monitors, the hardware enabling wireless network-compatibility may be implemented in a pluggable PCB (module), such as for area monitors. The module may also add a GPS receiver (which may or may not be populated). While not technically part of the feature set, the GPS feature may be implemented as part of the script running on the Radio SoC. Although a slightly different radio module may be used on area monitors, the other circuitry may be identical to the hardware implementation for portable instruments (other than GPS).

[0126] Fig. 11 depicts the wireless network architecture. In Fig. 11, the structure of two instruments 108, 110 with radio modules that interact in a wireless mesh network is depicted. Each of the instruments are depicted as being similar, but the instruments may be different instruments, and their structures may be that of a portable device, area monitor, or the like. Each instrument may have one or more end applications, such as gas detection, peer alarms, shadow gas, and the like. Each instrument may be involved in network management, such as with activities such as peer instrument list, signal quality, connect/disconnect, identify, and the like. An instrument-radio interface 1114 (e.g. serial, digital I/O) is shown operating to connect the instrument application component with the radio module 1118 and its wireless network protocol. A wireless interface 1120, the wireless mesh network, is shown between the radio modules 1118. Fig. 13 depicts the wireless network fitting in a 7-layer OSI Model.

[0127] In embodiments, the same wireless radio useful in the wireless network may be used in a master-slave relationship between an instrument and its accessory. In this case, each accessory device would include a similar radio as the instrument. Possible accessories include auxiliary alarm devices, smart sample draw pumps, or even a bridge to a smartphone or other mobile gateway or computing device. The bridge would communicate with the instrument using the wireless network technology but convert communications to another format. The other format could be Bluetooth to connect to a smartphone 118, or an industrial protocol like HART or WirelessHART, or WiFi. Accessories could also include additional sensing devices (gas, workers vital signs, or otherwise) that would share the display, datalog, and alarms already found in the gas detector. Another example is an adapter that holds an inline benzene filter, and communicates with the instrument to indicate filter state (engaged/bypassed) or filter age.

[0128] In certain embodiments, the parts of a gas detector (sensor, display, alarm, etc.) may actually be separate devices, connected wirelessly. With this model, a sensor could communicate with a smartphone 118.

[0129] Fig. 12 depicts how the hardware enabling wireless network-compatibility can be extended to a platform using gateways 112 to the Internet for the end application of remote monitoring and the like. For example, the gateway device 112 may receive data from an instrument 108, 110 through the mesh network 104 and transmit it to the cloud via cell, Wi-Fi, Ethernet, or satellite. The gateway device 112 may be intrinsically safe, extended battery power (such as 7 days), rugged, and wall-mountable or transportable. Fig. 12 depicts an instrument 108, 110 structure similar to the ones shown in Fig. 11, but the instrument 108, 110 is in communication with a gateway 112 in this instance via a wireless mesh network, such as the mesh network 104. The gateway 112 may include a radio module 1118 with a serial connection to a single-board computer 1214. The single-board computer 1214 may include a gateway application 1218 that is in communication with a database, and with a network through a communications protocol, such as the internet, Ethernet, cellular, WiFi, satellite, and the like. The network may ultimately allow an end user to connect to the worker safety system with a PC/mobile device 1220. The gateway 112 is shown in Fig. 1 where wireless network-compatibility is extended to a platform using gateways 112 to the Internet. Data may be transmitted between devices using the mesh network 104 and data may be transmitted to the gateway 112 using the mesh network 104. The gateway 112 may transmit data to the cloud via cellular technology, WiFi, and/or satellite where it may be used in a variety of applications as further described herein. For example, when a gas detector goes into alarm and the data are transmitted back to the cloud, a remotely located supervisor may deploy a response team, send a message back to the gas detector, call the worker with the gas detector on a separate phone or on the gas detector itself if it possesses telecommunications functionality, ask another nearby worker to check in on the worker, and the like. Data may be aggregated over time regarding alarms and other safety-related data to identify risks or safety-related issues in an area, as is described herein.

[0130] With continuing reference to Fig. 1, data may be transferred from the instruments 108, 110 to other devices, such as mobile devices, tablet computers, local computers, beacons, and the like using communications protocols such as NFC, Bluetooth and the like. In an illustrative example such as that depicted in Fig. 1, an API 114 may be used to transfer data between the instruments 108, 110 and smart devices 118/mobile gateways 131, wherein the smart devices

may use the data itself or transmit the data on to a remote server 130 or the cloud via WiFi, cellular, satellite or the like. In some embodiments, the instruments 108, 110 may transmit data directly to a remote location, such as by having integrated WiFi, cellular or satellite technology. There may be two-way communication through the device 118 or mobile gateway 131 such that remote computers or applications running in the cloud may be used to control, configure or otherwise communicate with the instruments 108, 110 through the device 118 or mobile gateway 131. For example, a report from a gas detector or a group of gas detectors that a gas threshold has been reached may be sent to a remotely located supervisor. The supervisor may be enabled to take many actions through the worker safety system, such as communicate back to the instrument, change the display on real-time signage, take control of a local device, such as a drone-mounted gas detector or camera, and the like. In embodiments, the worker safety system may automatically take control of local devices or instruments based on a report from an instrument.

[0131] Referring now to Fig. 3, a plurality of portable environmental sensing devices 108, 110 in a work area adapted to communicate with one another in a mesh network 104 are shown. In Fig. 3, some devices 108, 110 are shown in communication with a remote server 130 or computer via a communications facility, such as a dock 122, gateway 112, mobile gateway 131, or smart phone 118. Other devices in the mesh network 104 may not be in direct communication with the remote server 130 or computer and instead rely on receiving data or instructions through the mesh network 104 from other devices 108, 110 that are in communication with remote servers 130 and computers. The communications facility transmits data from at least one of the plurality of portable environmental sensing devices to a remote computer, wherein the remote computer is configured to monitor at least one of a hazardous condition and an activation of a panic button in the work area based on data from the at least one of the plurality of portable environmental sensing devices. The remote computer is configured to receive, from the at least one portable environmental sensing device, an alarm related to the hazardous condition or activation of panic button, and transmit to any of the portable environmental sensing devices an instruction to be propagated throughout the mesh network. The instruction may be a request to check the safety of a user of the at least one portable environmental sensing device, an evacuation instruction, a risk mitigation instruction, and the like. The remote computer may further be configured to display the location of the portable environmental sensing devices in a map of the work area and transmit the map for display on any of the portable environmental sensing devices. The data transmitted by the communications facility can be sensed gas data, wherein the hazardous condition is based on the sensed gas data exceeding a threshold. The remote computer may be further configured to display the sensed gas data in a map of the work area, wherein a size of the representation of the gas data is proportional to the gas level. The remote computer may be further configured to request an emergency response at the location of the at least one portable environmental sensing device.

[0132] In an illustrative example, applications resident on the smart device may send data to the cloud. Applications served by a cloud or other remote server 130 may receive data sent by smart devices or from the gateway 112 and provide web interfaces for various end use applications, such as monitoring, mapping workers and alarms/events, notifications, alarms, e-permitting, compliance, emergency response, safety inspections, accountability, risk management, compliance, lone worker solutions, worker networks, 3rd party integration, device/instrument control, and the like, as will be described further herein.

[0133] Continuing with Fig. 1, the instrument 108 is depicted as in communication with a beacon 102. The beacon 102 allows for broadcasting information to the instrument 108. In embodiments, the data broadcast by the beacon 102 may be stored by the instrument 108.

[0134] Fig. 1 also depicts an NFC tag in relationship to the instrument 108 and thus other components of the system. For example, data collected by the instrument 108 from the NFC tag may be used to tag gas detection data to enable quickly identifying the gas detection instrument operator and location to make the gas detection information more actionable.

[0135] Gas detection instruments, portable environmental sensing devices, and other safety devices with integral technology that collects temporary assignment and location information may enable valuable insight into gas exposure data, safety events and user behavior, while being useful when managing assets and investigating potential issues. Tagging gas detection data and other collected data allows anyone reviewing the data to easily see who had the instrument and where the operator was using it, making the information more actionable. This disclosure may refer to gas detection instruments and area monitors in the description and examples of the systems and methods. Such references are meant to apply to the components of the system described herein, such as environmental sensing device 108, area monitor 110, gateway 112, API 114/ Smart Device 118 or mobile gateway 131, it should be understood that other environmental sensing devices, area monitors, and components may be used with the embodiments described below.

[0136] NFC tags are short range, small, non-powered tags with a small memory and a radio chip attached to an antenna. Having no power source, they draw power from the device that reads them, thanks to magnetic induction. When a reader gets close enough to a tag, it energizes it and transfers data from that tag. The assignment tag may be small, light, require no battery, and may withstand harsh outdoor environments. Assignment tags may be in multiple styles, such as a sticker tag, a waterproof sticker tag, an outdoor tag, a keychain tag, and the like. The assignment tags

may be continually overwritten as needed or locked so that they cannot be reprogrammed.

[0137] The gas detection instruments with NFC technology may support multiple assignment types, such as recurring and temporary assignments. A recurring assignment may persist with the instrument when the instrument is restarted. A recurring assignment may be made using an application or software, such as iNet Control, DSSAC (Docking Station Software Admin Console), or accessory software resident on the instrument or other component of the system that communicates with the instrument. A temporary assignment may be made via an application or through the instrument settings. Temporary assignments may overwrite recurring assignments and stay with the instrument until it is restarted. Upon restart, an instrument with a temporary assignment may revert to the recurring assignment, if one is available. If there is no recurring assignment, the instrument may be unassigned. Alternatively, to remove a temporary assignment, the assignment tag may be re-touched to the instrument when the assignment is no longer needed.

[0138] In an embodiment, and referring to Fig. 14, in order to make use of the NFC assignment capabilities of the gas detection instrument, assignment tags 1402 may be programmed with an assignment using an assignment application 1404 or other assignment software. The tags may need to only be programmed once. The tags may then be distributed to instrument operators or installed at a location. Then, instrument users may touch the gas detection instrument 108 to an assignment tag so that the NFC radio in the instrument may sense the assignment tag.

[0139] Assignment tags for identifying individuals may be programmed with a variety of identification data, such as name, size and weight (such as to be able to calculate a person-specific gas hazard threshold), typical work locations, job function, security and/or authorization information which may include whether the user is authorized to use a specific instrument or be in a specific location, typical instruments used by the user, pre-existing events caused or experienced by the user such as prior alarms or gas events, languages known by the user, prior alarms, and the like. Assignment tags for identifying locations may be programmed with a variety of data, such as location within a space, GPS location, equipment at the location, fuel sources at the location, known hazards at the location, typical gas concentrations for the location, other environmental conditions for the location, recent gas events at the location, recent man down alarms triggered at the location, recent alarms triggered at the location, recent messages triggered at the location, and the like.

[0140] Referring now to Fig. 15, as described herein the worker or industrial safety monitoring system may include a personal NFC tag 1502 assigned to a worker, wherein the tag assigned to the worker comprises identity information of the worker, such as name, size, weight, job title/function, company, languages spoken, certifications/licenses, accommodations, approved tasks, approved locations, approved equipment, hours worked, typical work location, a typical instrument/equipment used, a pre-existing concern, a prior alarm, a prior gas or safety event, any prior radiation exposure levels, a prior message, a security clearance, and the like.

[0141] NFC assignment tags 1502 may be carried by workers or attached to a name badge, employee ID, hardhat, tool belt, or other personal item. The system may also include and/or interact with a plurality of location NFC tags 1504 assigned to locations, each location tag placed in a location comprising information of the location in which the location tag is placed. Certain parameters associated with the location may be programmed into the NFC tag, such as for example, location name, latitude/longitude/GPS coordinates, typical temperature, typical humidity, a level of authorization needed to enter/service the location, the type of equipment in the location, a certification/license needed to operate equipment at the location, personal protection or safety gear required, instructions to be followed, instructions for on-site equipment, gas detection instrument dock nearby, a fuel source at the location, a known hazard at the location, a typical gas concentration for the location, an environmental condition for the location, a recent gas event, a recent man down alarm, a recent alarm, a recent message, and the like.

[0142] A portable environmental sensing device 1508 detecting data of an environmental parameter may be configured to (i) read the personal NFC tag and store the identity information of the worker using the sensing device, (ii) read at least one of the plurality of location NFC tags and store the information of the location of a location tag read by the at least one portable environmental sensing device, (iii) associate the location information, identification information, and/or any parameters detected by the sensing device and store such associated information, and (iv) transmit any of the information above to other components of the system. Note that the transmission of data may be accomplished in accordance with the methods described herein, such as via a P2P network, mesh network and/or to and through the cloud in manners described herein. Components receiving and operating on the data may be as described herein. In accordance with the description herein at least one processor 1510, which for example may be located in another instrument 108/110 or part of the remote server 130, may be in communication with the at least one portable environmental sensing device 1508 and may receive any of the information above (i)-(iv) from the at least one portable environmental sensing device 1508. In embodiments, the at least one processor 1510, itself, may be programmed to determine an environmental parameter of the worker using the sensing device 1508 and the location of the determined environmental parameter based on the data it received from sensing device 1508. The system may further include a remote server 1512 comprising a memory 1514 in communication with the at least one portable environmental sensing device 1508 that stores the detected data and the information in a data log. The system may further include a wireless transmitter 1514 that transmits, including in the manners described herein, the detected data and the information to a cloud-based or other remote server 130 or log. The transmitter may be the gateway 112, API 114/Smart Device 118 or mobile gateway

131 as described herein in connection with Fig. 1. In embodiments, the wireless transmitter 1514 transmits the detected data and the information to another portable environmental sensing device 1508 or other safety device. For example, a detected event on a first portable environmental sensing device may be transmitted to one or more other portable environmental sensing devices, gas detection instruments, safety devices, servers, computers, smartphones, and the like in the form of a message, an alert, or raw data, wherein the transmission may include the information derived from the NFC tags.

[0143] In an aspect, workers may wirelessly enter a name and a location into the device 1508 or instrument 108/110 simply by tapping the NFC assignment tag to the instrument. Alternatively, location information may be automatically collected via GPS or other location sensing technology. Once the user and/or site information has been transferred from the assignment tag to the instrument, data recorded by the device 1508 or instrument 108/110 may be tagged with the user and location information and saved, in the instrument data log or wirelessly transmitted to a cloud-based or other remote server 130.

[0144] In another example, each employee may receive his or her own assignment tag identifying them which can be attached to a name badge, employee ID, or other personal item. Then, each day, the employee may pick up an instrument from a shared pool or tool crib, wherein the instruments may be compliant, calibrated, and/or bump-tested, at the start of his or her shift. When the instrument is touched to the assignment tag, the assignment is complete. The device may be further configured to the user's needs and/or specification, and may also include data about the user. This may be an example of a temporary assignment. In another example of a temporary assignment, the assignment application may be used to assign the location "Tank 1" to an assignment tag. The tag can then be installed at the entrance to Tank 1. When instrument operators enter Tank 1, they can touch their instruments to the tag and the location assignment will be saved to the instrument. These examples may describe separate scenarios or a single scenario. For example, the instrument operator may temporarily assign themselves an instrument from the tool crib, then assign the 'Tank 1' location upon arrival to Tank 1. Thus, data will be tagged with both the user identification and the location at which other data are collected.

[0145] In embodiments, using NFC tags, a permission-based perimeter fence may be established. For example, if only certain users are allowed to enter 'Tank 1', only those users may be able to assign the 'Tank 1' location to their instrument, which may then be used for electronic entry to 'Tank 1', for example.

[0146] In embodiments, the system of Fig. 15 includes a beacon 102, which may repeatedly transmit an informational message, the beacon's payload.

[0147] In embodiments, customized on-screen messages may be provided to the gas detection instrument with specific information or instructions, such as instructional text to assist users in knowing how to react properly in the event that an instrument alarm occurs. The messages may be programmed into the instrument itself or any system component in communication with the instrument and automatically triggered, such as through detection of one or more particular gases or detection of a threshold amount of gas. In other embodiments, the messages may be manually delivered, such as from a supervisor, another instrument user, a facility manager, an instrument manager, a control center, or the like. Certain messages may display during the instrument start-up sequence. Certain messages may display during gas or other safety events. In embodiments, a unique instructional message may be set for each of these events for each sensor: gas present (alert, low alarm, and high alarm), STEL (short-term exposure limit), and TWA (time-weighted average). For example, an alarm action message may be programmed for each all alert/alarm set points for each sensor of the gas detection instrument to tell the user, in their native language, whether they should wear a respirator, leave the area, seek shelter or take whatever action is dictated by the company emergency response plan. Alarm action messages mean that an instrument user need not be trained to interpret and understand the meaning of all gas readings, rather the user simply need to read the display and heed the instructions. Alarm action messages may change based on assigned user or location.

[0148] In embodiments, the gas detection instrument may feature audible, visual, and/or vibrating alarm indicators that may be used in multiple modes. For example, the audible indicator may be capable of delivering a tone at a programmed decibel level, in embodiments, 95dB, at a pre-set distance. In another embodiment, output could be visual such the flashing action of four ultra-bright LEDs, of varying colors such as red and two blue, may attract the attention of the user and others around. In yet another embodiment, a vibrating alarm may provide a tactile alert to the user in the highest noise environments.

[0149] In embodiments, the device 1508 or instrument 108/110 may execute an application that is programmed to utilize the assignment data, such as user identification and location or other information programmed to the assignment tag, to trigger alarms and/or messages, or filter the triggers. The application may be updated periodically by the server 130, such as to modify variables that will cause a trigger at particular locations or relationships concerning worker variables and alarm triggers. For example, at one particular location, detection of a particular gas may not be cause for alarm, however, at another location where conditions may be different, the same gas at the same detected concentration may be concerning or dangerous. For example, methane detected at a particular level may trigger an alarm and/or message at a location where ignition sources are present but cause no triggers at locations where it is known that no

ignition sources are present. In another example, the gas detection instrument may only trigger a high carbon monoxide alarm if the user assigned is above a certain weight.

[0150] As discussed herein, data transmitted through the gateway 112 or a device to a remote location may be used in various end applications either by itself or in conjunction with other data, other devices, other information or the like. Any number of applications of the worker safety system may be imagined, a number of exemplary applications will be described herein.

[0151] In one example, data from instruments 108, 110 or other nodes may be used for continuous safety inspections. Limits for particular measured variables may be set for individuals and/or groups in respect of automated, real-time, monitoring of safety parameters. The worker safety system may issue warnings when limits are approached to the appropriate audience.

[0152] In one example, data from instruments 108, 110 or other nodes may be used for lone worker monitoring. For example, if a lone worker's device triggers an alarm, such as a gas alarm, the connectivity of the instrument to a smart device, such as via an API 114, allows for that alarm to be detected remotely. Remote detection of an alarm may allow a supervisor, for example, to check-in on the lone worker or be able to send help as needed.

[0153] In an example, data transmitted to the cloud from instruments 108, 110 may be used for e-permitting. Certain confined spaces cannot be entered without first sampling the environment in the confined space, thus a sampling device may need to be present. Typically, permitting to enter the confined space is done using manual data entry to apply for a permit. The disclosure herein enables the same device that collects data on the environment of the confined space to transmit that data to an electronic permitting application for use in applying for a permit to enter the confined space. In embodiments, the device 118 may be a ruggedized tablet with an integrated gas sensor or with a connection to an instrument 108, 110 that provides gas sensing, wherein the sensed data are automatically provided to auto-fill an onboard application or transmitted to the cloud for use in an application, and in embodiments, is auto-submitted to the relevant permitting authorities.

[0154] In an example, data transmitted to the cloud from instruments 108, 110 may be coordinated with third party data. For example, additional hazards may be alarmed through the instruments 108, 110 by overlaying location data derived from the devices 118 or instruments 108, 110 with third party data, such as NOAA data, news/threat/terrorist data, or other external/3rd party data. Such a capability may be especially important for lone workers.

[0155] In an example, data transmitted to the cloud from instruments 108, 110 may be used by fire responders and other first responders. In addition to SCBA data, data from environmental monitoring (e.g. gas data), can be delivered automatically to fire responders (or other first responders) to provide site/all-in-one safety. The worker safety system may support automatically configured emergency nodes for first responders. For example, automatic configuration / pairing may occur for emergency responder use in a monitoring group. In embodiments, separate indicators may be used for responder-worn nodes

[0156] In an example, data transmitted to the cloud from instruments 108, 110 and various safety devices may be used by the worker safety system in the personal monitoring of various physiological and/or behavioral attributes of an individual in order to obtain information relevant to workplace safety, or to alert nearby users regarding a workplace safety situation. Thus, the worker safety system provides a remote and local biometric monitoring interface with nodes in the ad-hoc P2P or mesh network. A user-worn node has an interface to a worker to monitor physiological and/or behavioral attributes. The measured biometric levels are used for remote monitoring and alarms. The goal of such monitoring may be to determine the root causes and acute symptoms of death and injury in the workplace and mitigate the risk of death in the workplace or other major accidents and exposures, such as injury from fires or explosions, exposure to harmful substances or environments, falls, slips, trips, contact with objects and equipment, assaults and violent acts, suicide, terrorism, transportation incidents, overexertion, repetitive motion, and the like. A further goal may be to determine and understand the physiological and behavioral effects of the root causes and acute symptoms of death and injury in the workplace. The worker safety system may be useful in various industries, such as in mines, diesel/fuel plants, refrigeration, fertilizer plants, food & beverage, firefighting, chemical processing & manufacture, Haz-Mat, medical, law enforcement, insurance, and the like.

[0157] Illustrative physiological markers may include ECG, heart rate, breathing rate, skin temperature, posture, activity, accelerometry, blood pressure, pulse, body odors, blood alcohol level, glucose levels, oxygen saturation, and the like. Illustrative behavioral markers may include gait, walking patterns, eye movements, motion patterns, noises, removal of the sensor from the person before a prescribed time, and the like.

[0158] Physiological and/or behavioral attributes may be measured by sensors, such as sensors integrated with instruments 108, 110, sensors located on the body of an individual, clothing, and/or devices worn or used by the individual. In embodiments, various sensors may be used to measure a person's physiology and behavior, such as one or more of heart rate sensors, blood pressure sensors, gait detection sensors, olfactory sensors, galvanic skin response sensors, proximity sensors, accelerometers, eye tracking sensors, cameras/image sensor, microphones, infrared sensors, gas sensor, capacitive sensor, fingerprint sensor, signal detectors (e.g. WiFi, Bluetooth, mobile phone, etc.), location detectors (e.g. GPS sensor), and the like.

[0159] The physiological and/or behavioral attribute information may be used to gain insight into the characteristics of an individual, a department, or a category of employee that may have an effect on the safety and working conditions thereof. For example, the worker safety system may obtain data for an individual to obtain a day-to-day baseline and may compare current information to the baseline information. In another example, the worker safety system may compare an individual's information with a pool of data or with coworkers in a similar situation. The worker safety system may obtain and analyze the physiological and/or behavioral data to determine the physiological state of an individual (e.g., under stress, fatigued, etc.), the causes of accidents in the workplace, or to make predictions about workplace accidents. The worker safety system may utilize sensed data and algorithmic output to provide intervention to the individual or other interested parties (e.g. after two "near misses", a supervisor is alerted and re-training may be scheduled), to block a user from being able to access certain systems (e.g. after detecting a change in gait coupled with a temperature change, a signal is sent to nearby heavy machinery to block access to the individual), to allow a user to access systems (e.g. this individual was blocked because of flu but their temperature is now normal), to suggest behavioral changes to avoid an accident (e.g. after eye tracking indicates fatigue, the user is signaled with a suggestion to take a break), and the like. The collected data may go into a pool of data that can be used for subsequent comparisons.

[0160] The worker safety system may use the human body, such as human physiology and human behaviors, as a safety sensor or monitor to detect hazards including various sensors to measure a person's physiology and behavior, and then make use of data from a person or group of people, both physiological and behavioral, of data algorithms to identify a safety issue, and of the data from a person or group of people to prevent accidents or fatalities using certain physiological or behavioral markers. In embodiments, sensors deployed to obtain human physiology and human behaviors may form a body area network.

[0161] In embodiments, the use of data from a person or group of people, both physiological and behavioral, may be used to predict an accident, workplace injury, incident, "near miss", etc.; determine if a person is in danger; determine if the environment is hazardous; identify the hazard or family of hazards; make judgments about the safety of a person, group of people or the environment; alert the person, group of people or someone who will intervene via visual, audible, haptic alarms and the like; determine if the person is at risk of a future accident (including the use of near miss data); look for known patterns or to identify new patterns related to personal safety, and the like.

[0162] In embodiments, the use of data algorithms may be used in the following ways to identify a safety issue: compare a person against themselves in near time or in historical time; compare the person against the data from a population; compare the data from one person to others working with them at that point in time, and the like.

[0163] In embodiments, use of the data from a person or group of people may be used to prevent accidents or fatalities using physiological or behavioral markers. For example, at least one of heart rate, eyelid closures, pupil size, blood pressure, posture, jaw drop, breathing rate, ECG, skin temperature, and sweat may be used as markers to prevent accidents or fatalities in the field of transportation. In another example, at least one of gait, acceleration, blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and posture may be used as markers to prevent accidents or fatalities in the field of contacts with objects or equipment. In another example, at least one of gait, acceleration, blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, posture, ECG, sweat, and skin temperature may be used as markers to prevent accidents or fatalities in the field of slips, trips or falls. In another example, at least one of gait, acceleration, blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, posture, ECG, sweat, and skin temperature may be used as markers to prevent accidents or fatalities in the field of exposure to harmful substances. In yet another example, at least one of blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, posture, ECG, sweat, and skin temperature may be used as markers to prevent accidents or fatalities in the field of assaults or violence. In still another example, at least one of gait, acceleration, blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, posture, ECG, sweat, and skin temperature may be used as markers to prevent accidents or fatalities in the field of fires or explosions.

[0164] In embodiments, a database of sensor readings may be used to determine the appropriate prediction or identification of the safety issues and the appropriate response. The sensor readings may be wirelessly transmitted to a computer, instrument 108/110, or device 118 and processed in near real time or real time to provide information and insight regarding safety and hazard issues. The database may be consulted for matching sensor readings and matching combinations of sensor readings. Each combination of sensor readings may be associated with one or more particular safety issues and may be associated with one or more particular responses. The safety issue and/or response may be further limited by an additional factor, such as a supervisor or administrator preference, a facility preference, a location, a user, a context, a season, or a business rule. In an aspect, a method of the disclosure may include obtaining sensor data from one or more physiological and behavioral sensors worn by a user 1602, analyzing the sensor data to identify a safety issue 1604, and providing an alert to the user or an interested party regarding the identified safety issue 1608. Analyzing may include matching the sensor data to a known combination of sensor readings in a database of sensor reading combinations. In an embodiment, an application resident on the instrument 108/110 or device 118 may determine a condition hazardous to safety based on the sensor readings and algorithms to determine if the readings are indicating of a root cause or acute symptom of an incident. If a root cause or acute symptom is identified, an alert may be generated and sent through the instrument/device via the wireless network 104 to alert other users and ultimately on to the server

130. In embodiments, the transmitted information may be used to de-authorize the user from an area or equipment, deploy personnel, remotely close off an area, request a check-in on the user, and the like.

[0165] In embodiments, when certain physiological markers are combined with certain behavioral markers in a known pattern, a condition may be determined and an alert or response may be elicited. In one example, when a person falls or almost falls, physiological markers of the condition may include the heart speeding up, blood pressure rising, sweating, lungs breathing faster, and the temperature in the extremities may decrease. Behavioral markers of the condition may include a noise being made, a sudden acceleration then a period of not moving, and the like. These markers taken together may form a pattern indicative of a fall or an almost fall.

[0166] In another example, when an individual is sleep-deprived, physiological markers of the condition may include increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, and reduced leptin levels. Behavioral markers of the condition may include increased eyelid closure, eyes rolling, and yawning.

[0167] Table 1 indicates various incidents and their possible root causes or acute symptoms. When text is present in the cell, it is an indication that there is a correlation between the incident and the possible root cause or acute symptom. In some embodiments, there may be a temporal aspect to the correlation, such as if the root cause or symptom can be measured prior to the incident (Before), after the incident (After), or both (Both). In some instances, a simple correlation (Correlated) is indicated. The cells in Table 1 are blank if no correlation is currently known.

Table 1. Root Causes or Acute Symptoms of Incidents

Root Causes or Acute Symptoms	Transportation	Violence	Contact with Objects/ Equipment	Falls, Slips, Trips	Exposure to Harmful Substances/ Environments	Fires and Explosions
Acute Stress	Both	Both				
Fatigue	Before					
Under influence (Drugs/ Alcohol)	Both	Correlated		Both		
Distracted	Before		Correlated			
Excessive Speed	Before					
Equipment Failure	Correlated					
Weather	Correlated			Before	Before	
Aggressive	Correlated					
Anger		Both				
Fear	After			After		
Awkward Gait				Both		
Injury				Before		
Old age				Both		
Inadequate traction				Before		
Speed of movement				Before		
Light/Dark	Before			Before		
Temperature					Before	Before

[0168] With respect to fatigue, markers including heart rate, blood pressure, eyelid closures (slow closures, frequency of closures), pupil size, head position, and jaw drop, as well as other cardiovascular disturbances and sympathetic activity may be used to identify the condition.

[0169] With respect to stress, markers including heart rate (e.g. increased heart rate), sweat, dilated pupils, shallow breathing, increased blood pressure, changes in a person's voice (pitch, rate, volume), odor and tightened scalp may be used to identify the condition.

[0170] With respect to being under the influence, markers including breathing rate, increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, gait and speech changes may be used to identify the condition.

[0171] With respect to anger, markers including jaw clenching / teeth grinding, headache, stomachache, increased blood pressure, increased breathing rate, increased heart rate, sweating (especially hands), feeling hot in the neck/face, shaking / trembling, and dizziness may be used to identify the condition.

[0172] With respect to slips, trips, and falls, markers including breathing rate, blood pressure, heart rate, and awkward gait may be used to predict or identify a slip, trip, or fall. For example, the pattern for fear of heights, which is an indicator of potential falls, may be heart rate increase, stress temperature decrease, and systolic BP increase. However, if the situation includes an activity, such as climbing a ladder which might increase the heart rate independently, then adding a gait measurement may be necessary to determine if the individual is in motion or not.

[0173] With respect to carbon monoxide exposure, markers including nausea, vomiting, restlessness, euphoria, fast heart rate, low blood pressure, cardiac arrhythmia, delirium hallucinations, dizziness, unsteady gait/stumbling, confusion, seizures, central nervous system depression, unconsciousness, respiratory rate changes, and respiratory arrest may be used to identify the condition.

[0174] Table 2 depicts how various physiological markers are associated with particular root causes or symptoms.

Table 2, Part 1. Physiological Markers of Root Causes or symptoms.

Root Causes or Acute Symptoms	Heart Rate	Blood Pressure	Sweat	Breathing Rate	Gait	Pupil Size Change	Shaking/ Trembling	Dizzy
Acute Stress	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Fatigue	X	X		X		X		X
Under influence (Drugs/Alcohol)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Distracted								
Excessive Speed								
Equipment Failure								
Weather		X	X				X	X
Aggressive								
Anger	X	X	X	X			X	X
Fear	X	X	X	X		X		
Awkward Gait					X			X
Injury					X			
Old age					X			
Inadequate traction					X			
Speed of movement					X			

Table 2, Part 2. Physiological Markers of Root Causes or symptoms.

Root Causes or Acute Symptoms	Stomach ache	Head ache	Hot/flushed face & neck	Body Temp	O2 Level	Odor	Eye Blinks	Head position, facial changes, jaw drop	Voice changes
Acute Stress						X			

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	Root Causes or Acute Symptoms	Stomach ache	Head ache	Hot/flushed face & neck	Body Temp	O2 Level	Odor	Eye Blinks	Head position, facial changes, jaw drop	Voice changes
5	Fatigue				X	X		X	X	X
	Under influence (Drugs/Alcohol)				X	X				X
10	Distracted									
	Excessive Speed									
15	Equipment Failure									
	Weather	X	X	X						
	Aggressive									
	Anger	X	X	X						
20	Fear				X		X			
	Awkward Gait									
	Injury									
	Old age									
25	Inadequate traction									
	Speed of movement									

[0175] In embodiments, the systems and methods for monitoring physiology and behavior to identify or predict safety issues and mitigate risk may be embodied in a wearable device. In embodiments, the wearable device may include multiple physiological or behavioral sensors, such as those described herein. In embodiments, the wearable device may be a garment with one or more embedded sensors, a watch, a portable device, a badge, eyewear, a ring, and the like. The wearable device may include a wireless transmitter to transmit data in the manners described herein and ultimately to a server for analysis. The device may include a display to present content from a server based on analyzed data. The content may be information or an alert. The garment may be a vest, hardhat, jumpsuit, belt, band, and the like.

[0176] In embodiments, simulation software may be built on data models developed after a period of data collection on personal monitoring. The simulation software may have input variables, such as behavioral, mechanical, environmental, and physical, and risks may be identified. In one example, the input variable may be a piece of personal protective equipment and a simulated work environment and risk factors may be identified.

[0177] In embodiments, software application resident on a device, such as an instrument 108, 110, safety device, mobile device, or the like, may overlay safety concerns on a real time view of the surrounding environment using augmented reality.

Safety concerns can be pre-identified or can also be identified in real time.

[0178] In an embodiment, certain behaviors may be rewards and incentives offered to workers who do the right thing safety/compliance-wise based on analysis of collected data. For example, if the data collection indicates that the worker fell and then checked in to the nurses' office within a set period of time, they may be rewarded with a meal voucher or the like. Rewards may be given for other compliant behavior, such as checking an instrument back in to a tool crib, tagging instrument data with a location-based NFC tag, wearing PPE correctly, checking in with another worker, and the like.

[0179] Commercially available wearable devices useful in the disclosed systems and methods include devices such as the Zephyr BioHarness™, Aframe Digital MobileCare Monitor, BodyMedia FIT, Nonin, Valencell Performtek, Gaitometer, Wahoo Strap Monitor, Stress Thermometer, and others.

[0180] Continuing with another example of an application of the worker safety system, an application, which may be executing on instruments 108/110, devices 118, the server 130 or on a third party device, may prepare a dynamic map view of node location in the ad-hoc P2P or mesh network to monitor and display one or more node locations. The map may display relative location without reference to an area map, absolute location with reference to an area map, or 3D location on a topographic map or tunnel system. The map view may present alarm locations. In embodiments, a plurality of instruments 108/110, which may be enabled to communicate in the wireless network 104 or may be NFC-enabled,

may transmit data (e.g., sensed data, assignment data, location data, calibration status, etc.) to the server 130, at least partially transmitted by the wireless network 104, wherein the data may be further displayed in the map view.

[0181] Continuing with another example of an application of the worker safety system, real-time information signage may be used in conjunction with data collected from instruments 108, 110. For example, a real-time sign may be in electronic communication with one or more instruments 108/110, devices 118, the server 130 or a third party device such as by WiFi, Bluetooth, RFID or the like. The real-time sign may be located in an area and may display data based on an alarm from a nearby instrument 108, 110 and may serve as a remote alarm. The data may be transmitted directly to the sign using the wireless network 104 or may be transmitted to the cloud where it is processed to determine if it should be displayed on the real-time information sign. In embodiments, a plurality of instruments 108/110, which may be enabled to communicate in the wireless network 104 or may be NFC-enabled, may transmit data (e.g., sensed data, assignment data, location data, calibration status, etc.) to the server 130, at least partially by the wireless network 104, wherein the data may be displayed by the real-time sign.

[0182] In another example of an application of the worker safety system, data collected from instruments 108, 110, such as noise dosimeters, may be used to alarm workers. For example, if a gas detector tripped a detection threshold but a noise dosimeter indicated noise above a certain decibel range, the gas detector instrument will be signaled to relay its alarm via haptic and illuminated messaging as well as an audible alarm. Further, the alarm message may also be displayed on a nearby real-time informational sign.

[0183] In another example of an application of the worker safety system, data collected from instruments 108, 110 may determine an amount of oxygen in the environment. Under certain oxygen concentration conditions, a catalytic bead sensor may not work so the instrument may provide a warning. A remotely located supervisor may be alerted to the situation and deploy additional resources, such as personnel or different sensors, to the area to ensure safe and accurate monitoring.

[0184] In another example of an application of the worker safety system, data collected from instruments 108, 110 may be used in combination to trigger various levels of alert/alarm. For example, if an instrument reads a high carbon monoxide level, an alarm may be sounded but it may only be sounded at the instrument that made the reading. If an instrument's accelerometer determines that a man is down, an alarm may be sounded on the instrument as well as a few nearby instruments as determined by presence in the same wireless network 104 or proximity (e.g. GPS location, same NFC check-in to a location, manually identified location). If an instrument determines that both carbon monoxide is high and a man down is down, a critical alarm may be sounded on the instrument, to nearby workers, and in a wide area.

[0185] In yet another example of an application of the worker safety system, the system may be used for leak detection / pipeline monitoring. For example, sensors for pipeline leak inspections for safety and compliance monitoring, such as vehicle- or drone-mounted gas detectors, thermal conductivity or IR sensors, optical sensors, underground sensors, gas utility instruments and the like used to detect leaks may transmit data to the cloud or other remote location directly or through a device 118 or gateway 131, 112. In this example, the drone may be operated remotely in a two-way fashion so that control can be done locally or, for example, if the area needs to be evacuated, control can be remote. Applications may use the data to remotely configure the sensors and maintain the status of the sensors.

[0186] In still another example of an application of the worker safety system, the system may obtain data from eye wash stations, chemical showers, first aid stations, AED/defibrillator, fire extinguishers, sorbent stations or other fixed assets 124. In one example of an eye wash station or chemical shower, sensors may be placed at the station/drain to detect hazards/toxins that are being washed off a user, wherein the sensors may communicate data back to the cloud or remote location by any communication method described herein, either directly or through a device 118 or gateway 131, 112. In embodiments, the sensors may be stand-alone sensors with remote communications capability or may have local communications capability at a nearby dock or instrument that further transmits the data. In any event, such information may be used in an application used by first responders to determine what equipment/personnel to deploy. The data may be combined with other data being collected by the worker safety system that may be localized to the same area through the use of a shared assignment (e.g. NFC tags) or a known location (e.g. GPS or known fixed asset 124 fixed location). Continuing with this example, the drain sensor may determine particular toxins and a sensor in a smoke detector may indicate an identity of particulates in the air from a fire, in addition to temperature and visibility data. Images may also be captured from a nearby camera. These data combined together may alert a first responder that not only is there a fire, but it is a chemical fire and what the specific chemical it is that has caused the fire. Second responders may also be alerted as to what the specific cleanup needs will be. Thus, without any on-site personnel calling an emergency number and explaining the situation, first and second responders may have unprecedented situational awareness.

[0187] Continuing with this example, secondary alarms may be generated from an eyewash/shower pull. An inventory of items in the area may be needed in order to generate the secondary alarms, wherein the inventory is known at the remote location so that it gets displayed to first and second responders upon the eyewash/shower pull or the inventory is gathered by a nearby instrument and transmitted remotely. The inventory may include information such as strong acid present, tank of phosphine present, gases present, chemicals present, combination of gases and chemicals present, or

any information that would be on a posted hazard placard.

[0188] Continuing with the example of fixed assets 124 contributing to the worker safety system, a nearby sensor or integrated sensor may be able to transmit data regarding the kind of fire extinguisher that was used during a fire, such as a water, foam, dry powder, carbon dioxide, ABC, wet chemical, metal, and the like, or what kind of sorbent was utilized for a spill. Such information may be useful to a first or second responder in determining equipment and personnel to deploy.

[0189] Continuing with the example of fixed assets 124 contributing to the worker safety system, a sensor in area that sense an acid spill or other like hazard may transmit data back to a remote location for processing. Depending on the kind of hazard detected, instructions or information may be transmitted to devices in the area, displayed on a real-time information signage, transmitted to responders, and the like. For example, directions to the nearest eyewash/shower may be transmitted to instruments or real-time signage in the area upon sensing an acid spill or other hazard. If there are multiple hazards, the instructions may be specific as to which station to go to if one or more have not been maintained or are already in use, which would be known from sensed data at that location. Nearby instruments may also be informed of the hazard, of the activation of a nearby eyewash/shower station, or asked to check in with the user of a nearby instrument or warned to stay away from an area. When a first worker is asked to check in with a second worker, they may receive reminders of the request until the worker safety system detects that the workers are near each other or if some other proof of contact has been transmitted. For example, a voice print from the second worker or an image of the second worker may be recorded with the instrument or device of the first worker doing the checking.

[0190] Continuing with the example of fixed assets 124 contributing to the worker safety system, integrated sensors with an eyewash station or shower may be used to automate and accelerate periodic testing of flow rate, total volume, water temperature, salinity, pH, and the like, in respect of safety inspections, compliance with local or federal requirements, and to predict the need for maintenance. With the integrated sensors in communication with the worker safety system, automated maintenance reminders may be delivered, automated records may be created of testing results and technicians performing tests, automated certificates of compliance may be generated, performance statistics may be gathered, and the like.

[0191] In embodiments, one component of the worker safety system is to perform a job hazard analysis (JHA) and then apply the hierarchy of hazard controls. The specific job is analyzed to understand various safety-related aspects, such as an identification of tasks, an identification of potential hazards (e.g. gas, electrical, chemical, thermal, noise, etc.), and the like. The worker safety system may have the information about various tasks and known potential hazards and may perform an analysis to determine if the hazard can be eliminated from the task. If not, the worker safety system may recommend a way to mitigate the hazard. For example, certain controls may be used to minimize hazards, such as engineering/mechanical controls. Altered behavior such as through training, real-time signage as discussed herein, instructional messages, and the like may be used to minimize hazards. Administration (e.g. scheduling) may also be useful in minimizing hazards.

[0192] In embodiments, the worker safety system may determine, based on the identified hazard and task, an appropriate PPE or other protective technology (e.g. foam protection, hearing protection, fall, etc.) to use to minimize a hazard. The worker safety system, through use of connected instruments and devices may determine if the correct subtype of PPE was ultimately selected by the worker, if the selected PPE has been maintained, if the selected PPE has been donned or is otherwise in use, if the selected PPE is being used properly, and the like. For example, a job may require use of an air purifying respirator that filters in a chemical or mechanical way to block dust, fumes or gases. The worker safety system may recommend a disposable versus a re-usable/refillable respirator based on the task, the worker safety system may determine if the re-usable respirator has been properly maintained, and based on a pressure reading from the respirator, the worker safety system may determine that the respirator is in proper use. Further, the air purifying respirator may be equipped with a sensor, such as an RFID. If the worker safety system detects that a worker is in an area requiring the PPE or has indicated that a task has begun requiring the PPE but the RFID is not detected by the worker's instrument, an alarm may sound.

[0193] In another example, the worker safety system may determine, based on the identified hazard and task, that a self-contained breathing apparatus is required (SCBA). Sensors on the supplied air tank may be used to determine quality, efficacy (e.g. filter-mounted sensor), pressure (e.g. hose- or mouthpiece-mounted sensor), operational status, and the like. The sensors may communicate with beacons, devices, instruments, gateways or directly to the cloud or other remote location. Based on the sensor readings, the worker safety system can anticipate or predict maintenance based on usage and operational status instead of on a schedule. The worker safety system can store pressure test results for annual certification. The worker safety system can help set up a replacement tank, if necessary.

[0194] In an embodiment, the worker safety system may determine, based on the identified hazard and task, that fall protection is required, such as a harness, a self-retracting lifeline, rails/guards, retrieval equipment, and the like. A sensor attached to a worker or integrated in an instrument that is with the user may be used to determine if the worker is in the air. Further, knowing that data, the worker safety system can determine if the appropriate fall protection equipment has been checked out by the worker, if that fall protection has been maintained if they do have it on, if the protective equipment is being worn, and if they are using it correctly.

[0195] Various gas monitors that may be used in the worker safety system may include gas sensors (e.g. IR, (LED), LEL, catalytic bead, electrochemical, redundant gas sensors), humidity sensor, temperature sensor (e.g. to determine heat stress), a wind sensor, a microphone, an accelerometer (e.g. to measure lack of motion in order to further determine man-down, acceleration/deceleration to determine a fall), particulate sensor, a barometer, biometric sensors, phase, time of flight, signal strength, GPS or other location-sensing technology, a panic button (e.g. to sound a loud alarm, to transmit a signal remotely), NFC, Bluetooth, radio module, WiFi, integrated cellular technology, and the like.

[0196] In one mode, alarms may be triggered based on set thresholds, such as detection of one or more particular gases or detection of a threshold amount of gas. In another mode, the gas detection instrument may include a dedicated panic button. For example, an alarm may be sounded when the panic button is pressed and held for 3 seconds. This may allow the user to alert others at the press of a button in the event of distress. In another mode, the gas detection instrument may be programmed with a man down alarm. For example, if the instrument does not detect motion via a built-in accelerometer for a predetermined number of seconds, an alarm may be triggered and teammates may be alerted. In yet another mode, alarms may provide an early warning below a low alarm set point. For example, when a gas concentration exceeds an Acknowledgeable Gas Alert set point, the instrument may activate the alarm indicators to alert the user that she may be approaching a dangerous condition. The user may need to take preliminary or mitigating action, but can acknowledge and silence the alert while she continues her work. If the condition persists beyond 30 minutes, the alert may be reactivated.

[0197] The portable environmental sensing device or gas detection instrument may include a rugged case design, featuring field replaceable external dust filters to prevent clogs, plastic edges to prevent overmold peeling, plastic rails to reduce overmold tearing, a plastic ridge to protect external sensor filters when facedown, and a recessed display to protect from scratches.

[0198] Gas monitors useful in the worker safety system may be portable, free-standing, fixed, battery-powered, wall-mounted with fixed line power, modular, and the like. In embodiments, each form factor may enable different functions or capabilities of the gas monitor. In embodiments, a modular gas monitor may take the form of a central sensing unit that can engage with various form factors. For example, the modular gas monitor may be able to engage with a free-standing base, a slot in a wall to engage with line power, a robotic unit, a piece of heavy equipment such as a bulldozer, crane, etc., and the like.

[0199] In engaging with a free-standing base, the central sensing unit may be disposed in the base in a downward facing manner which protects it from the environment and allows substantially 360 degree access to environment. The free standing base may have a speaker to sound alarms in an area. The speaker may be a piezo-based speaker that may be electronically designed for intrinsic safety. The central sensing unit may be designed with bumps or other engagement features on the surface of the modules to prevent them from sliding out of the base. The receiving portion of the base may be designed to interact with the engagement features.

[0200] In embodiments, the central sensing unit may emit a loud sound during calibration and during setup (e.g. 108 dB). There may not be an electronic way to control the sound by operation or by regulation. An accessory component may be provided for placement over the audio output to dampen the sound. The geometric shapes inside the accessory component may provide additional surface area to absorb the sound.

[0201] In embodiments, monitors useful in the worker safety system may be area monitors, such as perimeter monitor (e.g. at the edge of refinery), dust/particulates monitoring, noise/sound level, gases/fugitive emissions, chemicals/toxins, fence line monitoring (e.g. cordon off an area), and the like. In an embodiment, mere placement of the area monitors and establishment of a peer network, as described herein, may cause the auto-establishment of fence lines and perimeters.

[0202] While area monitors 110 themselves may sense an environmental parameter that may trigger an alarm, sending of a communication, controlling another device or system, and the like, area monitors 110 may receive a report from a device 108, such as through the wireless network 104, and sound an alarm that may be audible widely. Area monitors 110 may receive a report from a device 108 or other network node, such as through the wireless network 104, and send out a communication to other devices 108 and monitors 110. Area monitors 110 may receive a report from a device 108, such as through the wireless network 104, and control another device or system in response to the report.

[0203] The methods and systems described herein may be deployed in part or in whole through a machine that executes computer software, program codes, and/or instructions on a processor. The processor may be part of a server, client, network infrastructure, mobile computing platform, stationary computing platform, or other computing platform. A processor may be any kind of computational or processing device capable of executing program instructions, codes, binary instructions and the like. The processor may be or include a signal processor, digital processor, embedded processor, microprocessor or any variant such as a co-processor (math co-processor, graphic co-processor, communication co-processor and the like) and the like that may directly or indirectly facilitate execution of program code or program instructions stored thereon. In addition, the processor may enable execution of multiple programs, threads, and codes. The threads may be executed simultaneously to enhance the performance of the processor and to facilitate simultaneous operations of the application. By way of implementation, methods, program codes, program instructions

and the like described herein may be implemented in one or more thread. The thread may spawn other threads that may have assigned priorities associated with them; the processor may execute these threads based on priority or any other order based on instructions provided in the program code. The processor may include memory that stores methods, codes, instructions and programs as described herein and elsewhere. The processor may access a storage medium through an interface that may store methods, codes, and instructions as described herein and elsewhere. The storage medium associated with the processor for storing methods, programs, codes, program instructions or other type of instructions capable of being executed by the computing or processing device may include but may not be limited to one or more of a CD-ROM, DVD, memory, hard disk, flash drive, RAM, ROM, cache and the like.

[0204] A processor may include one or more cores that may enhance speed and performance of a multiprocessor. In embodiments, the process may be a dual core processor, quad core processors, other chip-level multiprocessor and the like that combine two or more independent cores (called a die).

[0205] The methods and systems described herein may be deployed in part or in whole through a machine that executes computer software on a server, client, firewall, gateway, hub, router, or other such computer and/or networking hardware. The software program may be associated with a server that may include a file server, print server, domain server, internet server, intranet server and other variants such as secondary server, host server, distributed server and the like. The server may include one or more of memories, processors, computer readable transitory and/or non-transitory media, storage media, ports (physical and virtual), communication devices, and interfaces capable of accessing other servers, clients, machines, and devices through a wired or a wireless medium, and the like. The methods, programs or codes as described herein and elsewhere may be executed by the server. In addition, other devices required for execution of methods as described in this application may be considered as a part of the infrastructure associated with the server.

[0206] The server may provide an interface to other devices including, without limitation, clients, other servers, printers, database servers, print servers, file servers, communication servers, distributed servers and the like. Additionally, this coupling and/or connection may facilitate remote execution of program across the network. The networking of some or all of these devices may facilitate parallel processing of a program or method at one or more location without deviating from the scope of the disclosure. In addition, all the devices attached to the server through an interface may include at least one storage medium capable of storing methods, programs, code and/or instructions. A central repository may provide program instructions to be executed on different devices. In this implementation, the remote repository may act as a storage medium for program code, instructions, and programs.

[0207] The software program may be associated with a client that may include a file client, print client, domain client, internet client, intranet client and other variants such as secondary client, host client, distributed client and the like. The client may include one or more of memories, processors, computer readable transitory and/or non-transitory media, storage media, ports (physical and virtual), communication devices, and interfaces capable of accessing other clients, servers, machines, and devices through a wired or a wireless medium, and the like. The methods, programs or codes as described herein and elsewhere may be executed by the client. In addition, other devices required for execution of methods as described in this application may be considered as a part of the infrastructure associated with the client.

[0208] The client may provide an interface to other devices including, without limitation, servers, other clients, printers, database servers, print servers, file servers, communication servers, distributed servers and the like. Additionally, this coupling and/or connection may facilitate remote execution of program across the network. The networking of some or all of these devices may facilitate parallel processing of a program or method at one or more location without deviating from the scope of the disclosure. In addition, all the devices attached to the client through an interface may include at least one storage medium capable of storing methods, programs, applications, code and/or instructions. A central repository may provide program instructions to be executed on different devices. In this implementation, the remote repository may act as a storage medium for program code, instructions, and programs.

[0209] The methods and systems described herein may be deployed in part or in whole through network infrastructures. The network infrastructure may include elements such as computing devices, servers, routers, hubs, firewalls, clients, personal computers, communication devices, routing devices and other active and passive devices, modules and/or components as known in the art. The computing and/or non-computing device(s) associated with the network infrastructure may include, apart from other components, a storage medium such as flash memory, buffer, stack, RAM, ROM and the like. The processes, methods, program codes, instructions described herein and elsewhere may be executed by one or more of the network infrastructural elements.

[0210] The methods, program codes, and instructions described herein and elsewhere may be implemented on a cellular network having multiple cells. The cellular network may either be frequency division multiple access (FDMA) network or code division multiple access (CDMA) network. The cellular network may include mobile devices, cell sites, base stations, repeaters, antennas, towers, and the like.

[0211] The methods, programs codes, and instructions described herein and elsewhere may be implemented on or through mobile devices. The mobile devices may include navigation devices, cell phones, mobile phones, mobile personal digital assistants, laptops, palmtops, netbooks, pagers, electronic books readers, music players and the like. These devices may include, apart from other components, a storage medium such as a flash memory, buffer, RAM, ROM and

one or more computing devices. The computing devices associated with mobile devices may be enabled to execute program codes, methods, and instructions stored thereon. Alternatively, the mobile devices may be configured to execute instructions in collaboration with other devices. The mobile devices may communicate with base stations interfaced with servers and configured to execute program codes. The mobile devices may communicate on a peer to peer network, mesh network, or other communications network. The program code may be stored on the storage medium associated with the server and executed by a computing device embedded within the server. The base station may include a computing device and a storage medium. The storage device may store program codes and instructions executed by the computing devices associated with the base station.

[0212] The computer software, program codes, and/or instructions may be stored and/or accessed on machine readable transitory and/or non-transitory media that may include: computer components, devices, and recording media that retain digital data used for computing for some interval of time; semiconductor storage known as random access memory (RAM); mass storage typically for more permanent storage, such as optical discs, forms of magnetic storage like hard disks, tapes, drums, cards and other types; processor registers, cache memory, volatile memory, non-volatile memory; optical storage such as CD, DVD; removable media such as flash memory (e.g. USB sticks or keys), floppy disks, magnetic tape, paper tape, punch cards, standalone RAM disks, Zip drives, removable mass storage, off-line, and the like; other computer memory such as dynamic memory, static memory, read/write storage, mutable storage, read only, random access, sequential access, location addressable, file addressable, content addressable, network attached storage, storage area network, bar codes, magnetic ink, and the like.

[0213] The methods and systems described herein may transform physical and/or or intangible items from one state to another. The methods and systems described herein may also transform data representing physical and/or intangible items from one state to another.

[0214] The elements described and depicted herein, including in flow charts and block diagrams throughout the figures, imply logical boundaries between the elements. However, according to software or hardware engineering practices, the depicted elements and the functions thereof may be implemented on machines through computer executable transitory and/or non-transitory media having a processor capable of executing program instructions stored thereon as a monolithic software structure, as standalone software modules, or as modules that employ external routines, code, services, and so forth, or any combination of these, and all such implementations may be within the scope of the present disclosure. Examples of such machines may include, but may not be limited to, personal digital assistants, laptops, personal computers, mobile phones, other handheld computing devices, medical equipment, wired or wireless communication devices, transducers, chips, calculators, satellites, tablet PCs, electronic books, gadgets, electronic devices, devices having artificial intelligence, computing devices, networking equipment, servers, routers and the like. Furthermore, the elements depicted in the flow chart and block diagrams or any other logical component may be implemented on a machine capable of executing program instructions. Thus, while the foregoing drawings and descriptions set forth functional aspects of the disclosed systems, no particular arrangement of software for implementing these functional aspects should be inferred from these descriptions unless explicitly stated or otherwise clear from the context. Similarly, it will be appreciated that the various steps identified and described above may be varied, and that the order of steps may be adapted to particular applications of the techniques disclosed herein. All such variations and modifications are intended to fall within the scope of this disclosure. As such, the depiction and/or description of an order for various steps should not be understood to require a particular order of execution for those steps, unless required by a particular application, or explicitly stated or otherwise clear from the context.

[0215] The methods and/or processes described above, and steps thereof, may be realized in hardware, software or any combination of hardware and software suitable for a particular application. The hardware may include a dedicated computing device or specific computing device or particular aspect or component of a specific computing device. The processes may be realized in one or more microprocessors, microcontrollers, embedded microcontrollers, programmable digital signal processors or other programmable device, along with internal and/or external memory. The processes may also, or instead, be embodied in an application specific integrated circuit, a programmable gate array, programmable array logic, or any other device or combination of devices that may be configured to process electronic signals. It will further be appreciated that one or more of the processes may be realized as a computer executable code capable of being executed on a machine readable medium.

[0216] The computer executable code may be created using a structured programming language such as C, an object oriented programming language such as C++, or any other high-level or low-level programming language (including assembly languages, hardware description languages, and database programming languages and technologies) that may be stored, compiled or interpreted to run on one of the above devices, as well as heterogeneous combinations of processors, processor architectures, or combinations of different hardware and software, or any other machine capable of executing program instructions.

[0217] Thus, in one aspect, each method described above and combinations thereof may be embodied in computer executable code that, when executing on one or more computing devices, performs the steps thereof. In another aspect, the methods may be embodied in systems that perform the steps thereof, and may be distributed across devices in a

number of ways, or all of the functionality may be integrated into a dedicated, standalone device or other hardware. In another aspect, the means for performing the steps associated with the processes described above may include any of the hardware and/or software described above. All such permutations and combinations are intended to fall within the scope of the present disclosure.

Claims

1. A wireless mesh network (104) for connecting a plurality of network nodes (108, 110) comprising:
a plurality of nodes (108, 110), one of which is a leader node, wherein the plurality of nodes (108, 110) are adapted to communicate with one another to determine the leader node of the plurality of nodes (108, 110) within communication range and a plurality of follower nodes, wherein the leader node transmits a sync message to the plurality of follower nodes at a beginning of a network interval, wherein the leader node and the plurality of follower nodes transmit information during a transmission period and do not transmit information during a sleep period of the network interval, wherein the leader node and plurality of follower nodes use less power in the sleep period than the transmission period, wherein the plurality of follower nodes each comprise a timer adapted to time the transmission period and the sleep period of a plurality of future network intervals in an absence of continued receipt of the sync message from the leader node during the plurality of future network intervals, and wherein during a predetermined time of the transmission period of the network interval each of the plurality of follower nodes that received the sync message transmit a message advertising one or more properties of the leader node, wherein the one or more properties of the leader node includes at least one of a channel hopping sequence and a total number of the plurality of network nodes (108, 110) on the wireless mesh network (104), and wherein when any of the plurality of follower nodes (108, 110) fails to receive the sync message from the leader node, the follower node refrains from transmitting the message advertising a property of the leader node during the network interval.
3. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 1 wherein the message advertising a property of the leader node is broadcast on a predetermined subset of channels.
4. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 2 wherein a new follower node attempting to join the wireless mesh network (104) listens on the predetermined subset of channels to receive the message advertising at least one property of the leader node to learn the at least one property of the leader node to facilitate the new follower node to join the wireless mesh network (104).
5. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 3 wherein the at least one property comprises a total number of network nodes already on the wireless mesh network (104) and the new follower node will refrain from attempting to join the wireless mesh network (104) when the total number of network nodes exceeds a predetermined value.
6. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 1 wherein, after a predetermined interval, the leader node refrains from sending the sync message and entering the sleep period for at least one network interval and listens for messages advertising at least one property of a different leader node.
7. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 5 wherein the leader node is a gas sensor.
8. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 5 wherein, if the leader node receives a message advertising at least one property of the different leader node, the leader node starts a process to cease performing as the leader node and begin performing as a follower node of the different leader node.
9. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 5 wherein if the leader node does not receive a message advertising at least one property of another leader node, the leader node continues to perform as the leader node.
19. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 1 wherein when the plurality of follower nodes transmit the message advertising the one or more properties of the leader node, the message is transmitted with a single hop such that a node receiving the message does not retransmit the message.
10. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 1 wherein the plurality of network nodes (108, 110) are environmental sensing devices (108).
11. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 10 wherein the information is assigned by reading a near field communication tag.

12. The wireless mesh network (104) of claim 10 wherein the one or more properties is assigned by reading a near field communication tag.

5 Patentansprüche

1. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) zum Verbinden einer Vielzahl von Netzknoten (108, 110), das Folgendes beinhaltet:
 eine Vielzahl von Knoten (108, 110), von denen einer der führende Knoten ist, wobei die Vielzahl von Knoten (108, 110) dafür ausgelegt ist, um miteinander kommunizieren, um den führenden Knoten der Vielzahl von Knoten (108, 110) in Kommunikationsreichweite und eine Vielzahl von Folgeknoten zu bestimmen, wobei der führende Knoten zu Beginn eines Netzintervalls eine Sync-Nachricht an die Vielzahl von Folgeknoten überträgt, wobei der führende Knoten und die Vielzahl von Folgeknoten während einer Übertragungsperiode Informationen übertragen und während einer Ruheperiode des Netzintervalls keine Informationen übertragen, wobei der führende Knoten und die Vielzahl von Folgeknoten in der Ruheperiode weniger Energie verbrauchen als in der Übertragungsperiode, wobei die Vielzahl von Folgeknoten jeweils einen Zeitgeber beinhalten, der dafür ausgelegt ist, die Übertragungsperiode und die Ruheperiode einer Vielzahl zukünftiger Netzintervalle bei Fehlen des anhaltenden Empfangs der Sync-Nachricht vom führenden Knoten während der Vielzahl von zukünftigen Netzintervallen zeitlich zu steuern, und wobei während einer vorbestimmten Zeit der Übertragungsperiode des Netzintervalls jeder der Vielzahl von Folgeknoten, die die Sync-Nachricht empfangen, eine Nachricht überträgt, die ein oder mehr Eigenschaften des führenden Knotens anzeigt, wobei die ein oder mehr Eigenschaften des führenden Knotens mindestens eine von einer Kanalwechselfolge und einer Gesamtzahl der Vielzahl von Netzknoten (108, 110) an dem drahtlosen Mesh-Netzwerk (104) umfassen, und wobei, wenn irgendwelche der Vielzahl von Folgeknoten (108, 110) die Sync-Nachricht vom führenden Knoten nicht empfängt, der Folgeknoten es während des Netzintervalls unterlässt, die Nachricht, die eine Eigenschaft des führenden Knotens anzeigt, zu übertragen.
3. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Nachricht, die eine Eigenschaft des führenden Knotens anzeigt, auf einer vorbestimmten Teilmenge von Kanälen ausgesendet wird.
4. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 2, wobei ein neuer Folgeknoten, der versucht, sich an das drahtlose Mesh-Netzwerk anzubinden, auf der vorbestimmten Teilmenge von Kanälen lauscht, um die Nachricht, die mindestens eine Eigenschaft des führenden Knotens anzeigt, zu empfangen, um die mindestens eine Eigenschaft des führenden Knotens zu erfahren, um den neuen Folgeknoten zur Anbindung an das drahtlose Mesh-Netzwerk (104) zu befähigen.
5. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 3, wobei die mindestens eine Eigenschaft eine Gesamtzahl von bereits am drahtlosen Mesh-Netzwerk (104) befindlichen Netzknoten beinhaltet und der neue Folgeknoten von dem Versuch ablässt, sich an das drahtlose Mesh-Netzwerk (104) anzubinden, wenn die Gesamtzahl von Netzknoten einen vorbestimmten Wert übersteigt.
6. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 1, wobei der führende Knoten nach einem vorbestimmten Intervall davon ablässt, die Sync-Nachricht zu senden, und für mindestens ein Netzintervall in die Ruheperiode eintritt und auf Nachrichten lauscht, die mindestens eine Eigenschaft eines anderen führenden Knotens anzeigen.
7. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 5, wobei der führende Knoten ein Gassensor ist.
8. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 5, wobei, falls der führende Knoten eine Nachricht empfängt, die mindestens eine Eigenschaft des anderen führenden Knotens anzeigt, der führende Knoten einen Prozess startet, um das Funktionieren als der führende Knoten zu beenden und das Funktionieren als ein Folgeknoten des anderen führenden Knotens zu beginnen.
9. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 5, wobei, falls der führende Knoten keine Nachricht empfängt, die mindestens eine Eigenschaft eines weiteren führenden Knotens anzeigt, der führende Knoten weiterhin als der führende Knoten funktioniert.
19. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 1, wobei, wenn die Vielzahl von Folgeknoten die Nachricht überträgt, die die ein oder mehr Eigenschaften des führenden Knotens anzeigt, die Nachricht mit einem einzelnen Hop übertragen wird, so dass ein die Nachricht empfangender Knoten die Nachricht nicht erneut überträgt.

10. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch. 1, wobei die Vielzahl von Netzknoten (108, 110) Umweltsensorik (108) ist.

11. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 10, wobei die Informationen durch Lesen eines Nahfeld-Kommunikations-Tags zugeordnet werden.

12. Drahtloses Mesh-Netzwerk (104) nach Anspruch 10, wobei die ein oder mehr Eigenschaften durch Lesen eines Nahfeld-Kommunikations-Tags zugeordnet werden.

Revendications

1. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) pour connecter une pluralité de noeuds réseau (108, 110) comprenant :
une pluralité de noeuds (108, 110) dont l'un desquels est un noeud principal, dans lequel la pluralité de noeuds (108, 110) sont adaptés pour communiquer l'un avec l'autre afin de déterminer le noeud principal de la pluralité de noeuds (108, 110) dans une plage de communication et une pluralité de noeuds auxiliaires, dans lequel le noeud principal transmet un message de synchronisation à la pluralité de noeuds auxiliaires au début d'un intervalle réseau, dans lequel le noeud principal et la pluralité de noeuds auxiliaires transmettent des informations durant une période de transmission et ne transmettent pas d'informations durant une période de veille de l'intervalle réseau, dans lequel le noeud principal et la pluralité de noeuds auxiliaires utilisent moins de puissance dans la période de veille que dans la période de transmission, dans lequel la pluralité de noeuds auxiliaires comprennent chacun une horloge adaptée pour minuter la période de transmission et la période de veille d'une pluralité d'intervalles réseau futurs en l'absence de réception continue du message de synchronisation du noeud principal durant la pluralité d'intervalles réseau futurs, et dans lequel durant un temps prédéterminé de la période de transmission de l'intervalle réseau chacun de la pluralité de noeuds auxiliaires qui a reçu le message de synchronisation transmet un message faisant connaître une ou plusieurs propriétés du noeud principal, dans lequel l'une ou plusieurs propriétés du noeud principal comprennent au moins l'un d'entre une séquence de saut de canal et un nombre total de la pluralité de noeuds réseau (108, 110) sur le réseau maillé sans fil (104), et dans lequel lorsque l'un quelconque de la pluralité de noeuds auxiliaires (108, 110) manque à recevoir le message de synchronisation du noeud principal, le noeud auxiliaire s'abstient de transmettre le message faisant connaître une propriété du noeud principal durant l'intervalle réseau.
3. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 1, dans lequel le message faisant connaître une propriété du noeud principal est diffusé sur un sous-ensemble prédéterminé de canaux.
4. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 2, dans lequel un nouveau noeud auxiliaire tentant de joindre le réseau maillé sans fil (104) écoute sur le sous-ensemble prédéterminé de canaux pour recevoir le message faisant connaître au moins une propriété du noeud principal pour apprendre la au moins une propriété du noeud principal afin de faciliter au nouveau noeud auxiliaire de joindre le réseau maillé sans fil (104).
5. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 3, dans lequel la au moins une propriété comprend un nombre total de noeuds réseau déjà sur le réseau maillé sans fil (104) et le nouveau noeud auxiliaire s'abstiendra de tenter de joindre le réseau maillé sans fil (104) lorsque le nombre total de noeuds réseau dépasse une valeur prédéterminée.
6. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 1, dans lequel, après un intervalle prédéterminé, le noeud principal s'abstient d'envoyer le message de synchronisation et d'entrer dans la période de veille pendant au moins un intervalle réseau et se met à l'écoute de messages faisant connaître au moins une propriété d'un noeud principal différent.
7. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 5, dans lequel le noeud principal est un détecteur de gaz.
8. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 5, dans lequel, si le noeud principal reçoit un message faisant connaître au moins une propriété du noeud principal différent, le noeud principal commence un processus pour cesser de fonctionner comme le noeud principal et commence à fonctionner comme un noeud auxiliaire du noeud principal différent.
9. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 5, dans lequel si le noeud principal ne reçoit pas un message faisant connaître au moins une propriété d'un autre noeud principal, le noeud principal continue à fonctionner comme le noeud principal.

19. Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 1, dans lequel lorsque la pluralité de noeuds auxiliaires transmettent le message faisant connaître l'une ou plusieurs propriétés du noeud principal, le message est transmis en un seul saut de telle sorte qu'un noeud recevant le message ne retransmet pas le message.

5 **10.** Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 1, dans lequel la pluralité de noeuds réseau (108, 110) sont des dispositifs de détection de l'environnement (108).

10 **11.** Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 10, dans lequel les informations sont attribuées en lisant une étiquette de communication en champ proche.

10 **12.** Réseau maillé sans fil (104) selon la revendication 10, dans lequel l'une ou plusieurs propriétés sont attribuées en lisant une étiquette de communication en champ proche.

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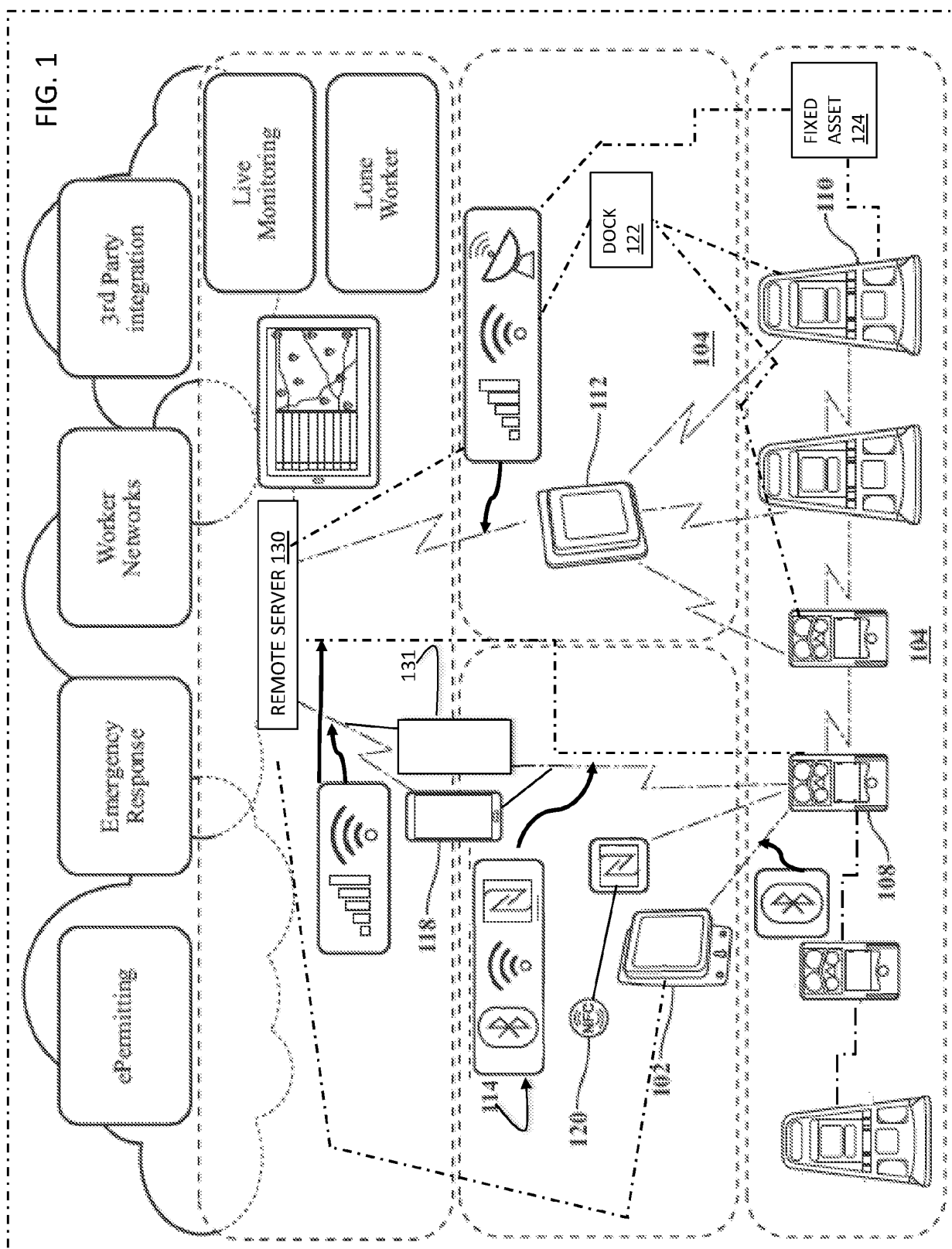
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FIG. 1



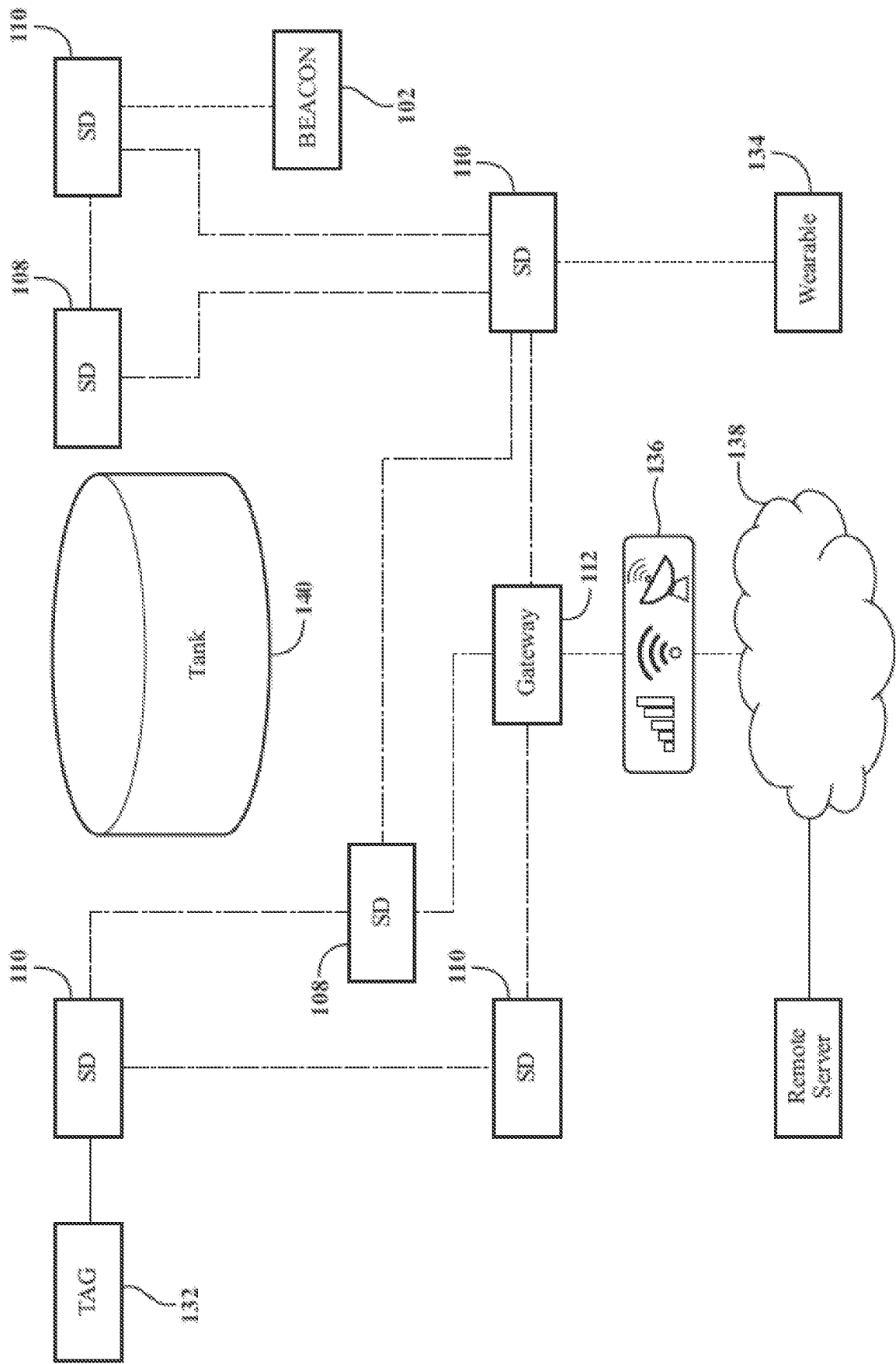


FIG. 2

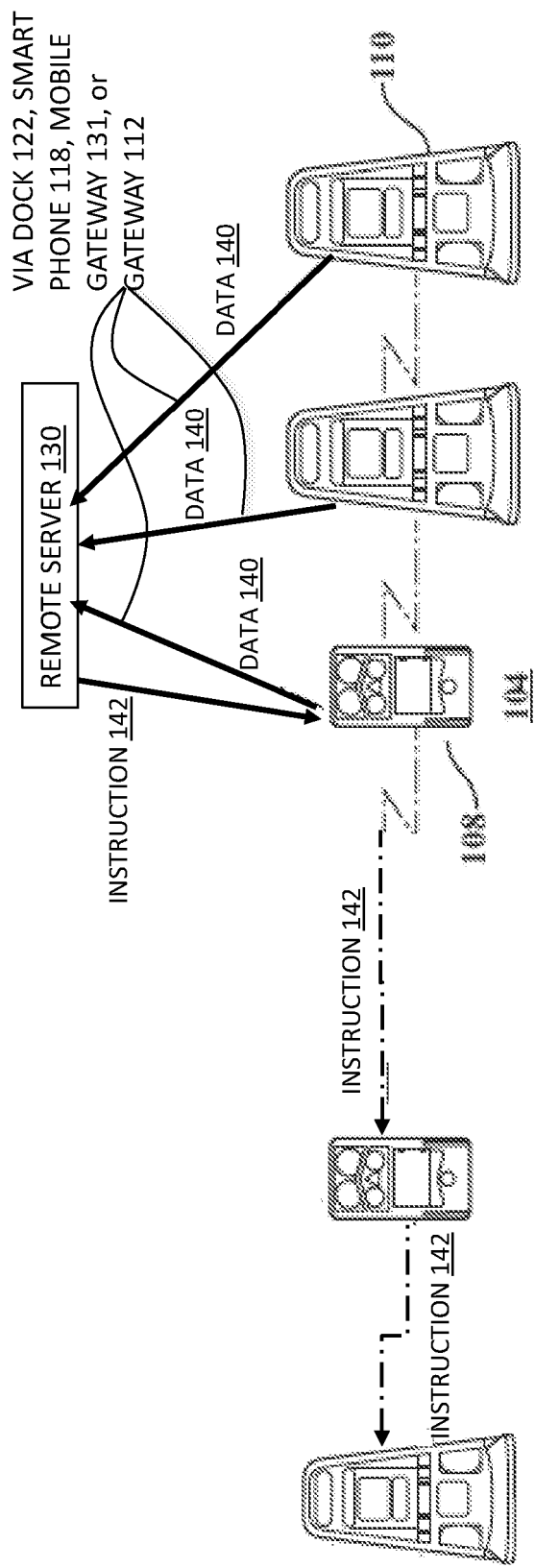


Fig. 3

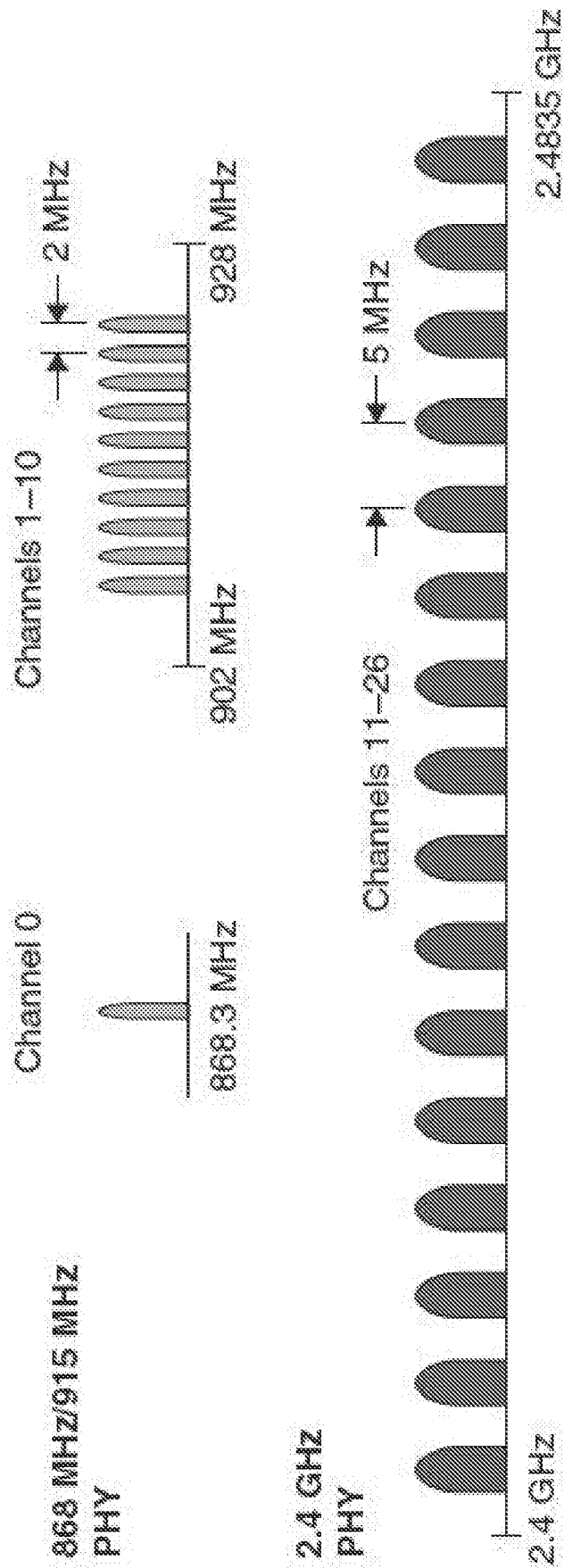


Fig. 4

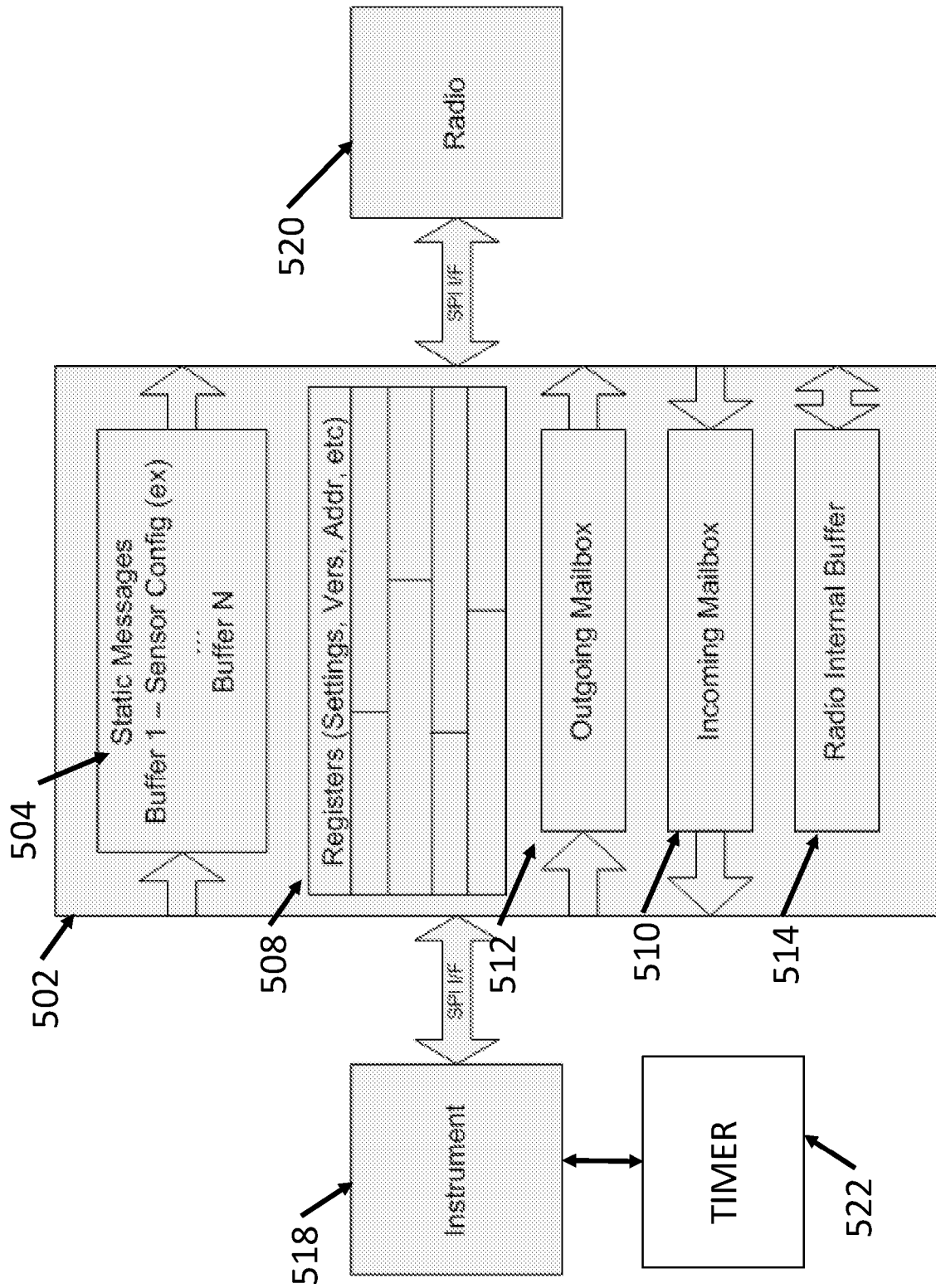


Fig. 5

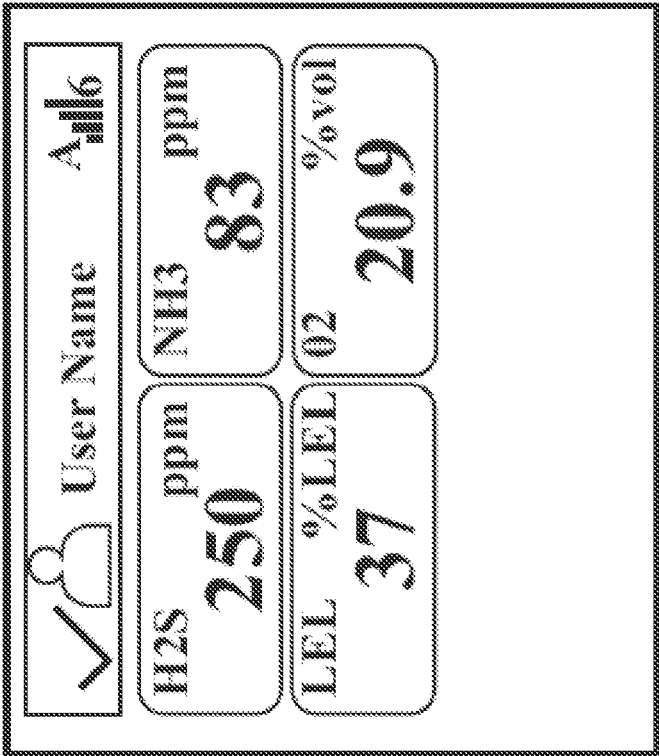


FIG. 6B

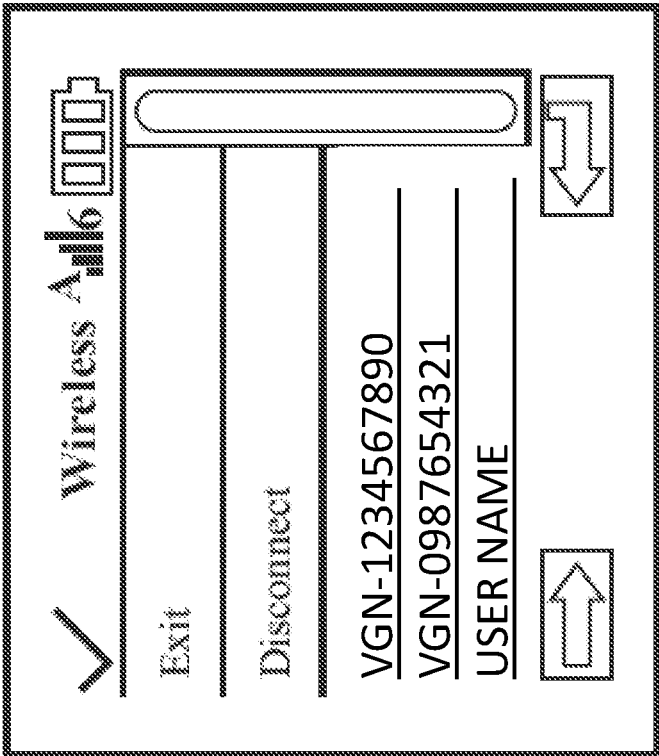


FIG. 6A

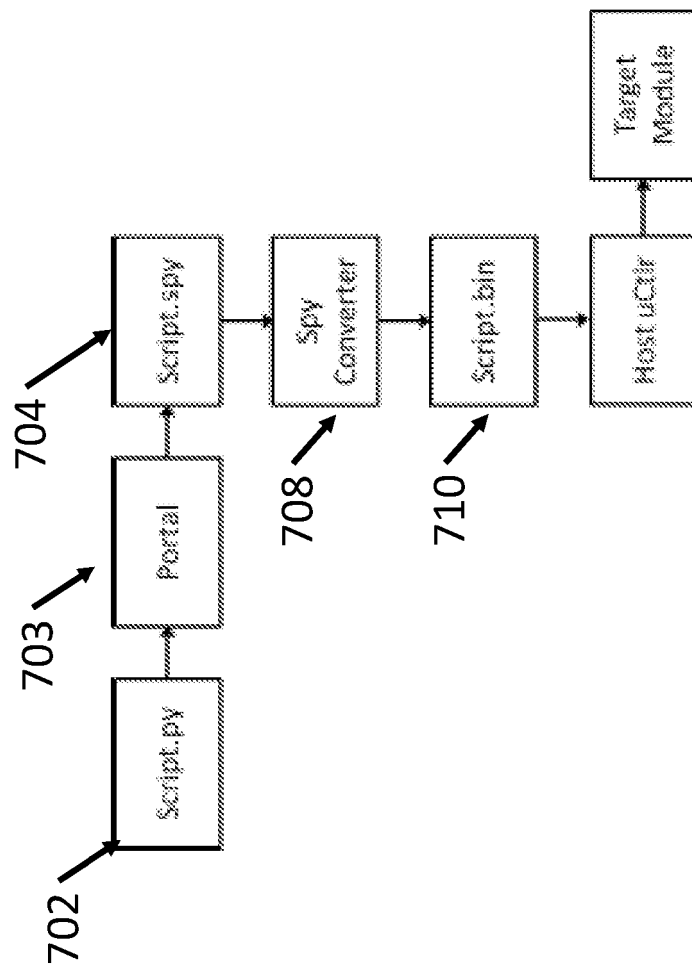


Fig. 7

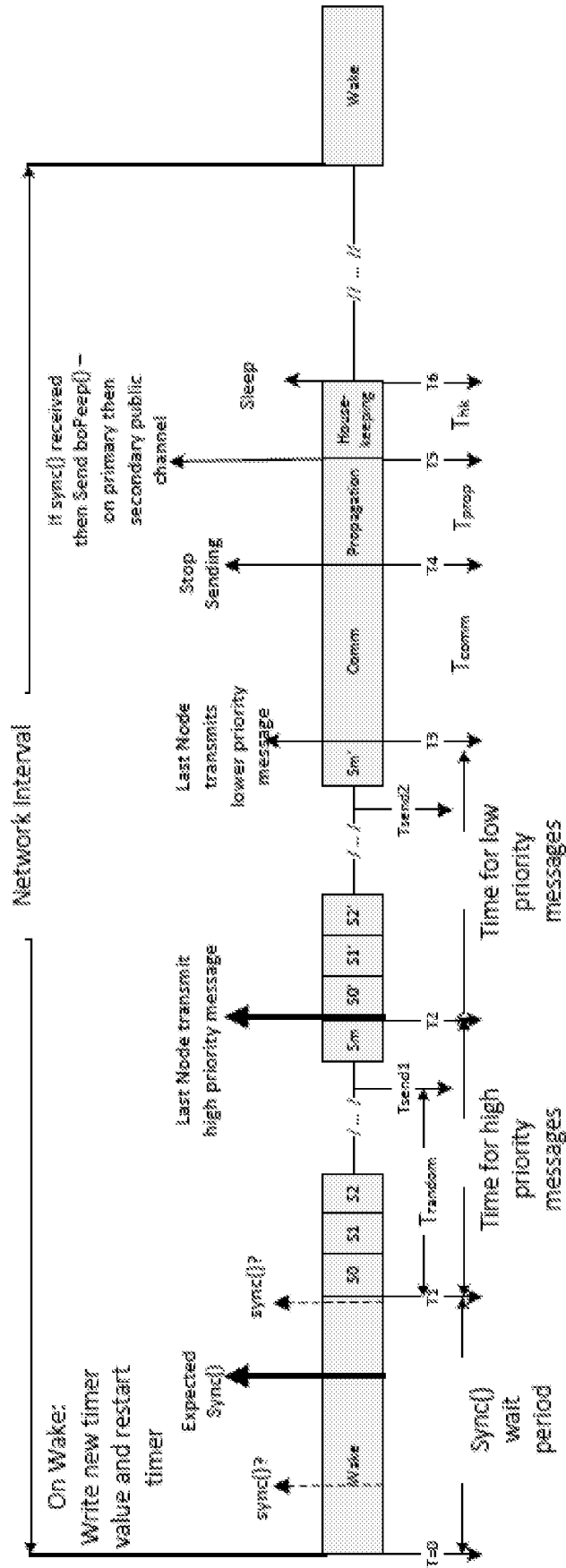


Fig. 8

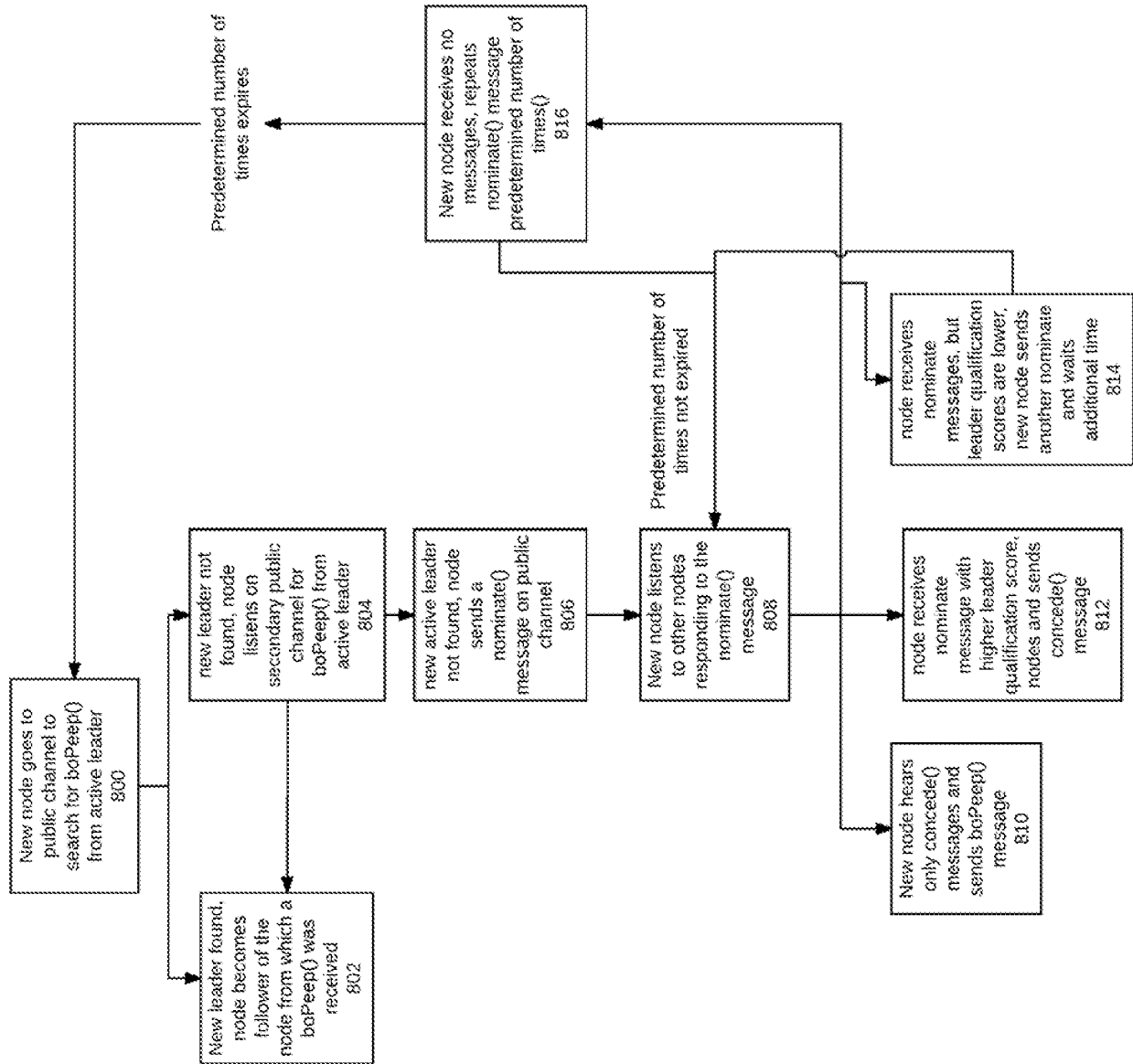


Fig. 8A

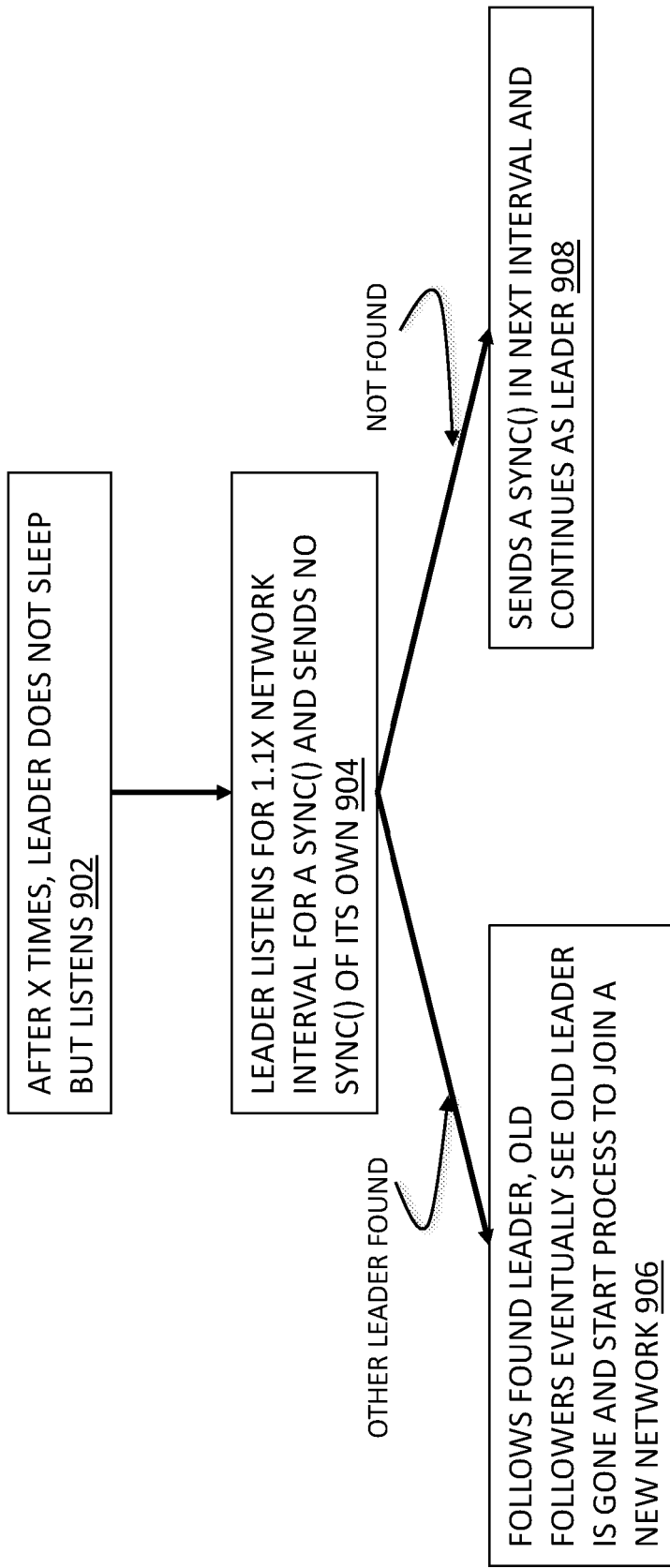


Fig. 9

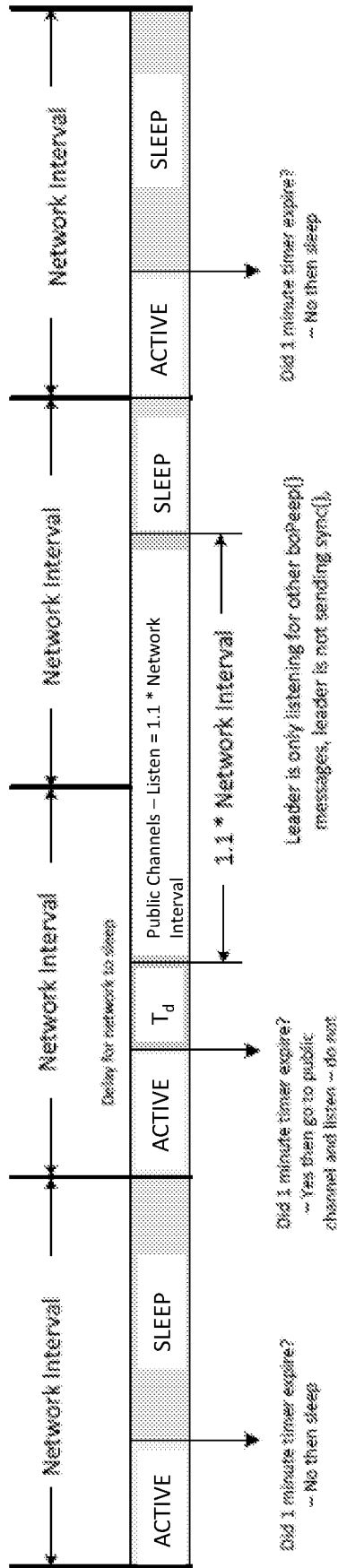


Fig. 10

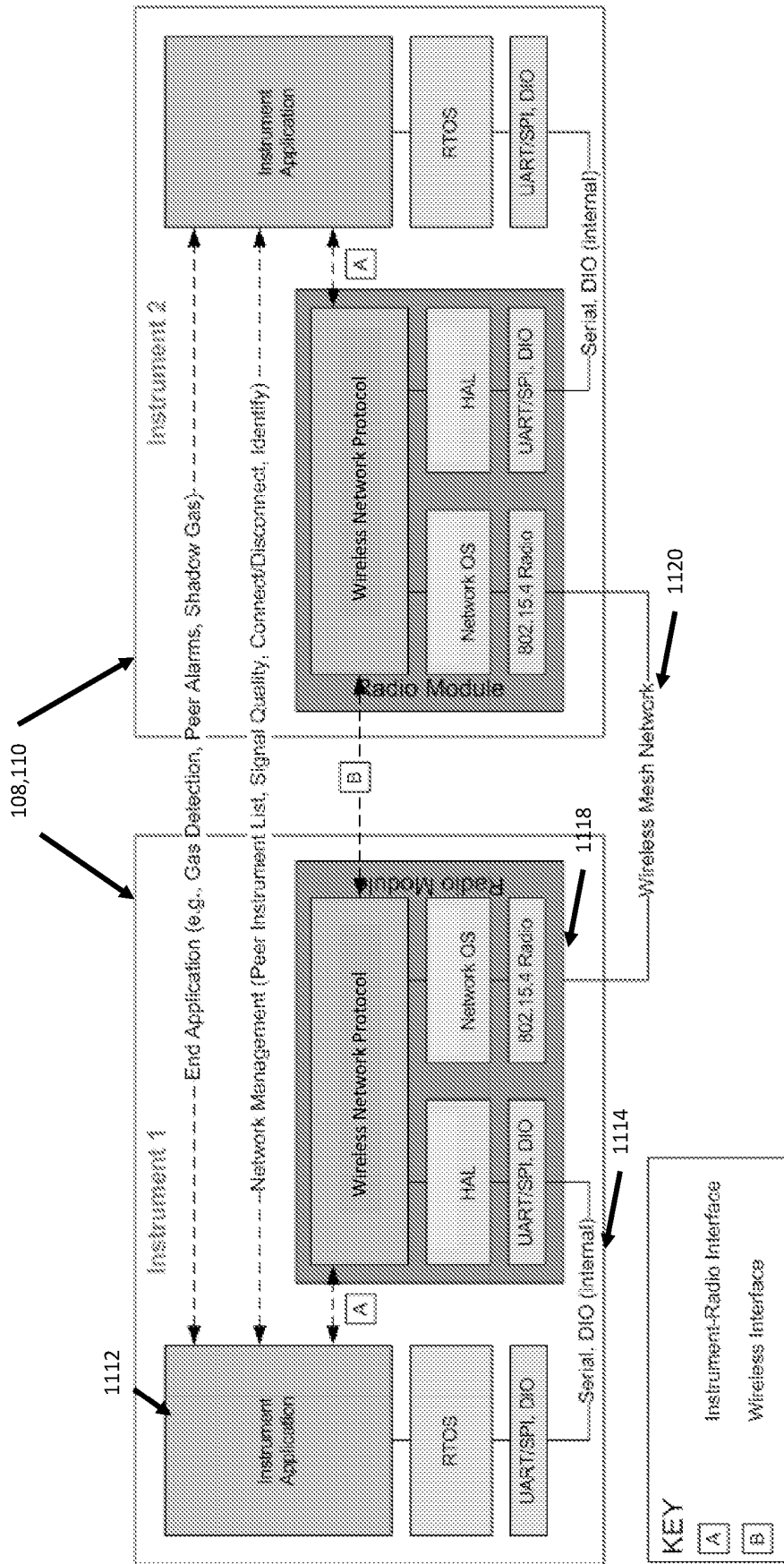


Fig. 11

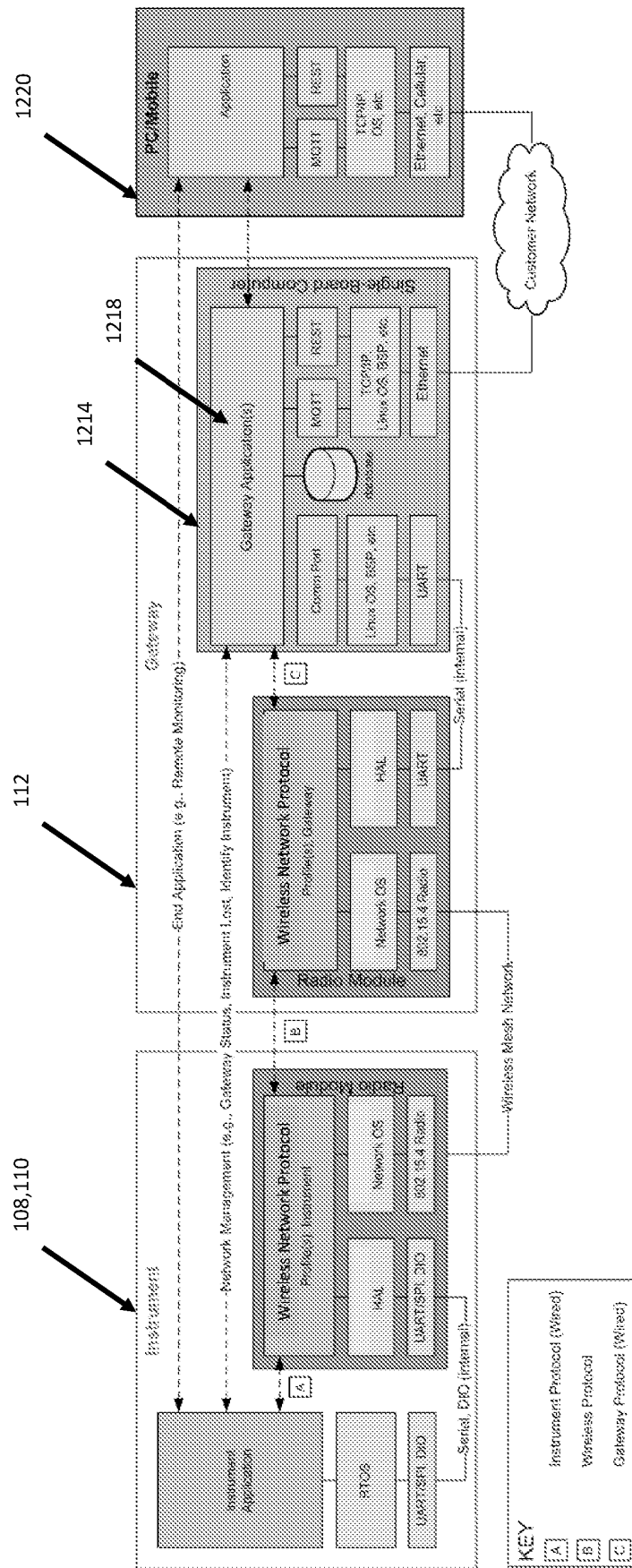


Fig. 12

Function		802.15.4		Mesh Network		Peer-to-peer Network		Devices		
OSI Model										
Identifying Partners	7. Application	Undefined		User's Host System (e.g., C/C++, JAVA, etc.)		Gas Detection, Location, Panic, Man Down, Vital		Instrument MCU		
Sending/Receiving Information	6. Presentation									
Syntax										
Device Profiles										
Connections										5. Session
Ack/Nak	4. Transport									
Retransmission										
Network Routing	3. Network									
Fragmentation/Reassembly										
Flow Control										
Error Control	2. Data Link Layer		802.15.4 MAC		VM, RPC Framework, Data, Mesh Networking		Network Operating System		Radio MCU	
Access Control										
Framing										
Physical Addressing										
Media Access Control (MAC)										
Media	1. Physical Layer		2.4GHz DSSS Radio (250kbps)		Module Hardware Abstraction		Radio Module/IC; other hardware		Radio Modem	
Channels and Modulation										

Fig. 13

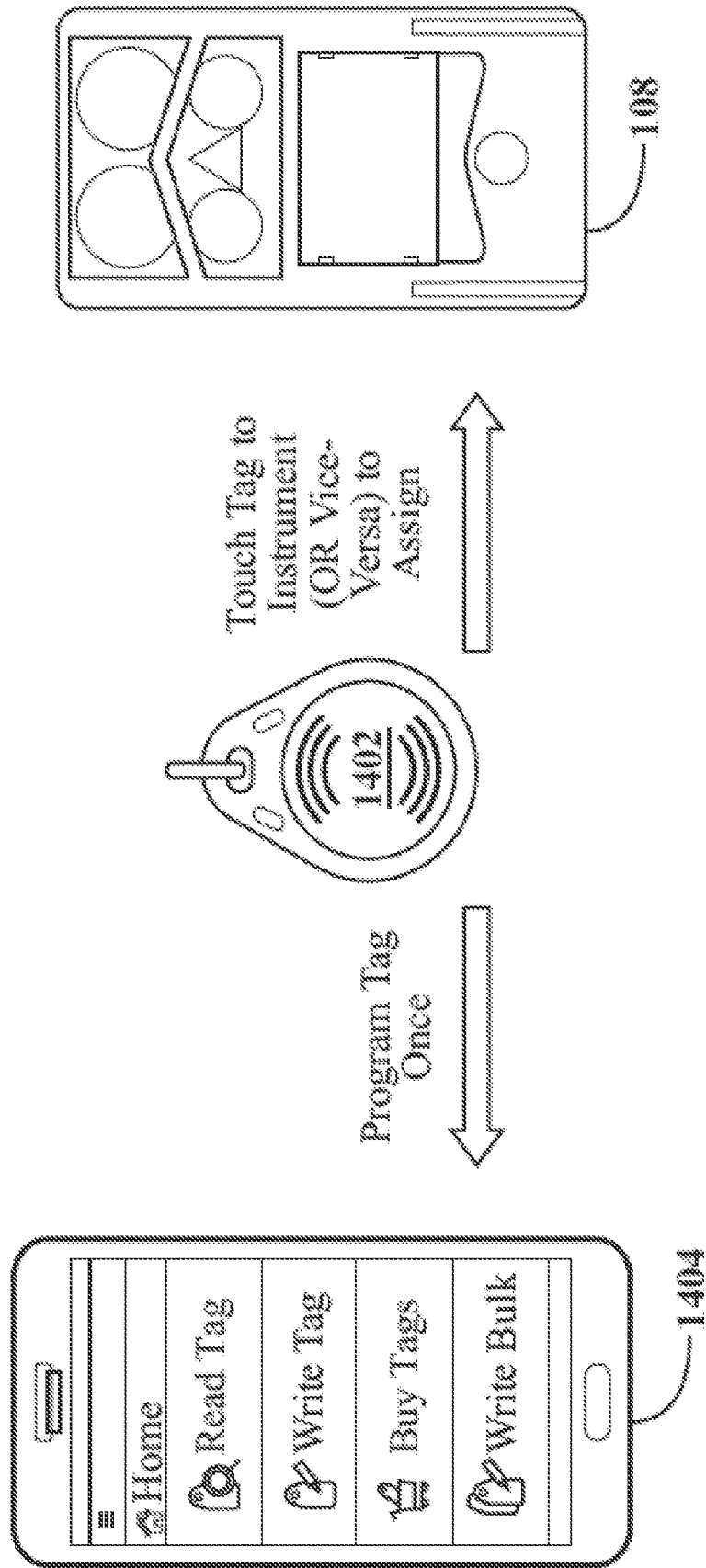


FIG. 14

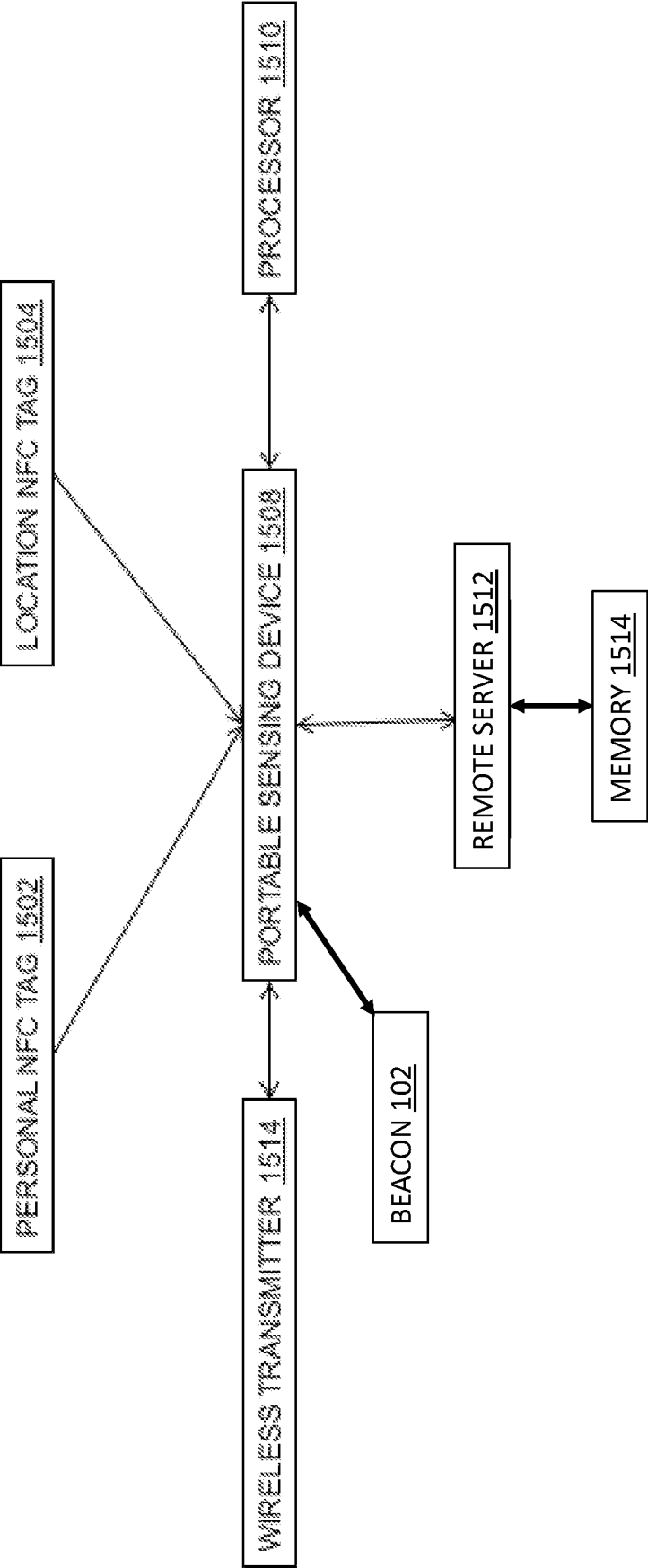


Fig. 15

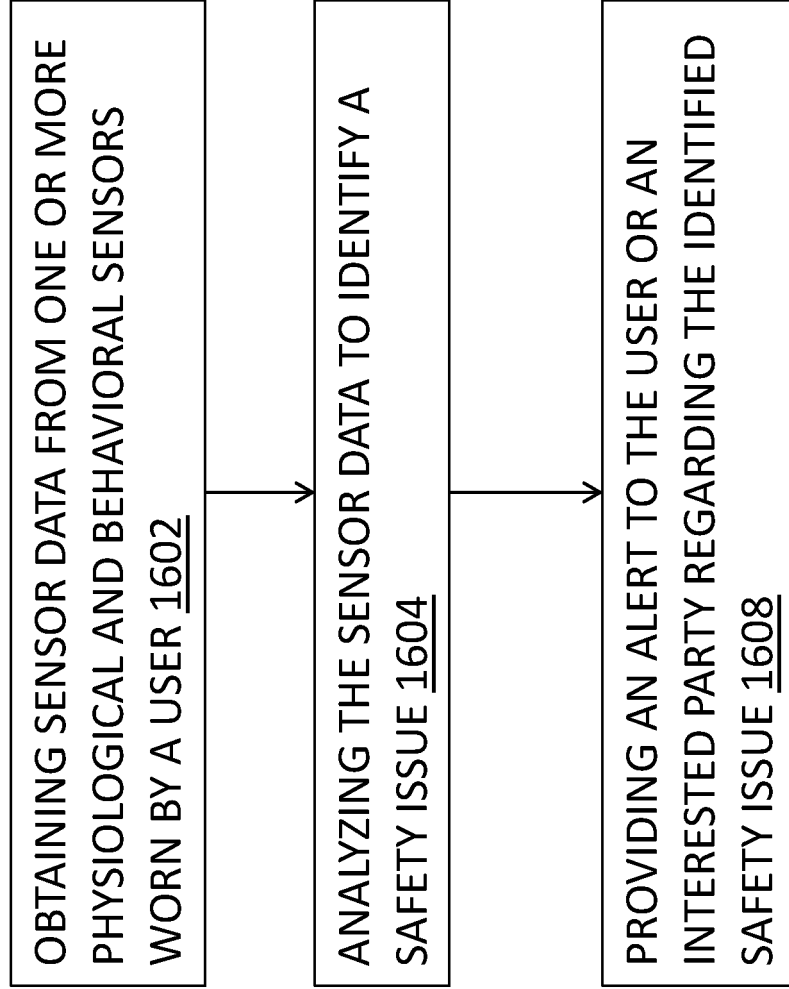


Fig. 16

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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