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Betz et al.

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(54) **LEAK DETECTING HOSE**

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F16L 55/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **138/104**; 138/125; 138/130; 138/132;
138/133

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 138/125,
138/132, 133, 104, 130
See application file for complete search history.

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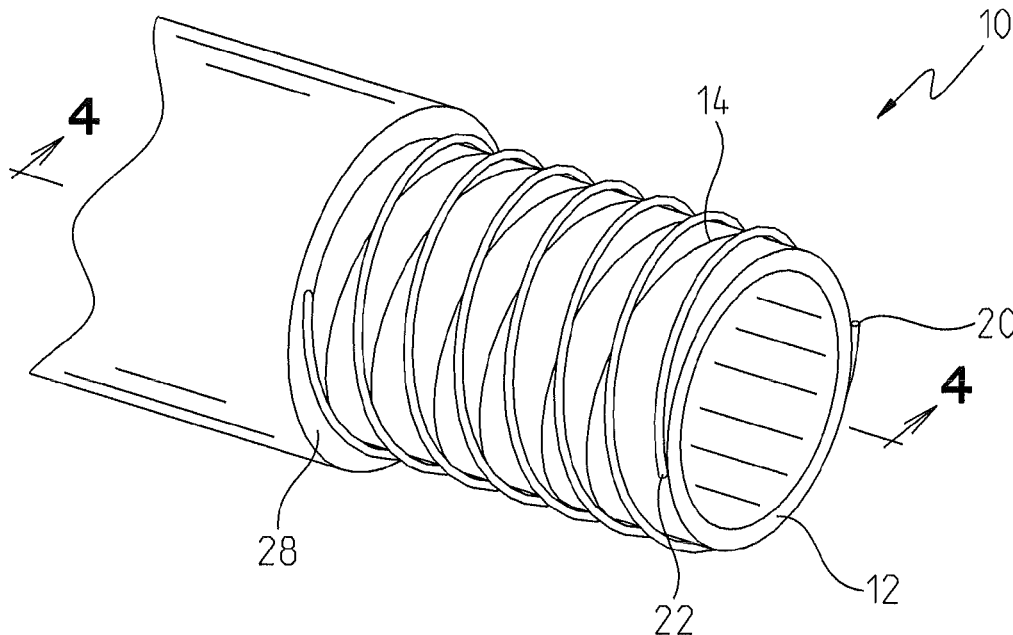
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A leak detecting hose for transporting fluid. The hose has an inner and outer layer. The outer layer circumscribes the inner layer. A transition layer is located between the inner and outer layer, and the transition layer provides a flow path for the fluid in the hose when the inner layer is breached. A first conductive wire is placed in contact with the transition layer, and a second conductive wire is placed in contact with the transition layer. The conductive wires are adjacent to and spaced from each other. When the inner layer of the hose is breached, the first and second wires will contact the fluid in the flow path. The conductive wires are radially equidistant from the center of the hose and helically wound around the inner layer. The transition layer may include reinforcement material, which can have filaments that provide a flow path for the fluid.

5 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



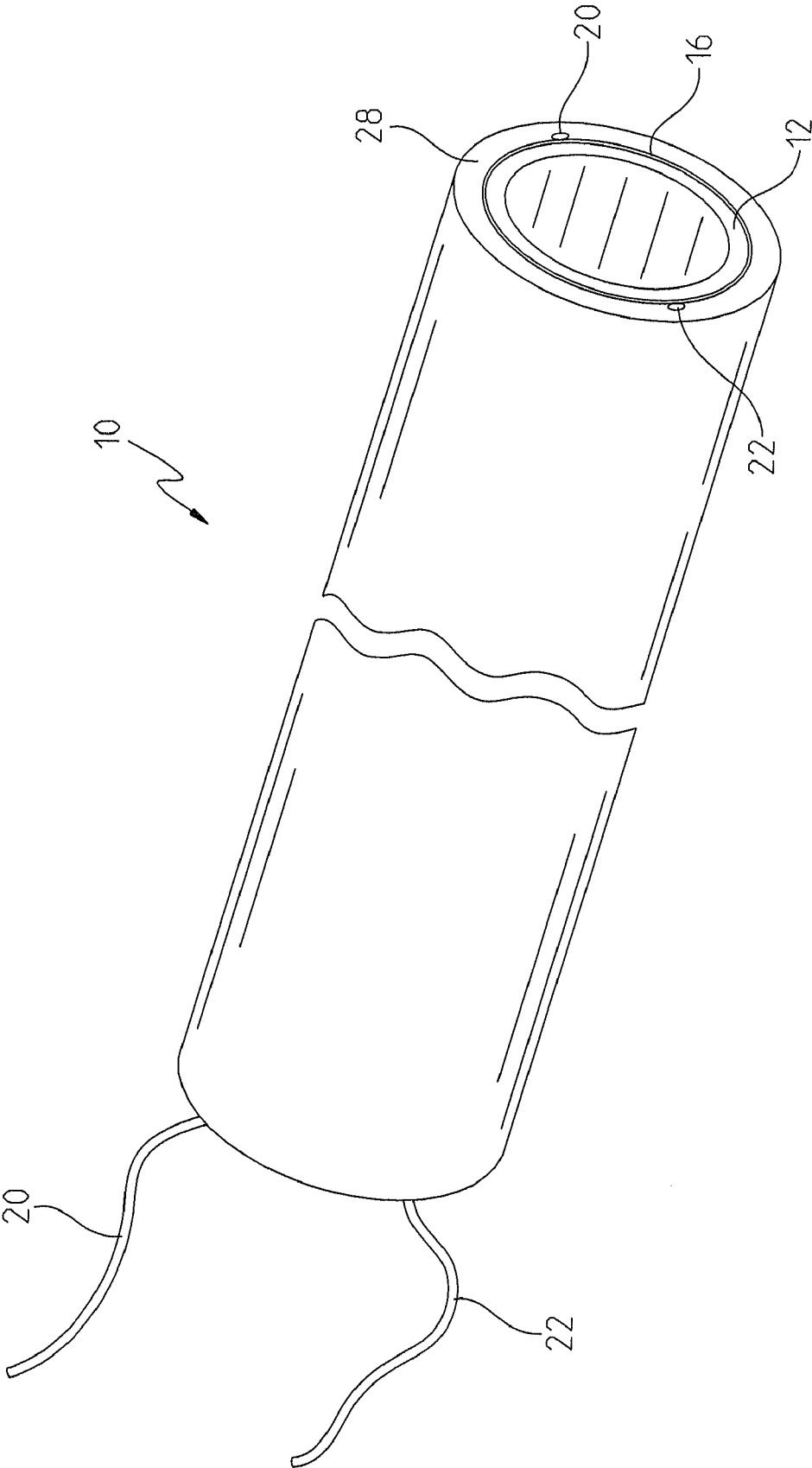


FIG. 1

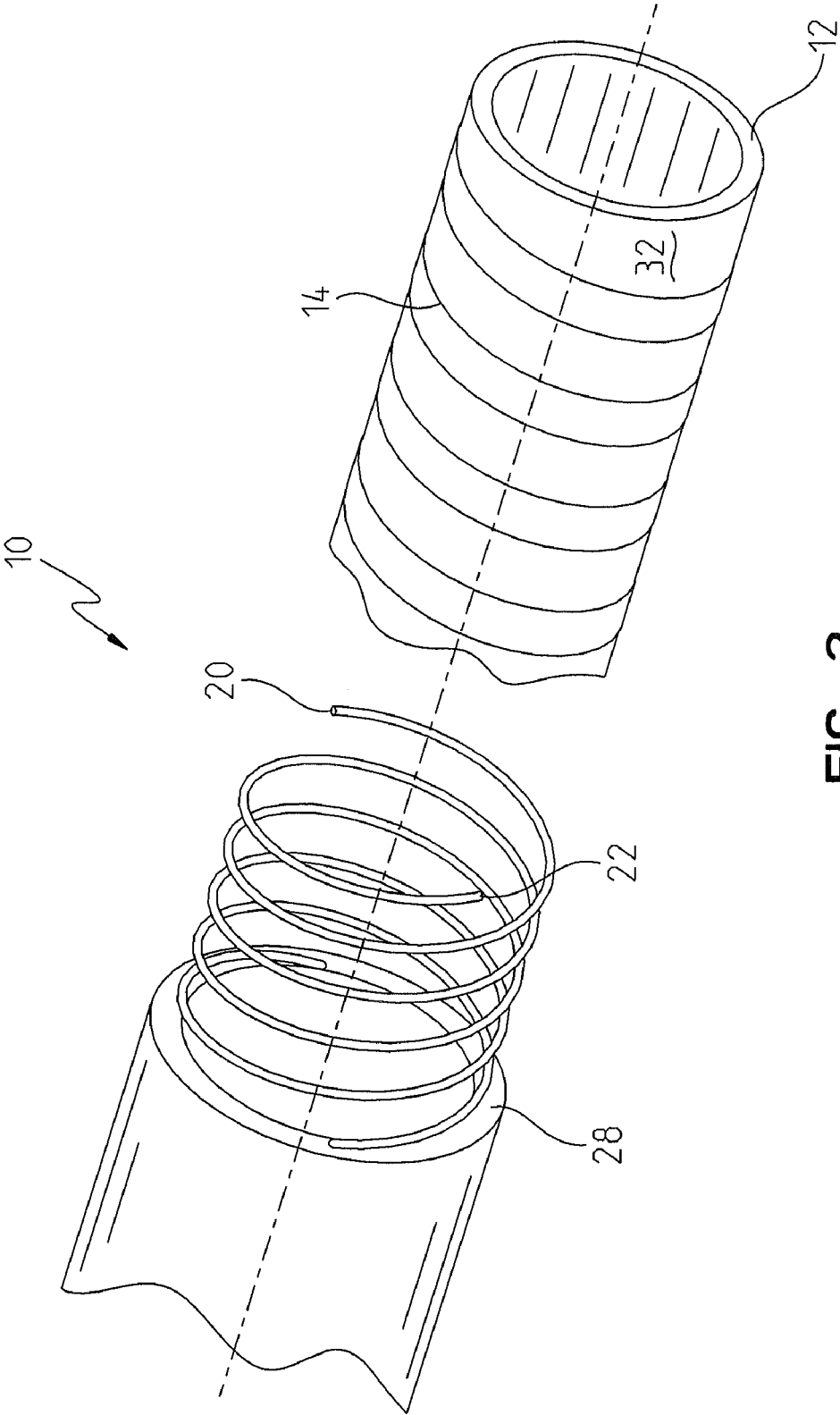


FIG. 2

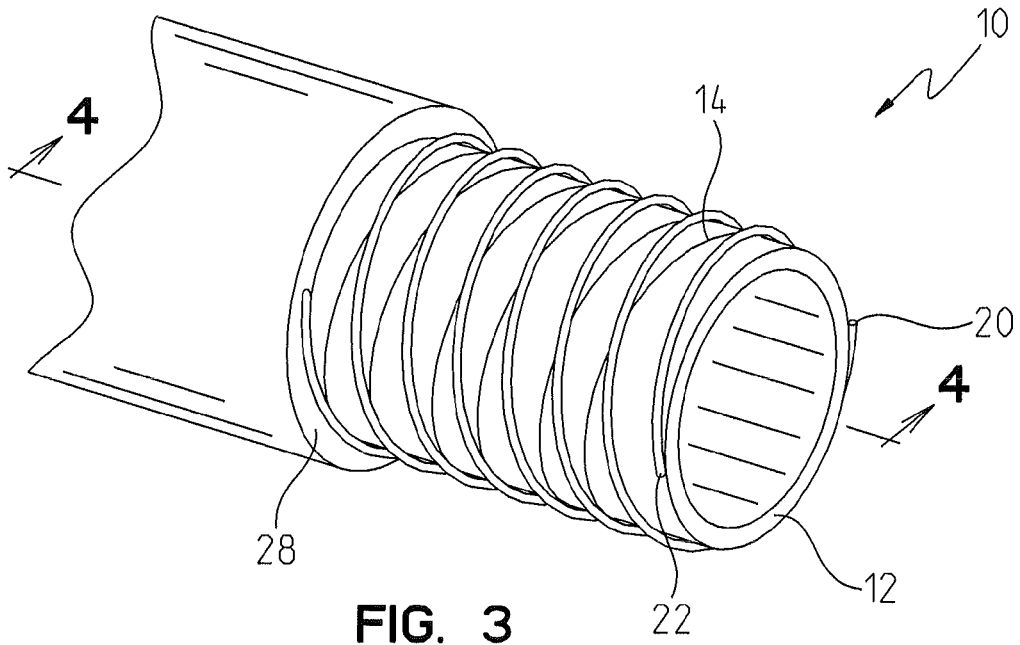


FIG. 3

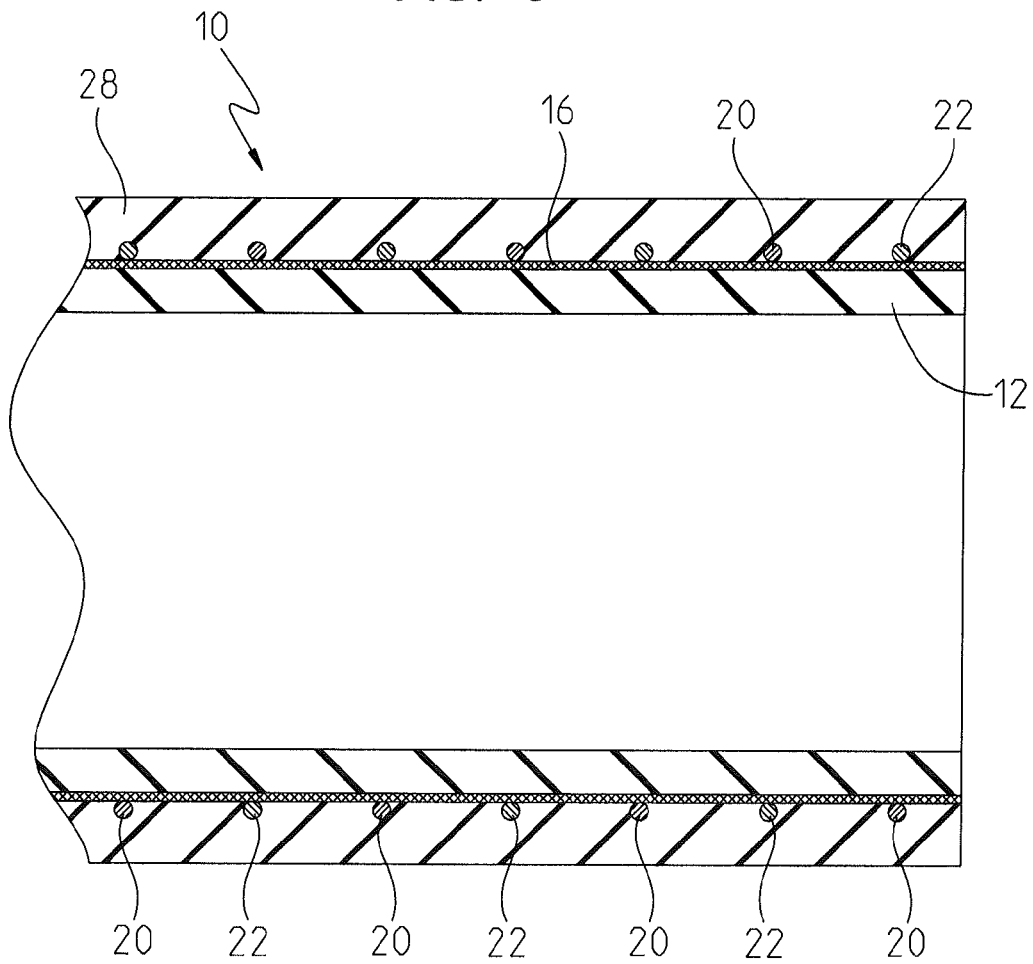


FIG. 4

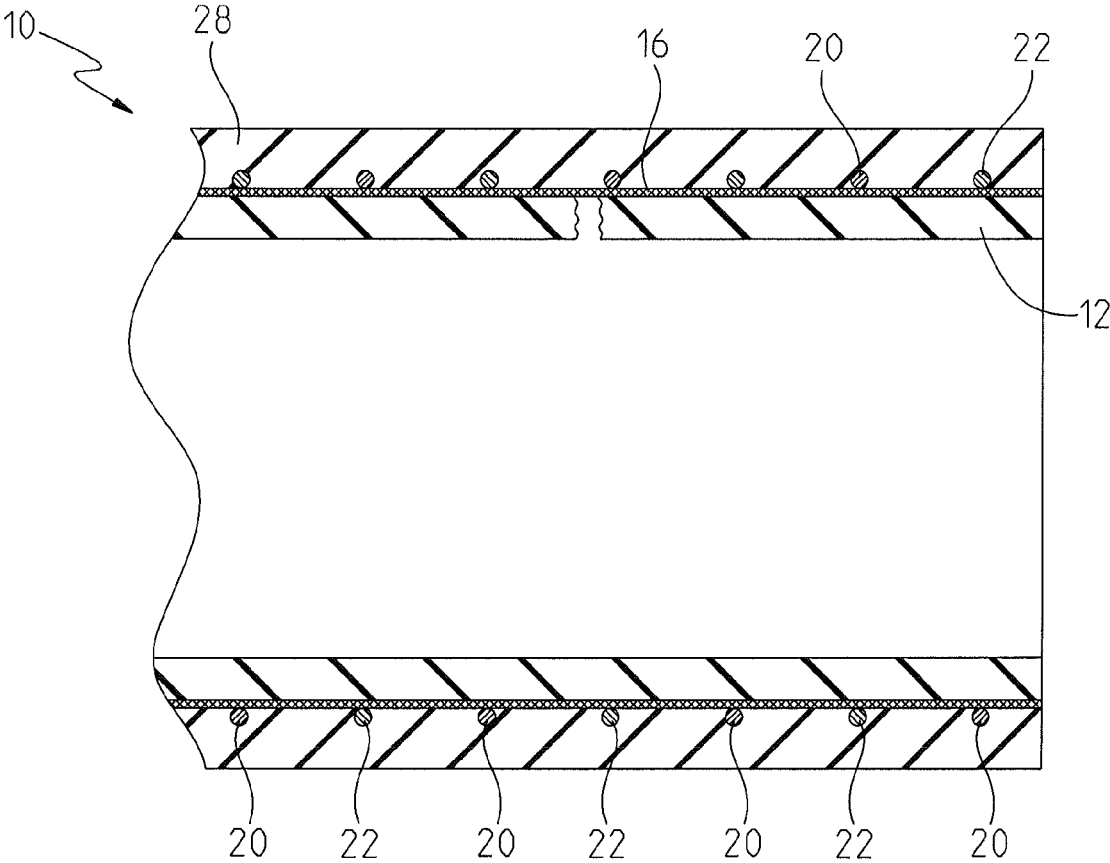


FIG. 5

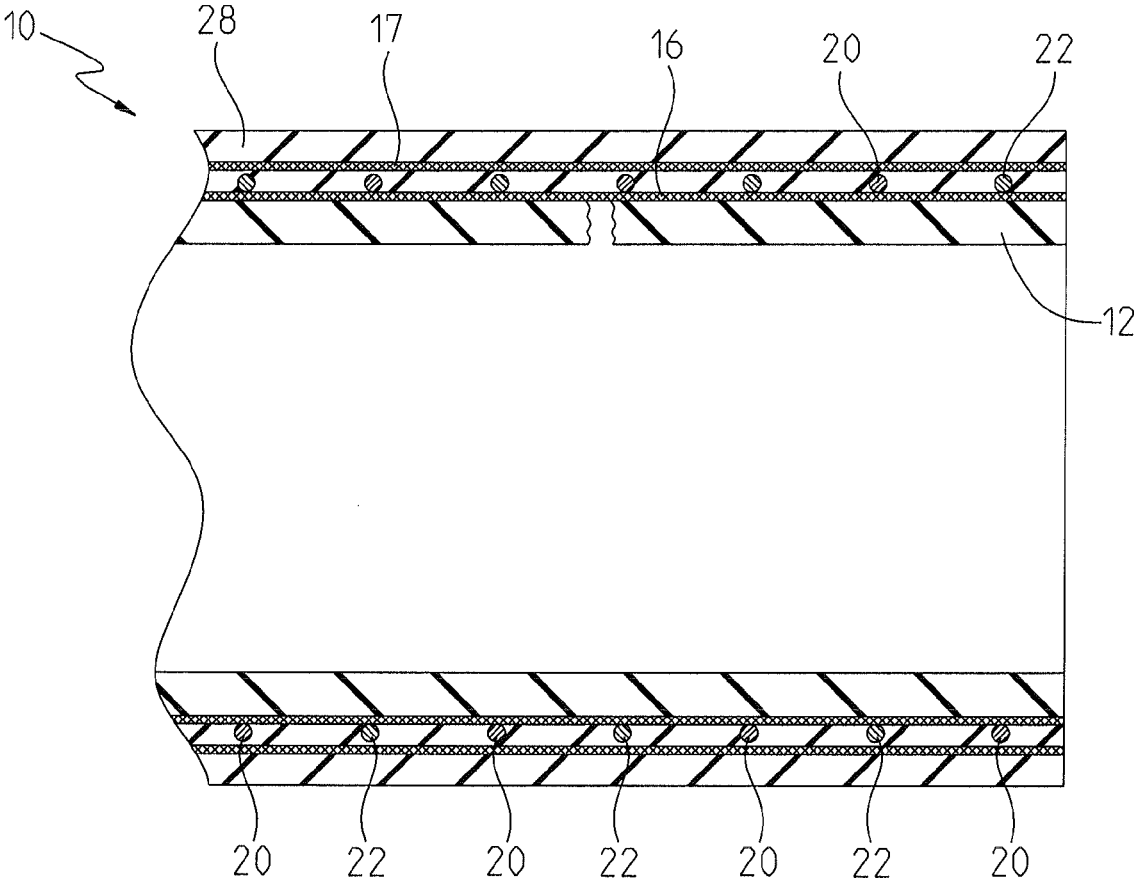


FIG. 5A

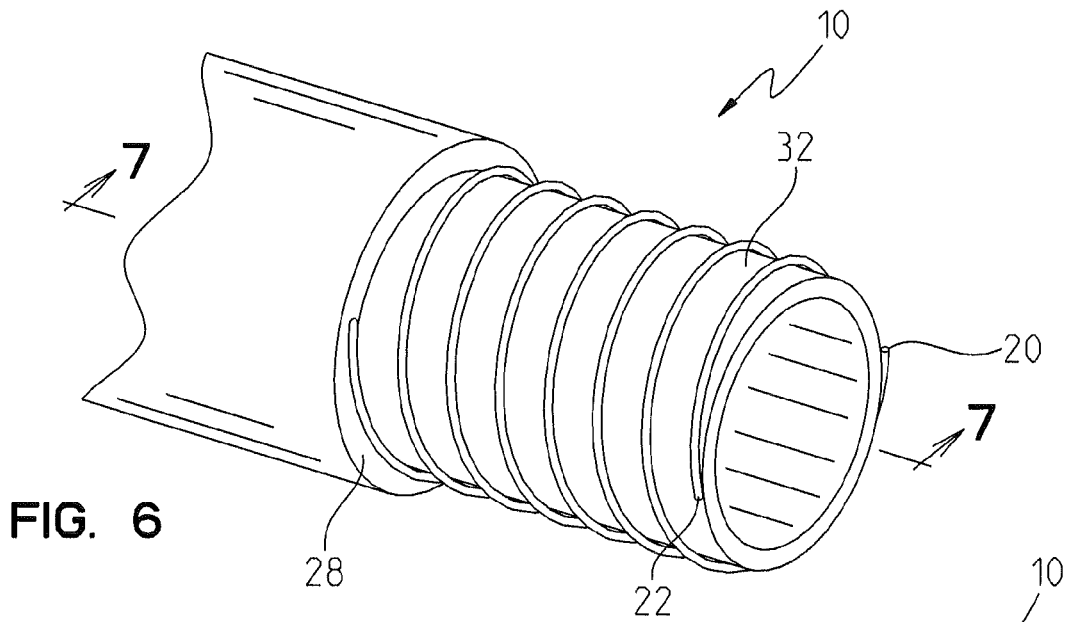


FIG. 6

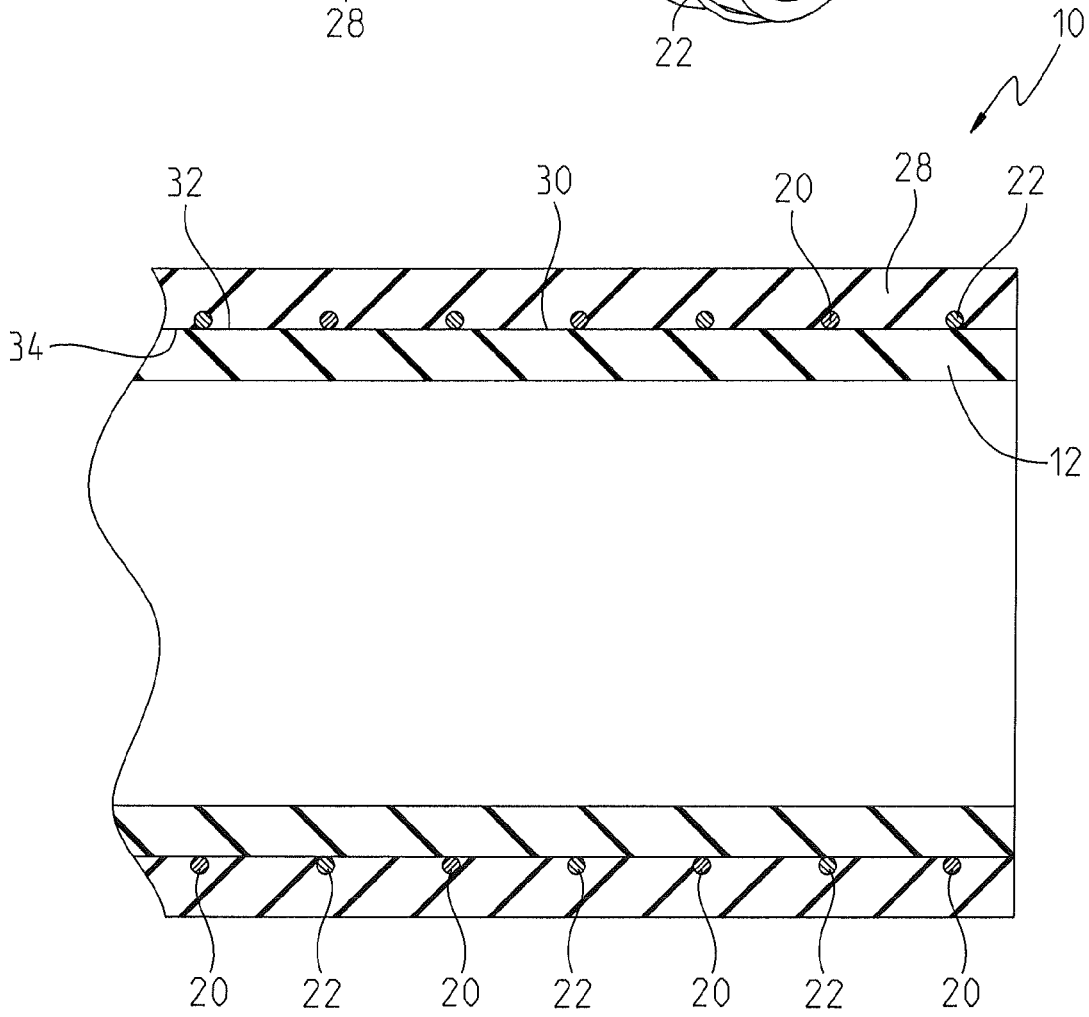


FIG. 7

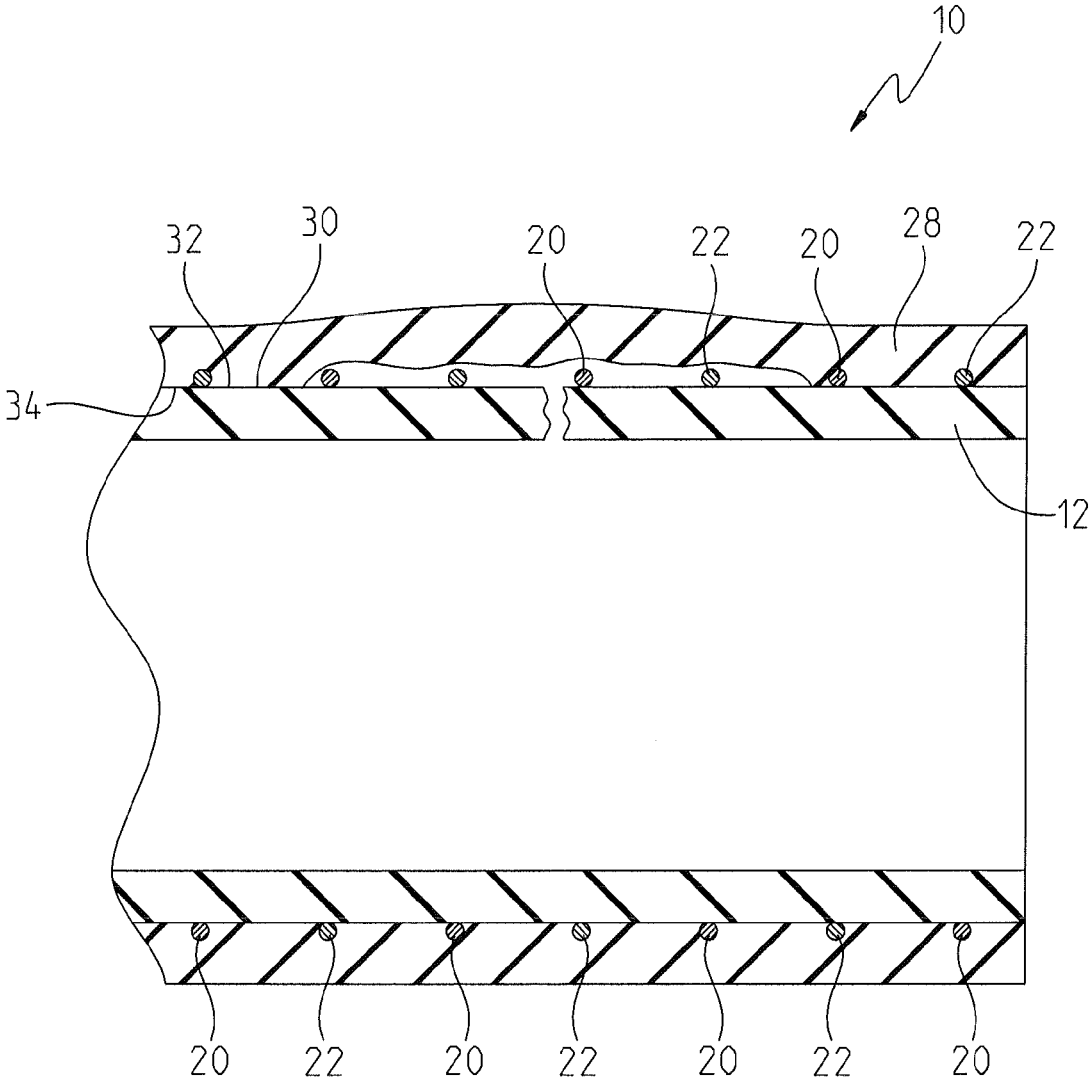


FIG. 8

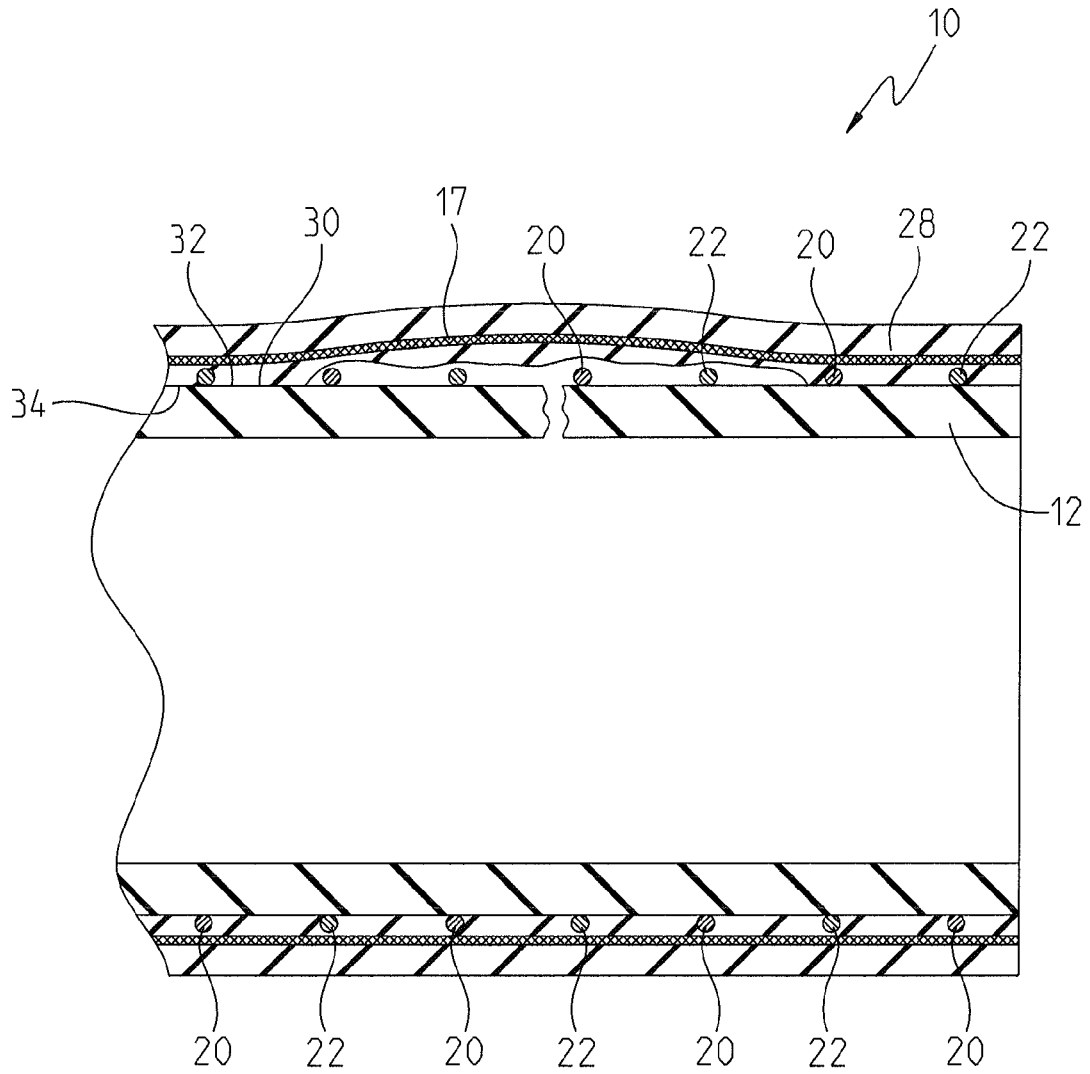


FIG. 8A

LEAK DETECTING HOSE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In many industrial processes, fluids are transported through hoses. Depending on the application, leakage of any amount of the fluid may be critical. In the transportation of hazardous fluids, an unchecked leak can be extremely costly. A hose that provides notification that it is leaking is desirable in such applications.

Attempts at creating a leak detecting hose were addressed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,634,497. In this hose, an inner liner has a first layer of braided copper wire placed over it. A layer of electrically insulating material encompasses the first layer of copper wire. A second layer of braided copper wire is placed over the insulating material. A finishing layer encompasses the hose assembly described. The braided layers of copper wire are electrically connected through the use of a bipolar socket. When the inner wires wear out due to abrasion, the first and second layers of wires will no longer be connected, and a sensor will detect the open circuit due to wear. The invention of this patent attempts to prevent leaks by detecting wear before the hose is weakened to a point where it cannot contain the pressure within itself. Currently, a small pinhole leak would remain undetected as long as enough of the copper wires remained in contact to complete an electric circuit.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a leak detecting hose for transporting fluid. The hose has an inner layer and an outer layer. The outer layer circumscribes the inner layer. A transition layer is located between the inner and outer layer, and the transition layer provides a flow path for the fluid in the hose when the inner layer is breached. A first conductive wire is placed in contact with the transition layer, and a second conductive wire is placed in contact with the transition layer. The conductive wires are adjacent to and spaced from each other. When the inner layer of the hose is breached, the first and second wires will contact the fluid in the flow path.

The conductive wires are radially equidistant from the center of the hose and helically wound around the inner layer. The transition layer may include reinforcement material. The reinforcement material can have filaments that provide a flow path for the fluid. The filaments are in contact with the conductive wires.

In another aspect of the invention, the transition layer is an interface between an outer surface of the inner layer and an inner surface of the outer layer. In this configuration, when the inner layer is breached, the flow path of the fluid will contact both wires.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the hose;

FIG. 2 is an exploded view of the hose shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a cutaway perspective of the hose shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a sectional view of the hose shown in FIG. 3 taken about the line 4-4;

FIG. 5 is a the hose shown in FIG. 4 with the inner layer ruptured;

FIG. 5A is a sectional view of the hose similar to that shown in FIG. 5 having an additional layer of reinforcing filaments in the outer layer;

FIG. 6 is a cutaway perspective of a hose without reinforcement filaments;

FIG. 7 is a sectional view of the hose shown in FIG. 6 taken about the line 7-7;

FIG. 8 is the hose shown in FIG. 7 with the inner layer ruptured; and

FIG. 8A is a sectional view of the hose similar to that shown in FIG. 8 having an additional layer of reinforcing filaments in the outer layer.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF INVENTION

An embodiment of the hose **10** of this invention is shown in FIG. 1. FIG. 3, shows a cut away of the end of the hose, with some of the material removed for illustrative purposes. The hose has an inner layer **12** which is typically a rubber material, but may be any elastomeric material. This inner layer **12** may be formed by depositing material on a mandrel. After the inner layer **12** is in place, a layer of filaments or fabric indicated at **14** is wound around the top of the inner layer **12**. The filaments **14** form a transition layer **16** that will be discussed later. The filaments **14** are wound in a helical pattern and may be spaced as shown in FIG. 3. This helical pattern resembles a left hand threaded fastener which will hereinafter be referred to as a left hand helix. The pattern illustrated in FIG. 3 may be the result of rotating the inner layer **12** on a mandrel clockwise as viewed from the right end and beginning to wind a filament **14** from the right end toward the left end. The spacing may be much closer than that illustrated in FIG. 3, and the filaments **14** may touch each other. The filaments **14** act as reinforcement material to strengthen the hose **10** as is common in the art of hose construction.

A first conductive wire **20** is wound around the filaments **14** as shown in FIG. 3. The first wire **20** begins at the three o'clock position as viewed from the right end shown in FIG. 3 and is helically wound over the filaments **14**. The first wire **20** is in contact with the filaments **14**. A second conductive wire **22** beginning at the nine o'clock position is helically wound around the filaments **14** adjacent to and spaced from the first wire **20**. Both of the wires **20, 22** are wound in the same helical pattern. The pattern in which the wires **20, 22** are wound resembles a right hand threaded fastener and will hereinafter be referred to as a right hand helix. The wires **20, 22** themselves have no insulation and are made of any material that conducts electricity well.

An outer layer **28** is put over the inner layer **12** once the filaments **14** and wires **20, 22** are in place. The outer layer **28** may be the same material as the inner layer, or could possibly be a different material. The outer layer **28** is deposited on the wires **20, 22**, filaments **14**, and inner layer **12** so that all of the aforementioned components are sealed within the outer layer **28**. As the outer layer **28** is deposited, it flows into any spaces between the wires **20, 22**, or space between the filaments **14**. FIG. 4 shows a sectional view of the hose that is not to scale, which shows the hose **10** after the outer layer **28** of material is deposited. The transition layer **16** is best seen in FIG. 4. As mentioned above, the filaments **14** may be wound in a left hand helical pattern with some spacing between the filaments or the filaments **14** may be wound so that they are tightly packed without any spacing between filaments as they are wound. Generally, it is preferable to wind the helix of the filaments **14** in the opposite hand as that of the wires **20, 22**. This will result in contact between the filaments **14** as the filaments **14** and wires **20, 22** cross. FIG. 3 shows intermittent contact between the filaments **14** and wires **20, 22**. Multiple layers of filaments **14** may also be used to make a thicker transition layer **16** and ensure contact between the filaments **14** and the wires **20, 22**.

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The transition layer **16** forms a flow path for fluid traveling within the hose **10** when the inner layer **12** is breached as shown in FIG. **5**. When the inner layer **12** is breached, the fluid will wick along the filaments in the transition layer **16**. Typically this hose **10** will be used to transport a fluid that conducts electricity, such as water. As the fluid wicks into the filaments of the transition layer **16**, the fluid will contact both the first and second wires **20**, **22**. The fluid contact with both wires **20**, **22** will complete a circuit between the first and second wires **20**, **22**. In some applications it may be desirable to include a second layer of filaments **17** within the outer layer **28**. This layer of filaments **17** will provide additional strength in the outer layer **28** when the inner layer **12** is ruptured and is illustrated in FIG. **5A**. The filaments **17** do not act as a transition layer and need not be in contact with the wires **20**, **22**.

Another embodiment of the hose **10** is shown in FIGS. **6-8**. In this embodiment, the transition layer **30** is the interface where the outer surface **32** of the inner layer **12** meets the inner surface **34** of the outer layer **28**. This embodiment of the hose **10** is without filaments to provide wicking action to complete a circuit between the wires **20**, **22**. When the inner layer **12** of this embodiment is breached, the transition layer **30** acts as a flow path as shown in FIG. **8**. During manufacture of this embodiment, the inner layer **12** is in place on a mandrel before the outer layer **28** is deposited upon the inner layer **12**. This forms a distinct abrupt transition that allows fluid to flow along the transition layer **30** between the inner layer **12** and the outer layer **28**, thus completing a circuit between the two wires **20**, **22**. Although there are no filaments to provide wicking in this embodiment, filaments **17** may be included to reinforce the outer layer **28** in a similar manner as described in the previous embodiment. This is illustrated in FIG. **8A**. These filaments **17** need not be in contact with the wires **20**, **22**.

The wires **20**, **22** of the above mentioned embodiments are connected to an external sensor that will indicate when a circuit is completed. This sensor may be connected to an alarm that warns of a breach in the inner layer **12** of the hose. The wires **20**, **22** may also be connected to something as simple as a light that will illuminate when the circuit between the first and second wires **20**, **22** is completed by the fluid. This will provide notice of a breach with some time to replace the hose **10** before the outer layer **28** ruptures and allows the fluid to be spilled into the surrounding environment. The helical winding of the wires **20**, **22** provides many locations around the transition layer **16**, **30** for a potential short circuit to occur. This will ensure that a breach in the inner layer **12** occurring on one side of the hose will be detected quickly

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because the fluid will only have to flow a short distance in the transition layer **16**, **30** for the short circuit to be detected. The closer the spacing is between the wires **20**, **22** the more quickly a leak may be detected, and this configuration provides for the detection of small pinhole leaks before fluid leaves the hose **10**. The ability of the hose **10** to quickly detect leaks is particularly useful for toxic substances transported in aqueous solution that may be extremely hazardous if spilled and would cause expensive remediation measures if released into the environment.

The construction of the present invention will warn of a rupture in the inner layer **12** when a circuit is completed by the fluid contacting both wires **20**, **22**. When the circuit is open between the wires **20**, **22**, energy will not be consumed. Thus, the present invention is an energy efficient alternative to a system that depends upon an electrified circuit being broken to indicate that part of the hose **10** had ruptured.

The invention is not limited to the details given above but may be modified within the scope of the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A leak detecting hose for transporting fluid comprising:
 - an inner layer;
 - a filament being wound around said inner layer in one helical direction;
 - first and second electrically conductive wires being wound helically in the same direction and being spaced from each other so that no contact is made between said first and second conductive wires, the helical direction of said wires being opposite that of said filament such that said filament contacts both wires intermittently whereby a breach of said inner hose would cause fluid in said hose to wick along said filament and electrically connect said wires; and
 - an outer layer circumscribing said inner layer, said filament and said wires.
2. A leak detecting hose as claimed in claim 1, wherein said outer layer is in direct contact with said inner layer in spaces between said wires and said filament.
3. A leak detecting hose as claimed in claim 1, wherein said outer layer directly contacts said inner layer where said wires and said filament do not.
4. A leak detecting hose as claimed in claim 1, wherein said filament is wound so that it does not contact itself.
5. A leak detecting hose as claimed in claim 4, wherein said outer layer directly contacts said inner layer where said wires and filament do not.

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