

FILTRATION MASK**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**
FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5

The present invention relates to a filtration mask, such as an emergency hood.

10 **Summary of the Prior Art**

Filtration masks have been known for many years, and their configuration depends on their intended use.

Simple filtration masks, such as surgical masks that are
15 used by doctors or surgeons, in order to protect patients from germs contained in their breath, cover only the wearer's nose and mouth. They may be formed entirely from filtration material. Similar masks are used by wood workers and construction workers etc, to prevent dust
20 particles entering their respiratory systems.

More complex filtration masks have been developed particularly for use in military conflicts, to provide protection for e.g. soldiers against chemical or biological hazards. These masks are often known as
25 respirators, and usually employ a rubber mask section which covers the wearer's face, and acts as a housing for air filters. These masks must seal effectively around the face of the wearer, to ensure that no hazardous

vapours can enter the wearer's respiratory system by routes other than via the air filters. The masks are often cumbersome, expensive, and must be sized to the particular wearer, in order to provide an effective seal
5 around the periphery of the wearer's face.

Intermediate these two types of masks are emergency hoods. Emergency hoods are a type of respirator, also called an "escape hood", which are designed to assist
10 escape from CBRN hazards, and are not intended for prolonged or repeated use. Such emergency hoods need to provide a wearer with protection for only fifteen minutes or so, preferably at least twenty minutes, to allow escape from a contaminated area. They generally comprise
15 an oro-nasal mask, for fitting over the wearer's nose and mouth, and a hood (with neck dam) for fitting over the wearer's head. Air filters are connected to the oro-nasal mask. The hood may serve to protect the wearer's eyes and other facial, head and neck features, from
20 hazardous chemicals.

In WO2007/042754, we disclosed such a filtration mask of respirator type, which had two filtration supports connected by an air guide containing two exhale
25 valves, with a collapsible air guide mounted to the air guide between the filter supports. The filter supports

were hinged to the air guide removable between the position in which the air guide was in a collapsed state, and the filter supports were close together to a deployed state in which the filter supports were further apart,
5 and the air guide was deployed.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention also makes use of hinged
10 filter supports, but seeks to provide a simplified structure more adapted for an emergency hood.

In the subsequent discussions, the term "inner" will be used to refer to parts of the mask which, in use, are
15 close to the wearer's face, and the term "outer" will be used to refer to parts which are further away from the wearer's face.

The first aspect of the invention is concerned with
20 the positioning of the exhale valve relative to the filter supports of the filtration mask. This aspect, at its most general, the filter supports are hinged together, and the exhale valve is located within recesses in the filter supports.

Thus, according to a first aspect of the invention there may be provided a filtration mask including a collapsible air guide and two filter supports, the filter supports being hingedly connected together at hinging
5 edges and moveable between a storage position and deployment position, the hinge angle between the filter supports being less in the deployment position than the storage position, wherein the filter supports each have a recess in the corresponding hinging edge, and an exhale
10 valve is mounted in said recesses such that the exhale valve is surrounded by the filter support when in the storage position, the exhale valve communicating with the air guide.

15 With this structure, the filter supports are hinged directly together, rather than being hinged to an intermediate structure as in WO2007/042754, resulting in a more complex structure. On the other hand, the exhale valve is received between the filter supports, and can be
20 restricted volume defined by the outer and inner planes of the filter supports, when they are in the storage position, so that the mask may be compact when stored.

Preferably, the exhale valve is circular, and
25 received between corresponding semi-circular recesses in the respective filter supports. It may form part of an

exhale module, which may also be circular and be received between the recesses.

Preferably, the exhale module is connected to the
5 filter supports by a flexible membrane. The membrane then connects the filter supports to the exhale module but permits relative movement, e.g. when the filter supports are hinged from their storage to deployment positions. The exhale module, and hence the valve, may
10 be considered to "float" between the filter supports, because it is connected thereto by a flexible component, rather than a rigid one.

Preferably, the membrane is an annulus which is
15 attached to a projection (e.g. an annular projection) on the inner surface of the exhale valve. The outer periphery of that annulus is then attached to the filter supports.

20 With such an arrangement, the exhale module may be a rigid body, but the position of that body is independent of the movement of the filter supports. Exhaled air may leave the oro-nasal cavity of the mask (within the air guide) and be expelled to the local atmosphere. The
25 exhale valve may be positioned in the optimum position for efficient exhalation performance, whilst still

allowing other parts of the mask to move. Hence, any distortion or movement of the filter supports, or other structure, is not passed on to the exhale valve. The exhale module and hence the exhale valve adopts to any
5 orientation of the filter supports or surrounding structure, giving a high exhale efficiency. Moreover, the use of a flexible membrane offers compliance against frontal impact.

10 As discussed above, the use of a flexible membrane to attach the exhale module to the filter bodies has been discussed as part of the first aspect of the invention. However, it is possible for such a flexible membrane to be used independently of other features of the first
15 aspect, and it therefore represents a second, independent, aspect of the invention.

Thus, according to the second aspect of the invention there may be provided a filtration mask
20 including a collapsible air guide and two filter supports, the filter supports being hingedly connected together at hinging edges and moveable between a storage position and deployment position, the hinge angle between the filter supports being less in the deployment position
25 than the storage position, wherein there is an exhale module containing an exhale valve mounted between the

filter supports and connected thereto by a flexible membrane, the exhale valve communicating with the air guide.

5 It is also desirable for the air guide to adopt a relatively compact position when the filter supports are in their storage position. In known masks, such as that disclosed in WO2007/042754, the air guide has been a integral rubber structure conforming closely to the
10 intended shape of the face of the wearer, and is held in a collapsed position by compression. When the compressive forces are released, the air guide adopts its deployed position, the resilience of the rubber causing it to spring into shape.

15

 The air guide may be formed by panels connected together by hinges, so that the air guide can unfold, rather than spring to shape. It is then possible for the air guide to be folded so that it is substantially flat
20 when the filter supports are in the storage position, and the movement of the filter supports from that storage position to the deployment position may then cause the air guide to unfold, by hinging of the panels, to adopt the position which it must take when the mask is to be
25 used. Thus, a third aspect of the invention proposes that the air guide is formed of such panels hingedly

connected together. The air guide may also include a flexible face ring, connected to the panels, which will abut the wearer's face when the mask is used. Again, although such an air guide may be used in the first or
5 second aspects of the invention, it may also be used independently of those aspects.

Hence, according to a third aspect of the invention there may be provided a filtration mask including a
10 collapsible air guide and two filter supports, the filter supports being hingedly connected together at hinging edges and moveable between a storage position and deployment position, the hinge angle between the filter supports being less in the deployment position than the
15 storage position, wherein the air guide comprises at least four side panels and a flexible face ring being hingedly interconnected and hingedly attached to the filter supports, the face ring having an aperture therein, the air guide being foldable by hinging of the
20 panels and the face ring between a flat position, when the filter supports are in the storage position and a deployed position when the filter supports are in the deployment position.

25 Preferably, the panels are of flexible material, in a similar way to the face ring, but it may be possible to

make the panels of rigid material. They are normally planar.

Preferably edges of said face ring are hingedly attached
5 to the respective filter supports.

Brief Description of the Drawings

An embodiment of the present invention will now be
10 described in detail, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figs. 1a and 1b are general views of a filtration mask being an embodiment of the invention;

15 Figs. 2a to 2h show part of the mask of Fig. 1. in successive stages of deployment;

Fig. 3 is a partially exploded view of part of the mask of Fig. 1;

20

Figs. 4a to 4e show successive stages in the deployment of the air guide of the mask of Fig. 1; and

Figs. 5a to 5c show successive stages in the folding
25 of the hood of the filtration mask.

Detailed Description

Figs. 1a and 1b are general views of a filtration mask being an embodiment of the invention. This
5 filtration mask is an emergency hood, also known as an escape mask.

The mask of this embodiment has five principal components. It has two filter supports 100a, 100b
10 hingedly connected at a hinge 130. Positioned between the filter supports 100a, 100b is a circular exhale module containing an exhale valve 110. An air guide 140 is attached to the filter supports 100a, 100b and exhale module 110 and is enclosed within a hood 150 attached to
15 the filter supports 100a, 100b.

As illustrated in Figs. 1a and 1b, the hood 150 is transparent, so that the internal components of the mask can be seen through it. In practice, only some parts of
20 the hood 150 are likely to be transparent, to enable the wearer to see, and other parts will be opaque for recent manufacture. The hood 150 has a hole 151 therein in its lower surface 153 to enable the wearer's head to be inserted in the mask. The hood 150 is attached to the
25 upper and lower edges of the filter supports 100a, 100b,

and also to the side edges of those filter supports 100a, 100b remote from the hinge 130.

The filter supports 100a, 100b contain filter material which remove contaminants from air inhaled into the mask. Air is exhaled through the exhale valve of the exhale module 110.

The exhale module 110 is attached to the filter supports by a flexible membrane, which is not shown in Figs. 1a and 1b, but will be described in more detail later. However, the view of Fig. 1b shows a projection 202 on the exhale module 110 to which that membrane will be attached, and also shows the internal structure of the outlet path of the exhale valve within the exhale module 110. The exhale valve is within the projection 202. Similarly, Figs. 1a and 1b show external and internal ribs 102, 103 of the filter supports 100a, 100b which hold the filter material in place.

20

Fig 1b also shows that although parts 104 of the rear surface of the filter supports 100a, 100b are solid, the parts within the air guide 140 are open, to allow the interior of the air guide 140 to communicate with the filters and the exhale valve within the exhale module 110.

Figs. 2a to 2f then show how the filter supports, exhale module, and air guide change in relative position as the mask is deployed. Fig. 2a shows the filter supports 100a 100b at, or close to, the storage position in which in this position, the circular exhale module 110 is surrounded by the semi-circular recesses 120a, 120b in the filter supports 100a, 100b.

As the mask is changed from its storage position to its deployment position, the filter supports 100a, 100b hinge along a line 130 at which their hinged edges 101a, 101b join, so that they successively adopt the position shown in Figs. 2b to 2H. Note that the hinge line is at the inner edges of the filter supports 100a, 100b. The hinge angle, i.e. the internal angle between the planes of the filter supports 100a, 100b at the hinge 130 decreases as the mask is moved to its deployed position. At the same time, the air guide 140 deploys, as will be described in more detail later. Note that the reference to the "inner" planes refers to the inside surfaces of the filter supports 100a, 100b which are closest to the wearer's face, when the mask is in use.

As can be seen from Figs. 2a to 2f, the filter supports 100a, 100b pivot relative to the exhale module

110. It is therefore necessary to support the exhale module into position. Thus, Fig. 3 shows the attachment of the exhale valve 110 to those filter supports 100a, 100b. In Fig. 3, the parts of the air guide 140 are
5 omitted for the sake of clarity. Thus, although panels 144, 145 and 147 of the air guide 140 are shown, other panels, and the face ring are not present in Fig. 3. The air guide 140 will be described in more detail later.

As shown in Fig. 3, the exhale module 110 is
10 attached to the filter supports 100a, 100b by an annular membrane 201 (only part of which is visible in Fig. 3). The outer periphery of that annular membrane 201 is attached to the inner edges of the recesses 120a, 120b and its inner edge is attached to an annular projection
15 202 on the inner surface of the exhale module 110. The opening in the interior of that annular membrane 201 is thus aligned with the opening 203 in the exhale valve. Thus, the exhale module 110 and hence the exhale valve 220 within it can be considered to "float" between the
20 filter supports 100a, 100b, being supported in position by the membrane 201, rather than by rigid parts of the filter supports 100a, 100b.

Figs. 4a to 4e illustrate the deployment of the air
25 guide. In known masks, the air guide is usually a relatively rigid structure, which is forceably collapsed

when the mask is in its storage position, but which springs outward due to the resilience of the rubber material from which it is made, when the forces compressing the air guide are removed. In the present invention, on the other hand, the air guide is formed from a series of flexible panels, hingedly connected together. Thus, Figs. 4a to 4e show that the air guide 140 comprises a flexible face ring 141 which is connected at opposite edges 141a, 141b to the respective filter supports 100a, 100b. In addition, there are four flexible and planar panels 142, 143, 144 and 145 which form the rest of the air guide. Each of those panels is hingedly connected to the face ring 141.

During the wearer's respiratory cycle, when the wearer inhales, air passes from the external atmosphere, through the filters within the filter supports 100a, 100b to the inside of the air guide 140, and then into the wearer's lungs. Then, when the wearer exhales, hot, moist air exhaled by the wearer passes into the air guide 140, then through the exhale valve 220, to the external atmosphere. The structure of this embodiment gives sufficient protection for use as an emergency hood.

Panels 142 and 143 are hingedly connected together along a hinge line 146, and panels 144 and 145 are

connected by a hinging panel 147, to which they are
connected by respective hinges 148, 149. Figs. 4a to 4e
also show the hinging lines 142b, 143a, 144a and 145b to
which the panels 142, 143, 144 and 145 are attached to
5 the respective filter supports 100a, 100b.

Thus, as can be seen from Figs. 4a to 4e, the air
guide unfolds from a substantially flat position, shown
in Fig. 4a, as the filter supports 100a, 100b hinge
10 around the hinge line 130. Two flaps, respectively
formed by panels 142 and 143, and by panels 144 and 145
pivot away from the filter supports 100a, 100b and so
deploy the face ring 141 to its correct position. The
face ring 141, from being in a folded position in Fig.
15 4a, gradually adopts a more planar configuration, until
the position shown in 4e is reached. At that point, the
mask is ready for use. Because the face ring 141 is
flexible, when the user places their nose and mouth
within the opening 150 in that ring, the periphery of the
20 opening 150 deforms to adapt to the shape of the wearer's
face, and so provide sufficient sealing and efficient
exhalation of hot used air

Figs. 5a to 5c show the folding of the hood 150.
25 For clarity, Figs. 5a to 5c show successive stages in the
folding of that hood, rather than the unfolding of it.

From the position shown in Figs. 1a and 1b, the filter supports 100a, 100b are opened to the storage position in which they form a substantially flat structure (as in Fig. 2a) or even more flat. In that position, the air guide is also folded, in the position at Figs. 4a. Then, the hood 150 is flattened, by folding the sides inwardly, hinging around the lines 152 in Fig. 1b, and with the lower surface 153 of the hood (the surface which contains the hole 151) also folded against the filter supports 100a, 100b. The top 154 of the hood 150 adopts the pointed shape shown in Fig. 5e, folding along fold lines 153 shown in Fig. 1b.

From that position, the hood is then folded transversely along fold lines 155 and 156 as shown in Fig. 5b, until those folds 155, 156 are at 180°, at which point the hood wholly overlies the filter supports 100a, 100b, and the position shown in Fig. 5c is reached. This is the position in which the mask can be packaged for storage and/or transport.

To deploy the hood, the procedure shown in Figs. 5a to 5c is reversed, until the hood 150 reaches the position shown in Figs. 1a and 1b. The filter supports 100a, 100b can then be folded to the deployed position as

described with reference to Figs. 2a to 2h, and the air guide unfolded as described with reference to Figs. 4a to 4e. The mask is then ready for use.

5 Thus, the embodiment described above provides a filtration mask adapted for use as an emergency hood. When the various elements are in the storage position, it presents a small package which can e.g. fit into the pocket of the user. It may be made light weight, from
10 suitable choice of materials. However, when needed it may rapidly be unfolded to adopt the deployment position, where it is ready for wear.

CLAIMS:

1. A filtration mask including a collapsible air guide
and two filter supports, the filter supports being hingedly
5 connected together at hinging edges and moveable between a
storage position and deployment position, the hinge angle
between the filter supports being less in the deployment
position than the storage position, wherein the air guide
comprises at least four side panels and a flexible face ring
10 being hingedly interconnected and hingedly attached to the
filter supports, the face ring having an aperture therein, the
air guide being foldable by hinging of the panels and the face
ring between a flat position, when the filter supports are in
the storage position and a deployed position when the filter
15 supports are in the deployment position.
2. A filtration mask according to claim 1, wherein the
panels are flexible.
- 20 3. A filtration mask according to claim 1 or claim 2,
wherein the panels are planar.
4. A filtration mask according to any one of the
preceding claims wherein edges of said face ring are hingedly
25 attached to the respective filter supports.
5. A filtration mask including a collapsible air guide
and two filter supports, the filter supports being hingedly

connected together at hinging edges and moveable between a storage position and deployment position, the hinge angle between the filter supports being less in the deployment position than the storage position, wherein the filter

- 5 supports each have a recess in the corresponding hinging edge, and an exhale valve is mounted in said recesses such that the exhale valve is surrounded by the filter support when in the storage position, the exhale valve communicating with the air guide.

10

6. A face mask according to claim 5, wherein the exhale valve is an exhale module connected to the filter supports by a flexible membrane.

- 15 7. A face mask according to claim 5 or claim 6, wherein each of said recesses is semi-circular.

8. A face mask according to any one of claims 5 to 7, wherein the exhale valve is circular.

20

9. A filtration mask according to any one of claims 5 to 8, wherein the air guide comprises at least four wide panels and a flexible face ring being hingedly interconnected and hingedly attached to the filter supports, the face ring
- 25 having an aperture therein, the air guide being foldable by hinging of the panels and the face ring between a flat position, when the filter supports are in the storage

position and a deployed position when the filter supports are in the deployment position.

10. A filtration mask according to claim 9, wherein the
5 panels are flexible.