

COUPLING HAVING ANGULARLY ORIENTED CAVITY

Cross-Reference to Related Application

5 This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional
Application No. 60/730,305, filed October 26, 2005.

Field of the Invention

10 This invention relates to mechanical couplings for
joining pipe elements together in end-to-end relation.

Background of the Invention

15 Mechanical pipe couplings are used throughout a broad
spectrum of industry, for example, in mining, petroleum
extraction and refining, chemical production as well as in
fire protection systems used in office buildings, warehouses,
schools and the like. Mechanical couplings provide
significant advantages over other methods of joining pipe
elements together, for example, welding or brazing, in that
20 they allow for the assembly of a fluid carrying piping network
by relatively unskilled labor using simple tools. The term
"pipe elements" is used herein to denote any pipe-like item or
component having a pipe-like form. Pipe elements include pipe
stock, pipe fittings such as elbows, caps and tees as well as
25 fluid control components such as valves, reducers, strainers,
restrictors, pressure regulators and the like.

30 Figure 1 shows an example of a mechanical pipe coupling
according to the prior art. Coupling 10 comprises two (or
more) segments 12 and 14 that are positionable straddling a
sealing member 16 and pipe elements 18 and 20. Each coupling
segment 12 and 14 has arcuate surfaces 22 and 24 that
respectively engage the pipe elements 18 and 20 to secure them

in end to end relation. In the example shown in Figure 1, the arcuate surfaces 22 project radially inwardly and engage grooves 26 in the ends of the pipe elements. Other examples include pipe elements having smooth ends, flared ends or
5 raised shoulders that are engaged by the couplings.

The sealing member 16 engages both pipe elements 18 and 20 and ensures a fluid-tight joint. Sealing member 16 is preferably a flexible elastomeric ring that is positioned
10 within a cavity 28 within the coupling defined by a pair of sidewalls 30 and 32 attached to a back wall 34. Sealing member 16 is compressed into engagement with the pipe elements by contact with the sidewalls and back wall of the coupling segments 12 and 14 as the segments are drawn together to form
15 the pipe joint.

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, coupling segments 12 and 14 may have angularly oriented surfaces 36 and 38 positioned at opposite ends. The slopes of the surfaces are oriented
20 opposite to one another on each segment. When the surfaces on two segments are positioned in facing relation, as when the segments are straddling pipe elements 18 and 20, and the segments are drawn together, sliding engagement of the surfaces causes the segments to rotate in opposite directions
25 relatively to one another about an axis 40 that is oriented substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis 42 of pipe elements 16 and 18. The relative rotation of the segments 12 and 14 is desirable because it forces the arcuate surfaces 22 and 24 into engagement with the side surfaces of
30 grooves 26 in the pipe elements and adds rigidity to the joint about all axes, i.e., bending and torsion, as well as preventing axial expansion or contraction.

In addition to the angularly oriented surfaces described herein, there are other means for effecting relative rotation of the coupling segments, such as the crescent shaped protrusion interfitting within the crescent shaped groove as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,246,257, hereby incorporated by reference, or the use of offset apertures in attachment flanges as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,861,075, also hereby incorporated by reference.

To connect segments 12 and 14, each segment has connection members positioned at opposite ends of the segments. In the example illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, the connection members comprise projections 44 in the form of lugs that extend outwardly from the segments. The projections have apertures 46 that receive fasteners such as bolts 48 and nuts 50 which, when tightened, cause the segments 12 and 14 to be drawn toward one another.

While it is advantageous in certain circumstances to increase the rigidity of the joint by rotating the coupling segments about axis 40, this rotation of the segments deforms the sealing member 16 through its engagement with the sidewalls 30 and 32. It is preferable not to distort the shape of the sealing member through rotation of the segments.

Summary of the Invention

The invention concerns interconnectable pipe coupling segments, each positionable straddling a sealing member and end portions of a pair of pipe elements engaged with the sealing member for securing the pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship. Each segment comprises a pair of arcuate surfaces adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of the pipe elements. First and second connection members are

positioned at opposite ends of the arcuate surfaces for adjustably connecting one coupling segment to another. The connection members are adjustably tightenable for drawing the segments together. First and second angularly oriented
5 surfaces are positioned adjacent to the first and second connection members respectively. The angularly oriented surfaces have opposite slopes. The angularly oriented surfaces on one segment are positionable in facing relation with angularly oriented surfaces on another segment and engage
10 one another when the segments are drawn together. Engagement of the surfaces causes the segments to rotate relatively to one another about an axis oriented substantially perpendicularly to the pipe elements. A concavity is positioned between the arcuate surfaces and extends
15 circumferentially around the segment. The concavity is oriented angularly with respect to the axis to receive the sealing member. In another embodiment, the cavity is divided into a plurality of sectors, at least one of the sectors being oriented angularly with respect to the axis. In a particular
20 embodiment, the segment has three sectors, two of which are located at opposite ends of the segment. These two sectors are angularly oriented with respect to the aforementioned axis.

25 The invention also includes a pipe coupling positionable straddling a sealing member and end portions of a pair of pipe elements for securing the pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship. The pipe coupling comprises a pair of the coupling segments as described above.

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The invention further includes a method of securing facing end portions of pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship. The method comprises:

(a) providing a pipe coupling having a pair of coupling segments attached to one another end-to-end, the coupling segments each having arcuate surfaces adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of the pipes, the coupling segments each having a concavity positioned between the arcuate surfaces and extending circumferentially around the segments, the concavity being adapted to receive a sealing member, the concavity being oriented angularly with respect to an axis oriented substantially perpendicular to the pipe elements;

(b) positioning the end portions of the pipe elements between the segments;

(c) drawing the coupling segments into engagement with the outer surfaces of the pipe elements;

(d) rotating the coupling segments in opposite directions about the axis relatively to one another thereby orienting the cavities substantially perpendicular to the pipe elements.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a longitudinal sectional view of a pipe joint using a pipe coupling according to the prior art;

5 Figure 2 is an exploded perspective view of a pipe coupling according to the prior art;

Figure 3 is an exploded side view of the pipe coupling shown in Figure 2;

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Figure 4 is a front view of a pipe coupling segment according to the invention;

Figure 5 is a bottom view of the pipe coupling segment shown in Figure 4;

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Figure 6 is a front view of another embodiment of a pipe coupling segment according to the invention; and

20 Figure 7 is a bottom view of the pipe coupling segment shown in Figure 6.

Detailed Description of the Embodiments

Figures 4 and 5 show a pipe coupling segment 52 according to the invention. Segment 52 has arcuate surfaces 54 and 56 adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of pipe elements. A cavity 58 is positioned between the arcuate surfaces. The cavity is defined by sidewalls 60 and 62 and a back wall 64 attached to the sidewalls. Angularly oriented surfaces 66 and 68 are positioned at each end of the coupling segment. The surfaces 66 and 68 have opposite slopes, and when they engage similar surfaces on another segment in facing relation they cause the coupling segments to rotate in opposite directions

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relatively to one another about an axis 70 that is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the pipe elements being joined by the coupling. Connection members 72 and 74 are positioned at opposite ends of the coupling segment 52. In this example the connection members comprise lugs having apertures 76 adapted to receive fasteners such as bolts and nuts for connection of two coupling segments together straddling pipe elements.

In the embodiment shown in Figures 4 and 5, cavity 58 has an angular orientation with an orientation angle 78 measured about the rotation axis 70 relative to a datum line 80 that extends between the connection members 70 and 72. The orientation angle 78 of cavity 58 is defined by the angle 82 of the sidewalls 60 and 62 relative to a line 81 parallel to the datum line 80. Orientation angle 78 is preferably less than 4° for practical designs, and may range between $1/4^\circ$ and 4° depending upon the coupling size and degree of rotation of the coupling segments. The orientation angle 78 is oriented in a direction opposite to that of the direction of relative rotation of the coupling segment 52 when engaged with another coupling segment. This arrangement of the orientation angle compensates for the rotation of the coupling segment so that the sealing member, which is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the pipe elements (i.e., aligned with datum line 80), is not distorted by interaction with the sidewalls 60 and 62 and back wall 64 when the coupling segment rotates about axis 70. Cavity 58 is, thus, angled so that, despite the fact that the coupling segments rotate relative to the pipe elements and the sealing member, the sealing member is received substantially squarely within the cavity and is not distorted by forced contact with one of the sidewalls as a result of the rotation.

When coupling segments 52 are attached to one another surrounding a sealing member and pipe elements in a manner similar to that shown in Figures 1 and 2, they will be initially skewed in opposite directions due to the sidewalls of the cavities engaging the sealing member, the cavities being angularly oriented as described above. As the segments are brought towards the pipe elements, the arcuate surfaces 54 and 56 may not initially align with the grooves in the pipe elements due to the initial skew of the segments. As a result, the arcuate surfaces may not properly engage the grooves. To lessen the chance of such misalignment, it is advantageous to chamfer the outer regions 83 of the arcuate surfaces 54 and 56 where they are expected to make first contact with the grooves in the pipe elements.

In another coupling segment embodiment 84, shown in Figures 6 and 7, the cavity 86 is divided into a plurality of sectors. In this example, there are three sectors, two end sectors 88 and 90 positioned at opposite ends of segment 84, and a middle sector 92 positioned between the end sectors. When three sectors are present, it is advantageous that each end sector subtend an angle 94 of about 45° and the middle sector subtend an angle 96 of about 90° . Other angular distributions are also feasible.

The end sectors 88 and 90 of cavity 86 are differentiated from the middle sector 92 by their angular orientation. Preferably, the end sectors 88 and 90 have respective orientation angles 98 and 100 less than about 6° and more preferably between about $1/4^\circ$ and about 6° while the middle sector 92 is not angularly oriented as defined herein.

Preferably, the orientation angles 98 and 100 of the end sectors have the same magnitude and slope.

The coupling segments are preferably cast from ductile
5 iron but could also be molded in plastic or machined from a metal billet. It is advantageous to impart the angular orientation of the cavity during casting of the segments rather than by machining after casting. The configuration having a plurality of sectors provides advantages in the
10 preparation of the pattern for casting of the coupling segment. This is especially advantageous for couplings which deform to conform with the shape of the pipe elements. Because the linear motion of the segments during rotation about axis 70 is greatest at each end, it is feasible to
15 angularly orient only the end sectors and leave the middle sector unaffected. The relatively limited traversal of the middle sector tends to have less distorting effect on the sealing member than the end sectors, which traverse the greater distance upon rotation by virtue of their greater
20 distance from the axis of rotation.

Although the example couplings shown herein have two segments and angularly oriented surfaces to effect relative rotation of the segments, the angularly oriented cavity is
25 applicable to prevent sealing member distortion in any style coupling wherein the segments are rotated relatively to one another out of the plane of the coupling. Further examples include couplings having 4 or more segments as well as couplings having different means for effecting relative
30 rotation.

What is claimed is:

1. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments, each positionable straddling a sealing member and end portions of a pair of pipe elements engaged with said sealing member for securing said pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship, wherein each said segment comprises:

a unitary body comprising a pair of arcuate surfaces adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of said pipe elements;

first and second essentially planar faces oriented parallel to one another and positioned in spaced relation to each other on opposite sides of said unitary body, each of said essentially planar faces being positioned adjacent to one of said arcuate surfaces;

first and second connection members positioned at opposite ends of said arcuate surfaces for adjustably connecting one coupling segment to another, said connection members being adjustably tightenable for drawing said segments together; and

a concavity extending entirely between end faces of said segment and positioned between said arcuate surfaces and extending along an inner circumference of said segment, said concavity being oriented angularly with respect to said arcuate surfaces about a first axis oriented substantially perpendicular to a second axis that extends between said first and second connection members of one of said segments, said angular orientation of said concavity being measured with respect to a datum line positioned between and oriented substantially parallel to said first and second essentially planar faces.

2. A pipe coupling positionable straddling a sealing member and end portions of a pair of pipe elements for securing said pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship, said pipe coupling comprising:

first and second coupling segments, each coupling segment comprising a unitary body having a pair of arcuate surfaces adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of said pipe elements;

first and second essentially planar faces oriented parallel to one another and positioned in spaced relation to each other on opposite sides of said unitary body, each of said essentially planar faces being positioned adjacent to one of said arcuate surfaces;

first and second connection members positioned at opposite ends of said arcuate surfaces for adjustably connecting one coupling segment to another, said connection members being adjustably tightenable for drawing said segments together; and
a concavity extending entirely between end faces of each respective coupling segment and positioned between said arcuate surfaces and extending along an inner circumference of said segment, said concavity being oriented angularly with respect to said arcuate surfaces about a first axis oriented substantially perpendicular to a second axis that extends between said first and second connection members of one of said segments, said angular orientation of said concavity being measured with respect to a datum line positioned between and oriented substantially parallel to said first and second essentially planar faces.

3. A pipe coupling positionable straddling a sealing member and end portions of a pair of pipe elements for securing said pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship, said pipe coupling comprising:

first and second coupling segments, each coupling segment comprising a unitary body having a pair of arcuate surfaces adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of said pipe elements;

each said coupling segment having first and second essentially planar faces oriented parallel to one another and positioned in spaced relation to each other on opposite sides of said unitary body, each of said essentially planar faces being positioned adjacent to one of said arcuate surfaces;

each coupling segment having first and second connection members positioned at opposite ends of said arcuate surfaces for adjustably connecting one coupling segment to another, said connection members being adjustably tightenable for drawing said segments together;

each coupling segment having first and second angularly oriented surfaces respectively positioned adjacent to said first and second connection members on each said segment, said first angularly oriented surface on each segment having a slope opposite to said second angularly oriented surface, said angularly oriented surfaces on said first segment being positioned in facing relation with angularly oriented surfaces on said second

segment and engaging one another when said segments are drawn together and causing said segments to rotate relatively to one another about a first axis oriented substantially perpendicular to a second axis that extends between said first and second connection members of one of said segments; and

each coupling segment having a concavity extending entirely between said first and second angularly oriented surfaces of each coupling segment and positioned between said arcuate surfaces and extending along an inner circumference of said segment, said concavity being divided into a plurality of sectors, at least one of said sectors being oriented angularly with respect to said arcuate surfaces about said first axis and said angular orientation of said concavity being measured with respect to a datum line positioned between and oriented substantially parallel to said first and second essentially planar faces.

4. A pipe coupling according to claim 3, wherein said concavity is divided into first and second end sectors respectively positioned adjacent to opposite ends of said segment, and a middle sector positioned between said end sectors, said end sectors being oriented angularly about said first axis with respect to said datum line.

5. A pipe coupling according to claim 3, wherein said end sectors each subtend an angle of 45° and said middle sector subtends an angle of 90° said angles being measured from a center of curvature of one of said arcuate surfaces.

6. A pipe coupling according to claim 3, wherein said end sectors are angularly oriented at an orientation angle less than 6° measured relatively to said datum line.

7. A pipe coupling according to claim 3, wherein said end sectors are angularly oriented at an orientation angle between $1/4^\circ$ and 6° relatively to said datum line.

8. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments, each positionable straddling a sealing member and end portions of a pair of pipe elements engaged with said sealing member

for securing said pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship, wherein each said segment comprises:

a unitary body having a pair of arcuate surfaces adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of said pipe elements;

first and second essentially planar faces oriented parallel to one another and positioned in spaced relation to each other on opposite sides of said unitary body, each of said essentially planar faces being positioned adjacent to one of said arcuate surfaces;

first and second connection members positioned at opposite ends of said arcuate surfaces for adjustably connecting one coupling segment to another, said connection members being adjustably tightenable for drawing said segments together; means for rotating said

segment in a first direction about a first axis oriented substantially perpendicular to a second axis that extends between said first and second connection members; and

a concavity extending entirely between end faces of the segment and positioned between said arcuate surfaces and extending along an inner circumference of said segment, said concavity being oriented angularly with respect to said arcuate surfaces about said first axis and said angular orientation of said concavity measured with respect to a datum line positioned between and oriented substantially parallel to said first and second essentially planar faces.

9. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 8, wherein said concavity is oriented angularly at an orientation angle less than 4° measured relatively to said datum line.

10. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 8, wherein said concavity is oriented angularly at an orientation angle between $1/4^{\circ}$ and 4° measured relatively to said datum line.

11. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 8, wherein said concavity is angularly oriented in a second direction about said first axis, said second direction being opposite to said first direction.

12. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 8, wherein said concavity comprises first and second sidewalls positioned in spaced relation to one another and a back wall attached to said sidewalls.
13. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 8, wherein said connection members comprise a pair of projections extending outwardly from the ends of each of said segments, said projections being adapted to receive fasteners for adjustably connecting said segments to one another, said fasteners being adjustably tightenable for drawing said arcuate surfaces of said segments together into engagement with said outer surfaces of said pipe elements.
14. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 8, wherein at least one of said projections comprises a lug having an aperture therethrough adapted to receive said fastener.
15. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 8, wherein said means for rotating comprises first and second angularly oriented surfaces positioned adjacent to said first and second connection members on each said segment respectively, said first angularly oriented surface having a slope opposite to said second angularly oriented surface on each said segment, said angularly oriented surfaces on one said segment being positionable in facing relation with said angularly oriented surfaces on another said segment and engaging one another when said segments are drawn together and causing said segments to rotate relatively to one another about said first axis.
16. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 8, wherein said arcuate surfaces project radially inwardly.
17. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 16, wherein said arcuate surfaces are substantially continuous along said segments.
18. A pipe coupling positionable straddling a sealing member and end portions of a

pair of pipe elements for securing said pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship, said pipe coupling comprising:

first and second coupling segments, each coupling segment comprising a unitary body having a pair of arcuate surfaces adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of said pipe elements;

each coupling segment having first and second essentially planar faces oriented parallel to one another and positioned in spaced relation to each other on opposite sides of each of said unitary bodies, each of said essentially planar faces being positioned adjacent to one of said arcuate surfaces;

each said coupling segment having first and second connection members positioned at opposite ends of said arcuate surfaces for adjustably connecting one coupling segment to another, said connection members being adjustably tightenable for drawing said segments together;

each said coupling segment having means for rotating said first segment in a first direction and said second segment in a second direction relatively to one another about a first axis oriented substantially perpendicular to a second axis that extends between said first and second connection members of one of said segments, said first direction being opposite to said second direction; and

each said coupling segment having a concavity extending entirely between end faces of each coupling segment and positioned between said arcuate surfaces and extending along an inner circumference of each of said segments, each of said concavities being oriented angularly with respect to said arcuate surfaces about said first axis and said angular orientation of said concavity measured with respect to a datum line positioned between and oriented substantially parallel to said first and second essentially planar faces.

19. A pipe coupling according to claim 18, wherein at least one of said concavities is oriented at an orientation angle less than 4° measured relatively to said datum line.

20. A pipe coupling according to claim 18, wherein at least one of said concavities is oriented angularly at an orientation angle between 1/4° and 4° measured relatively to said datum line.

21. A pipe coupling according to claim 18, wherein said concavity of said first coupling segment is angularly oriented in said second direction about said first axis and said concavity of said second coupling segment is angularly oriented in said first direction about said first axis.
22. A pipe coupling according to claim 18, wherein said concavity comprises first and second sidewalls positioned in spaced relation to one another and a back wall attached to said sidewalls.
23. A pipe coupling according to claim 18, in combination with said sealing member, said sealing member comprising a flexible, resilient seal, said seal being a substantially circular ring having an inner diameter, said seal being positioned within said concavities of said first and second coupling segments.
24. A pipe coupling according to claim 18, wherein said means for rotating comprises first and second angularly oriented surfaces respectively positioned adjacent to said first and second connection members on each said segment, said first angularly oriented surface having a slope opposite to said second angularly oriented surface on each said segment, said angularly oriented surfaces on said first segment being positioned in facing relation with said angularly oriented surface on said second segment and engaging one another when said first and second segments are drawn together and causing said first and second segments to rotate relatively to one another about said first axis.
25. A pipe coupling according to claim 18, wherein said arcuate surfaces project radially inwardly.
26. A pipe coupling according to claim 25, wherein said arcuate surfaces are substantially continuous along said segments.
27. A pipe coupling according to claim 18, wherein said connection members

comprise a pair of projections extending outwardly from the ends of each of said segments, said projections being adapted to receive fasteners for adjustably connecting said segments to one another, said fasteners being adjustably tightenable for drawing said segments together.

28. A pipe coupling according to claim 27, wherein at least one of said projections comprises a lug having an aperture therethrough adapted to receive said fastener.

29. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments, each positionable straddling a sealing member and end portions of a pair of pipe elements engaged with said sealing member for securing said pipe elements together in end-to-end relationship, wherein each said segment comprises:

a unitary body having a pair of arcuate surfaces adapted to interface with the outer surfaces of said pipe elements;

first and second essentially planar faces oriented parallel to one another and positioned in spaced relation to each other on opposite sides of said unitary body, each of said essentially planar faces being positioned adjacent to one of said arcuate surfaces;

first and second connection members positioned at opposite ends of said arcuate surfaces for adjustably connecting one coupling segment to another, said connection members being adjustably tightenable for drawing said segments together;

first and second angularly oriented surfaces positioned adjacent to said first and second connection members respectively, said first angularly oriented surface having a slope opposite to said second angularly oriented surface, said angularly oriented surfaces on one said segment being positionable in facing relation with angularly oriented surfaces on another said segment and engaging one another when said segments are drawn together and causing said segments to rotate relatively to one another about a first axis oriented substantially perpendicular to a second axis that extends between said first and second connection members of one of said segments; and

a concavity extending entirely between said first and second angularly oriented surfaces of each coupling segment and positioned between said arcuate surfaces and extending along an inner circumference of said segment, said concavity being divided into a

plurality of sectors, at least one of said sectors being oriented angularly with respect to said arcuate surfaces about said first axis and said angular orientation of said concavity measured with respect to a datum line positioned between and oriented substantially parallel to said first and second essentially planar faces.

30. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 29, wherein said concavity is divided into first and second end sectors respectively positioned adjacent to opposite ends of said segment, and a middle sector positioned between said end sectors, said end sectors being oriented angularly about said first axis with respect to said datum line.

31. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 30, wherein said end sectors each subtend an angle of 45° and said middle sector subtends an angle of 90° , said angle being measured from a center of curvature of one of said arcuate surfaces.

32. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 30, wherein said end sectors are oriented at an orientation angle less than 6° measured relatively to said datum line.

33. Interconnectable pipe coupling segments according to claim 30, wherein said end sectors are oriented angularly at an orientation angle between $1/4^\circ$ and 6° measured relatively to said datum line.