

MODULAR ELECTRICAL ASSEMBLY WITH JUMPER STORAGE

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a modular electrical assembly such as a relay, circuit
5 breaker, residual current device (RCD) or other switch gear assembly that may be electrically connected to at least one other modular electrical assembly in use. In particular the invention relates to a modular electrical assembly and structure for storing a connecting jumper associated with the modular assembly.

10 Background of the Invention

Prior art electrical assemblies such as relays are typically connected via wires that are used as links between the relays. The process of installing relays using wires is time consuming and labour intensive. Also the quality of the connections may vary depending on the skill of the installer.

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Prior art electrical assemblies are sometimes joined via jumper strips that must be purchased separately as an accessory. The jumper strips may have 20 or more contacts that typically have to be cut to suit an installation resulting in wastage of jumper strips and leaving an exposed cut metal edge that may give rise to safety
20 concerns.

The present invention may provide a modular electrical assembly and structure for storing a connecting jumper that alleviates the disadvantages of the prior art or at least provides the consumer with a choice.

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Summary of the Invention

According to one aspect of the present invention there is provided a modular electrical assembly adapted to be electrically connected to at least one other modular electrical assembly by means of a connecting jumper, wherein said assembly includes a
30 storage structure for storing said connecting jumper associated with said modular assembly prior to use.

The modular assembly may include electrical switchgear such as a relay, relay socket, circuit breaker or residual current device (RCD).

5 The or each connecting jumper may include a generally U-shaped body made of a conducting material and may include two legs joined via a web. The conducting body may comprise a copper alloy or other material that has good electrical conductivity. The conducting web may be covered by an electrically insulated housing. The electrically insulated housing may comprise PBT (Polybutylene terephthalate) or PA66 (Polyamide or Nylon 66).

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The storage structure may include one or more recesses in the assembly for retaining at least a part of the connecting jumper such as a leg. The or each recess may include an electrical contact or it may be a blank recess. The or each electrical contact may be adapted to be connectable to an electrical contact of at least one
15 other modular assembly.

The storage structure may be adapted to store the connecting jumper in a front face of the assembly. The storage structure may be arranged in the front face of the assembly such that the web of the jumper extends substantially parallel to a long side
20 of the front face. In some embodiments the storage structure may be arranged such that the web of the jumper extends at an angle relative to the long side of the front face.

In one form the front face of the assembly may include two recesses for receiving legs
25 of a connecting jumper. The two recesses may be positioned along a line that extends substantially parallel to the front face of the assembly.

According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of electrically connecting a modular electrical assembly to at least one other modular
30 electrical assembly including connecting said assemblies by means of a connecting jumper, wherein said assembly includes a storage structure for storing said connecting jumper associated with said modular assembly prior to use.

Description of a Preferred Embodiment

A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein:

- 5 Figure 1 shows a front view of a pair of relay sockets connected in use;
 Figure 2 shows a side view of the relay sockets in Figure 1;
 Figures 3A to 3E show views of a connecting jumper according to one embodiment of the present invention;
 Figure 4 shows a cross sectional view along X-X in Figure 2;
- 10 Figure 5 shows detail 40 in Figure 4;
 Figures 6A and 6B show front and perspective views of three relay sockets connected in use;
 Figures 7A and 7B show front and perspective views of four relay sockets connected in use;
- 15 Figure 8 shows a front view of a relay socket with jumpers in a storage position;
 Figure 9 shows a cross sectional view along line Y-Y in Figure 8;
 Figure 10 shows detail 90 in Figure 9;
 Figure 11 shows a pair of wide body relay sockets before connection;
 Figure 12 shows a pair of wide body relay sockets after connection; and
- 20 Figure 13 shows three wide body relay sockets after connection.

A preferred embodiment of the present invention is described below with reference to slim body relay sockets being relay sockets that are approximately 6.2mm wide. Nevertheless it will be appreciated that the present invention is also applicable to

25 relay sockets and other modular electrical assemblies being other than slim body modular assemblies such as wide body relay sockets and wide body modular electrical assemblies.

Figures 1 and 2 show front and side views of pair of relay sockets 10, 11, electrically

30 joined together via jumpers 12-15 and Figures 3A-E show details of jumper 14 (jumpers 12, 13 and 15 may be substantially identical). A cross sectional view along line X-X in Figure 2 is shown in Figure 4 with detail 40 in Figure 4 being shown in Figure 5.

Referring firstly to Figures 3A to 3E, jumper 14 includes a U-shaped body 30 made of a conducting material such as copper alloy. Jumper body 30 includes legs 31, 32 joined via web portion 33. Web portion 33 is covered via a housing 34 made of an electrically insulating material such as plastics. Examples of suitable plastics for the insulating material include PBT (Polybutylene terephthalate) or PA66 (Polyamide or Nylon 66).

Jumper body 30 may be formed by stamping from a sheet of conducting material such as copper alloy sheet or it may be formed from copper alloy wire in any suitable manner and by any suitable means. Housing 34 may be formed over web portion 33 in any suitable manner and by any suitable means such as injection molding or the like.

Referring to Figures 4 and 5, leg 31 of jumper 14 is inserted in recess 50 in front face 51 of relay socket 10 and engages contacts 52A, 52B associated with relay socket 10. Leg 32 of jumper 14 is inserted in recess 53 in front face 54 of relay socket 11 and engages contacts 55A, 55B associated with relay socket 11. Jumper 14 is adapted to electrically connect contacts 52A, 52B associated with relay socket 10 with contacts 55A, 55B associated with relay socket 11. Contacts 52A, 52B are electrically connected to PCB 56 associated with relay socket 10 and contacts 55A, 55B are electrically connected to PCB 57 associated with relay socket 11. When jumper 14 engages contacts 52, 55 electrical communication may be facilitated between PCB 56 in relay socket 10 and PCB 57 in relay socket 11.

Jumper 15 performs a similar role to jumper 14 since its contacts (not shown) may be arranged to be electrically parallel with contacts 52, 55 respectively. One jumper of jumper pair 14, 15 may be electrically redundant when two relay sockets are electrically connected together as shown in Figure 1. Similar comments apply to jumper pair 12, 13 wherein one jumper (12 or 13) may be electrically redundant when two relay sockets are electrically connected together as shown in Figure 1. However jumper pair 12,13 or 14,15 and their associated contacts may not be electrically redundant when three or more relay sockets are electrically connected together as described below with reference to Figures 6-7.

Figures 6A and 6B show front and perspective views of three relay sockets 10, 11, 60 electrically connected together via jumpers 12-15. However unlike Figure 1 jumpers 12-15 are staggered such that jumpers 12, 14 connect relay sockets 10, 11 and jumpers 13, 15 connect relay sockets 11, 60. Also unlike Figure 1 jumper pairs 12, 13 and 14, 15 respectively may not be electrically redundant notwithstanding that each jumper pair 12, 13 and 14, 15 may engage contacts that internally may be electrically parallel or connected together.

Figures 7A and 7B show front and perspective views of four relay sockets 10, 11, 60, 70 electrically joined together via jumpers 12-15, 71, 72. The jumpers are again staggered such that jumpers 12, 14 connect relay sockets 10, 11, jumpers 13, 15 connect relay sockets 11, 60 and jumpers 71, 72 connect relay sockets 60, 70. Jumper pairs 12, 13; 14, 15; 13, 71; 15, 72 also may not be electrically redundant notwithstanding that jumper triplets 12, 13, 71 and 14, 15, 72 may engage contacts that internally may be electrically parallel or connected together.

Figure 8 shows the front face 51 of relay socket 10 with jumpers 12, 14 retained in relay socket 10 in a storage position. The legs of jumpers 12, 14 are retained in respective recesses formed in front face 51. A cross sectional view along line Y-Y in Figure 8 is shown in Figure 9 with detail 90 in Figure 9 being shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10 shows leg 31 of jumper 14 inserted in recess 50 in front face 51 of relay socket 10. Leg 31 is shown engaging contacts 52A, 52B although such contact may be electrically redundant in a storage position. Leg 32 of jumper 14 is inserted in a second recess (not shown) in relay socket 10. The second recess may be positioned along a line that extends substantially parallel to front face 51 of relay socket 10. In the storage position shown in Figure 8 the second recess in relay socket 10 may be positioned substantially vertically below recess 50. Spacing between recess 50 and the second recess may be selected such that it is substantially the same as the spacing between legs 31, 32. The position of the second recess in relay socket 10 may correspond to a recess associated with jumper 15 shown in Figure 1.

Figure 11 shows wide body relay sockets 110, 111 positioned side by side prior to being electrically connected together via one or more connecting jumpers 112-115.

Connecting jumpers 112-115 are shown in storage positions in association with relay sockets 110, 111. Each connecting jumper 112-115 may be similar in construction to connecting jumper 14 as described with reference to Figure 3.

- 5 The legs of connecting jumper 112 are retained in recesses 116, 117 of relay socket 110 and the legs of connecting jumper 113 are retained in recesses 118, 119 of relay socket 110. The legs of connecting jumper 114 are retained in recesses 120, 121 of relay socket 111 and the legs of connecting jumper 115 are retained in recesses 122, 123 of relay socket 111.

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Each recess 117, 119, 121, 123 and 124-127 includes an electrical contact while each recess 116, 118 120, 122 may be a blank recess that does not include an electrical contact. The electrical contacts (not shown) associated with recesses 119, 123, 125, 127 may comprise positive polarity contacts. The electrical contacts (not shown) associated with recesses 117, 121, 124, 126 may comprise negative polarity contacts.

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Spacing between recess pairs 116, 117; 118, 119; 120, 121; and 122, 123 may be selected such that it is substantially the same as the spacing between legs 31,32 and/or recess pairs 123, 125 and 121, 124 when relay sockets 110,111 are positioned side by side.

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Figure 12 shows two wide body relay sockets 110, 111 electrically connected together via connecting jumpers 112, 113 and Figure 13 shows three wide body relay sockets 110, 111, 130 electrically connected together via connecting jumpers 112-115.

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Advantages of a modular electrical assembly including structure for storing a connecting jumper according to the present invention include:

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1. Less inventory since jumpers required to connect one modular electrical assembly such as a relay socket to another modular electrical assembly may be stored and purchased with the modular assembly.
2. Even if end users pay for two additional jumpers with each modular assembly (which they may not use) the extra cost may be offset because purchase of

long jumper strips which must be cut to length and associated wastage may be avoided.

3. The issue of exposed metal after a jumper strip is cut may be avoided leading to improved safety in the use of jumpers with an insulated housing according to the present invention.
4. Accurate and consistent interconnection between modular assemblies may be ensured promoting product reliability and improving safety.

Finally, it is to be understood that various alterations, modifications and/or additions may be introduced into the constructions and arrangements of parts previously described without departing from the spirit or ambit of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A modular electrical assembly adapted to be electrically connected to at least one other modular electrical assembly by means of a connecting jumper, wherein said
5 assembly includes a storage structure for storing said connecting jumper associated with said modular assembly prior to use.
2. A modular electrical assembly according to claim 1 wherein said assembly includes electrical switchgear such as a relay, a circuit breaker or a residual current
10 device (RCD).
3. A modular electrical assembly according to claim 1 wherein said connecting jumper comprises a generally U-shaped body made of a conducting material including two legs joined via a web, and wherein said web is covered by an electrically
15 insulated housing.
4. A modular electrical assembly according to claim 3 wherein said conducting body comprises copper alloy.
- 20 5. A modular electrical assembly according to claim 1 wherein said storage structure includes a recess in said assembly for retaining at least a part of said connecting jumper.
6. A modular electrical assembly according to claim 5 wherein said recess
25 includes an electrical contact that is connectable to an electrical contact of said one other modular assembly.
7. A modular electrical assembly according to claim 3 wherein said storage structure is adapted to store said connecting jumper in a front face of said assembly
30 such that said web extends substantially parallel to a long side of said front face.
8. A modular electrical assembly according to claim 3 wherein said storage structure includes two recesses in said assembly for receiving the legs of said connecting jumper.

9. A modular electrical assembly according to claim 8 wherein said two recesses are positioned along a line that extends substantially parallel to a front face of said assembly.

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10. In combination a modular electrical assembly according to claim 1 and including at least one connecting jumper stored in association with said assembly prior to use.

10 11. A method of electrically connecting a modular electrical assembly to at least one other modular electrical assembly including connecting said assemblies by means of a connecting jumper, wherein said assembly includes a storage structure for storing said connecting jumper associated with said modular assembly prior to use.

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12. A method according to claim 11 wherein said modular assembly includes electrical switchgear such as a relay, a circuit breaker or a residual current device (RCD).

20 13. A method according to claim 11 wherein said connecting jumper comprises a generally U-shaped body made of a conducting material including two legs joined via a web, and wherein said web is covered by an electrically insulated housing.

14. A method according to claim 13 wherein said conducting body comprises
25 copper alloy.

15. A method according to claim 11 wherein said storage structure includes a recess in said assembly for retaining at least a part of said connecting jumper.

30 16. A method according to claim 15 wherein said recess includes an electrical contact and including connecting said electrical contact to an electrical contact of said one other modular assembly by means of said connecting jumper.

17. A method according to claim 13 wherein said storage structure is adapted to store said connecting jumper in a front face of said assembly such that said web extends substantially parallel to a long side of said front face.

5 18. A method according to claim 13 wherein said storage structure includes two recesses in said assembly for receiving respective legs of said connecting jumper.

19. A method according to claim 13 wherein said two recesses are positioned along a line that extends substantially parallel to a front face of said assembly.