

PLUG-IN SPEAKER FOR EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION AND VOICE EVACUATION

FIELD

[0001] The invention pertains to alarm notification devices that can output audible messages and/or visual alarm indicators. More particularly, the invention pertains to wall mountable loud speakers or speaker/strobe units or devices which releasibly engage a base which has been hardwired into an alarm or public address system.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Power and or signaling wires for fire notification devices are usually connected directly to the product. The product is then attached to a mounting base. The fact that the product is directly wired makes it more difficult to replace a malfunctioning unit. Additionally, up to twelve, eight gage wires may be used to power the product. The direct wiring of so many large gage wires makes attachment of the product to the mounting base much more difficult. Furthermore, testing and troubleshooting the system is much more difficult. It is difficult to determine whether a system problem is product or wiring related.

[0003] There is thus a need for structures that facilitate such connections and disconnections. Further, it would be desirable to be able to more readily check wiring than has been possible in the past.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] Fig. 1 illustrates a multi-element apparatus in accordance with the invention;

- [0005]** Fig. 2 illustrates a speaker or a horn unit usable in connection with the apparatus of Fig. 1;
- [0006]** Fig. 3 illustrates a strobe unit usable with the apparatus of Fig. 1;
- [0007]** Fig. 4 is a view illustrating the elements of the apparatus of Fig. 1 being positioned in contact with one another;
- [0008]** Fig. 5A illustrates one pin configuration of an electrical unit in accordance with the invention;
- [0009]** Fig. 5B illustrates a different pin configuration of an electrical unit in accordance with the invention;
- [0010]** Fig. 6 illustrates control circuitry and other elements of the unit of Fig. 5A;
- [0011]** Fig. 7 illustrates one of the elements of Fig. 1 mounted on an electrical box and with wires coupled thereto;
- [0012]** Fig. 8A, 8B is an enlarged partial views of short circuited and open circuited terminals of an electrical unit such as the electrical unit of Fig. 5A;
- [0013]** Fig. 9 is a perspective view of one of the terminals usable in the electrical unit of Fig. 8;
- [0014]** Fig. 10 is a perspective view of another electrical terminal usable with the unit of Fig. 8;
- [0015]** Fig. 11 illustrates details of an embodiment of the invention which incorporates a loud speaker and a strobe;
- [0016]** Fig. 12 is a sectional view illustrating details of the embodiment of Fig. 11 mounted on an electrical box; and
- [0017]** Figs. 13A, B are exploded views of the embodiment of Fig. 11 from two different orientations.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] While embodiments of this invention can take many different forms, specific embodiments thereof are shown in the drawings and will be described herein in detail with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the principles of the invention, as well as the best mode of practicing same, and is not intended to limit the invention to the specific embodiment illustrated.

[0019] One embodiment includes a fire notification appliance which includes a speaker which can emit verbal messages and a mounting base. The mounting base carries wiring terminals. Another embodiment includes a speaker and a strobe.

[0020] The base can be mounted to an electrical junction box. Alarm system wires are connected to the wiring terminals of the base. The notification appliance makes contact with those terminals upon installation of the product to the base. That contact can be made through a variety of structures including pins, blades, and the like, all without limitation.

[0021] If the appliance needs to be replaced, it can be removed from the base and another can be put in its place, without detaching the power wires. The base can also contain a shorting contact spring connecting, for example, positive "in" and positive "out" terminals. This structure enables an installer to check for wiring continuity prior to installing the product, simplifying the installation process.

[0022] In one aspect of the invention, the shorting spring can have a locking feature that causes the contact to remain open if the product is removed. This would then cause an open circuit trouble condition at the fire panel alerting the proper personnel that a fire notification unit had been removed.

[0023] Finally, the wires can be neatly dressed into the box allowing ample room within the box and unimpeded product installation.

[0024] The mounting base could have several embodiments. First, it could be formed as an injection molded plastic part with metal terminals pressed into positions that are aligned with the power pins or blades emanating from the product. Another embodiment could include a metal plate with an insulated terminal block attached such that it aligns with the power pins.

[0025] The product could contain a printed circuit board to which power connection pins or blades are soldered either individually or as a pin header assembly. The pins or blades would protrude through a back protective cover of the appliance and extend far enough to make contact with the terminals on the base. The contact can be made by a variety of methods including a jack and plug style, or pressure/friction contact, etc. This contact provides power to the appliance.

[0026] In a disclosed configuration, the appliance can be moved into releasible engagement with the base along a line generally perpendicular to the base or along a line generally parallel to the base. In either embodiment, the appliance open circuits the shorting spring.

[0027] In another aspect of the invention, removal of the appliance can leave the spring in an open circuited state. The spring can be short circuited to check system wiring.

[0028] Fig. 1 illustrates an embodiment of the present invention, an apparatus 10. The apparatus 10 includes a mounting plate generally indicated at 12 and an associated electrical unit indicated generally at 14. The mounting plate 12 is of a type which could be releasibly attached to an electrical box into which electrical wires have been drawn. Such electrical wires could be associated with an alarm monitoring system with the wires particularly being associated with energizing and controlling alarm indicating output appliances such as horns, strobes, combination horn/strobes, loud speakers, and the like, all without limitation.

[0029] Electrical unit 14 is a representative one of the respective appliances. The unit 14 can be elongated, square, cylindrical or any other convenient shape without limitation.

[0030] The mounting plate 12 has a generally planar shape with a central section 16a which could be formed of molded plastic with various openings, such as 16b formed therein to make it convenient to attach the plate 12 to the respective electrical box.

[0031] The plate 12 also divides an internal opening 16c through which electrical wires noted above could be drawn and in turn connected to power supply terminals indicated generally at 18.

[0032] The plate 12 can support various numbers of power supply terminals, the three terminals 18a, b and c illustrated in Fig. 1 are representative only. Additional numbers such as five or six terminals can also be supported by the mounting plate 12. Those of skill in the art will understand that the number of terminals is not a limitation of the present invention.

[0033] The terminals are illustrated as screw type terminals in the embodiment of Fig. 1. It will also be understood that other types of terminal configurations such as push in terminals and the like which don't necessarily require screws come within the spirit and scope of the present invention. The terminals 18 are metallic as is conventional.

[0034] Electrical unit 14 includes a hollow exterior housing 22a with a generally planar surface 22b which closes an open side of the housing 22a. The representative electrical unit 14 illustrated in Fig. 1 is a strobe unit. The member 22b

can be used with a plurality of differed shaped housings 22a such elongated, square, cylindrical all without limitation.

[0035] Those of skill in the art will understand that the unit 14 can be placed on and connected to the plate 12. The plate 12 supplies a convenient and advantageous structure wherein the electrical wiring associated with the alarm system is brought into the box, then through the opening 16c and connected to the terminals 18. Some of the terminals 18 can provide electrical signals or electrical energy to the unit 14 all without limitation.

[0036] The unit 14 carries a plurality of contact pins 24 which extend through openings in the cover 22b of the housing 22a. The pins 24 are coupled to electrical circuitry carried in the housing 22a which can for example energize the respective strobe light periodically as would be understood by those of skill in the art, activate a horn or a loud speaker if desired as well.

[0037] Fig. 2 illustrates a representative speaker or horn unit 14a which can be coupled to the plate 12 and powered off of the terminals 18. Fig. 3 illustrates a representative strobe 14b which can also be coupled to a plate such as the plate 12 and energized off of power supply terminals such as terminals 18.

[0038] As illustrated in Fig. 4, contact pins 24 of unit 14 (as in Fig. 1) can be brought into contact with the terminals 18 of the plate 12 via rotating the unit 14 in a direction indicated generally at 28. The direction 28 while arcuate is not a limitation of the present invention. The plate 12 could be configured such that the unit 14 is linearly moved into contact with the plate 12. In the configuration of Fig. 4, the unit 14 moves in a direction which is along a line which intersects the plate 12.

[0039] Alternately to the configuration of Fig. 4, those of skill will understand that the unit 14 could be moved laterally relative to the plate 12 generally along a line which is parallel to plate 12. The unit 14 can also be rotatably coupled to the plate 12 if desired.

[0040] Fig. 4 illustrates the plate 12 attached to a box B with wires W extending into the box B. The wires W extend through the opening 16c and can be coupled to the terminals 18, best seen in Fig. 7.

[0041] Fig. 5A illustrates a configuration of pins 24 with a plurality of pins, such as three pins extending from the surface 22b which closes the housing 22a. A contact member 24a is adjacent to the connecting pins 24. It will be understood that the exact shape of the pins 24 is not a limitation of the present invention. While

illustrated cylindrically, other contact shapes and numbers of contacts come within the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0042] Fig. 5B illustrates an alternate configuration of contact elements or pins 24b which includes multiple, for example six, contact members. The five contact members 24b can be coupled to circuitry within the unit 14' which can carry both a strobe and an audio output device such as horn or loud speaker. An audio output adjustment element 22b-2 can be provided on the member 22b-1.

[0043] Fig. 6 illustrates the unit 14 with the cover or housing 22a removed. As illustrated therein the plurality of contact pins 24 extends from the planar member 22b. The member 22b also carries a reflector 30a, a strobe light 30b, and associated control circuitry 30c. The control circuitry 30c which can include a power supply can receive electrical energy via the wires W and at least one of the members of the plurality 24.

[0044] Fig. 7 illustrates the plate 12 attached to the box B with the wires W extending through the opening 16c. As illustrated in Fig. 7, the plate 12 can be attached via screws such as screws S1, S2 to the box B.

[0045] Relative to the terminals 18, as best seen in Fig. 8A, B, terminals 18a, 18c are substantially identical. Terminal 18b is unlike terminals 18a, 18c. Both terminals 18a, 18c include a contact member, such as 18a-1, 18c-1 which extends laterally therefrom. Terminal 18b carries a multi-element structure 18b-1.

[0046] Elements 18a-1, 18c-1 are best seen in Fig. 9. Element 18b-1 is best seen in Fig. 10.

[0047] As illustrated in Fig. 9, terminals such as 18a, 18c carry the integrally formed laterally extending contact member 18a-1, 18c-1. They also carry a respective screw terminal such as 18a-2, 18c-2. A slidable contact 18a-3, 18c-3 is positioned between the screw terminal such as 18a-2 and the laterally extending 18a-1. The contacts 18a-3, 18c-3 slidably receive the members of the plurality 24.

[0048] Relative to Fig. 10, the contact member 18b-1 has a U-shaped hook portion indicated generally at 18b-5 and a latchable contact portion 18b-6. The contact portion 18b-6 has a short circuit state; illustrated in Fig. 8A relative to contact member 18c-1 and an open circuit state Fig. 8B where the member 18b-6 does not contact the member 18c-1.

[0049] In the open circuit state, the latch mechanism 18b-5 holds the contact portion of 18b-6 in a retracted position relative to the contact 18c-1 thereby

producing an open circuit state. The member 18b-6 is spring biased and can switch from the open circuit state to the closed circuit state, illustrated in Fig. 8, by displacing the latch member 18b-5 laterally relative to the contact member 18b-6. As illustrated in Fig. 10, the contact member 18b-6 is in its short circuit position, see Fig. 8.

[0050] The terminals 18b, 18c operate in conjunction with a force applying member 24a but seen in Fig. 5A, B, of the electrical unit 14. As the electrical unit 14 engages the plate 12, the member 24a displaces contact member 18b-6 moving same toward the latch member 18b-5. The latch member engages the contact member 18b-6 and latches same into an open circuit condition. In this condition, the terminals 18b, 18c are open circuited relative to one another, and, the power supply and control circuitry 30c of the unit 14 can if desired, couple an electrical signal from one terminal to the other indicating that the unit 14 has been installed and is functioning properly.

[0051] When the unit 14 is removed from the base 12 the terminals 18b, 18c continue to remain open circuited. This results in a discontinuity in the respective wires and can be detected as indicative of a trouble condition caused by a missing electrical unit. For test purposes, an installer can manually release contacting member 18b-6 from latch member 18b-5 to produce a short circuit condition between terminals 18b, c. When the unit 14 is reinstalled on the base 12, the open circuit condition results between terminals 18b, c.

[0052] Fig. 11 is a block diagram of a speaker/strobe embodiment of the invention 14-1. Fig. 12 is a view, in section illustrating appliance 14-1 mounted on the box B. Figs. 13A, B are exploded views of the box B, wiring/mounting plate 12-1 and appliance 14-1.

[0053] Fig. 12 illustrates the advantages of using a pre-mounted wiring plate, such as the plate 12-1 given the way that the appliance 14-1 fills the box B. Plate 12-1 can be mounted on the electrical box B. Plate 12-1 can carry several strobe related wire terminal contacts 12a and several displaced speaker related wire terminal contacts 12b. Output appliance 14-1 can then be coupled to the mounting plate 12-1 as discussed previously.

[0054] Appliance 14-1 includes strobe power contacts 24-1, and displaced speaker power contacts 24-2 both of which correspond to previously discussed contacts 24. These mate with terminals 12a, b when the unit 14-1 is mounted on

plate 12-1 as discussed previously. Strobe power contacts 24-1 are in turn coupled to a strobe system 40 which includes a flashable strobe light, a reflector 40a, both of which could be mounted on a printed circuit board (PCB) 40b and a PCB holder or support 40c.

[0055] Speaker power contacts 24-2 are coupled to a speaker system 42 which includes a loud speaker 42a, which can be used to output verbal messages into a region being monitored. The speaker 42a could be mounted on a PCB 42b as would be understood by those of skill in the art. The PCB 42b and speaker assembly 42a could be supported by a PCB holder or support 42c.

[0056] A housing 44 can carry a lens 40d, through which visible radiant energy from the strobe light passes, and a grill 42d, through which verbal messages pass upon being emitted by the speaker. As best seen in Fig. 13B, manually operable adjustments 50a,b can be provided, for example to set strobe output intensity, or speaker output volume, without limitation. An optical output indicator 50a', coupled to the adjustment member 50a can be viewed from the front of the unit 14-1. Those of skill will understand that the embodiment illustrated in Figs. 11- 13B could be implemented with only the speaker 42a without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0057] From the foregoing, it will be observed that numerous variations and modifications may be effected without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. It is to be understood that no limitation with respect to the specific apparatus illustrated herein is intended or should be inferred. It is, of course, intended to cover by the appended claims all such modifications as fall within the scope of the claims.

Claims:

1. An alarm notification device comprising:
a base with a plurality of wire receiving terminals and a plurality of unit engaging contacts, each terminal is coupled to a respective contact; and
an alarm unit, the unit releasibly engages the base and is electrically coupled to at least some of the terminals via the contacts; the alarm unit is movable along an axis that intersects the base.
2. A device as in claim 1 where the unit carries a plurality of conductive elements, each of the elements engages a respective contact at least when the unit engages the base.
3. A device as in claim 1 or 2 where the unit carries a structure to open circuit a pair of terminals.
4. A device as in claim 3 where the structure can alternatively short circuit the pair of terminals.
5. A device as in claim 3 where the pair of terminals can be locked into an open circuit state.
6. A device as in claim 5 where the structure exhibits an open circuit when the unit has been removed from the base.
7. A device as in any one of the preceding claims where the unit carries a plurality of unit terminations, at least some of the unit terminations slidably engage a respective engaging contact.
8. A device as in any one of the preceding claims where the unit is selected from a class which includes a horn, a strobe, a combination horn/strobe, a voice output transducer, or a combination voice output transducer/strobe.
9. A device as in claim 8 where one of the base or the unit carries at least one metal shorting member which provides an open circuit state between selected terminals when the unit engages the base.

10. A device as in claim 9 where the shorting member short circuits selected terminals.

11. A device as in claim 7 where the unit terminations linearly slide or rotatably slide.