

METHOD AND DEVICE FOR COUNTING ENERGISATION EVENTS

5 TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates broadly to a method and device for counting energisation events of an energisable element.

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BACKGROUND

In the electronics industry, devices such as relays are typically used to operate machinery and circuits. Such devices typically rely on energisation or switching on/off for operations.

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Suppliers of such devices typically estimate a lifetime for devices. For example, for a switching device, a supplier may estimate the number of times the switching device is switched on before it becomes overdue for replacement. This estimate is typically known as life cycle usage or the lifetime. Currently, there is no suitable device or method which can provide information or early warning to users regarding an estimated remaining life of an energisable device. This may be due to high costs involved in monitoring e.g. each and every switching of a device. There is also a lack of an efficient method or mechanism for monitoring.

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The lack of knowledge on the remaining life of such a device can lead to undesirable consequences such as risk of damage to machines or equipment when users do not replace an in-use device that is overdue for replacement. The lack of knowledge can also result in users trying to use a device which has already reached its end of the life cycle usage.

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In the relevant industry, users would typically use guesswork to determine when a device should be replaced due to its life cycle usage expiring. This can lead to uncertainty during maintenance. In an attempt to eliminate uncertainty, users may decide to change all

energisable devices much earlier before the estimated life cycle usage is actually due. This can lead to unnecessary costs incurred by the users.

Furthermore, during machinery or circuit breakdown, without knowledge on the life cycle usage of devices, troubleshooting is typically complicated. In addition, suppliers of failure devices carrying out failure analysis do not have an effective way of determining whether each failure device has failed due to manufacturing or production errors, or whether failure is due to expiry of the life cycle usage.

Hence, in view of the above, there exists a need for a method and a system for counting energisation events of an energisable element to address at least one of the above problems.

SUMMARY

In accordance with a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a device for counting energisation events, the device comprising a connector member for connecting to an energisable element; a sampling module coupled to the connector member, the sampling module configured to detect energisation of the energisable element; a count module coupled to the sampling module, the count module configured to count a number of detected energisation events of the energisable element.

The device may further comprise a display module capable of displaying information relating to a usability of the energisable element based on the counted number of detected energisation events.

The display module may comprise a bistable display, wherein said information relating to a usability of the energisable element is arranged to be displayed on the bistable display.

The bistable display may be capable of displaying said information in the absence of power supply to power the display.

One energisation event may be counted based on a detection of a switch coupled to the energisable element being switched on.

The energisable element may be a coil of a relay.

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The energisation of the coil may be by connection of a power supply to the coil.

The information relating to a usability of the energisable element may be based on an estimated maximum number of energisation events.

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The information relating to a usability of the energisable element may be based on an estimated remaining life of the energisable element.

In accordance with a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided method of counting energisation events, the method comprising connecting a count device to an energisable element; detecting energisation of the energisable element; and counting a number of detected energisation events of the energisable element.

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The method may further comprise displaying information relating to a usability of the energisable element based on the counted number of detected energisation events.

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The method may further comprise displaying said information relating to a usability of the energisable element on a bistable display, wherein the bistable display is capable of displaying said information in the absence of power supply to power the display.

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The method may comprise counting one energisation event based detecting a switch coupled to the energisable element being switched on.

The energisable element may be a coil of a relay.

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The energisation of the coil may be by connecting a power supply to the coil.

The information relating to a usability of the energisable element may be based on an estimated maximum number of energisation events.

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The information relating to a usability of the energisable element may be based on an estimated remaining life of the energisable element.

5 In accordance with a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a system for counting energisation events, the system comprising an energisable element; a device for counting energisation events, the device being connected to the energisable element; the device further comprising: a sampling module configured to detect energisation of the energisable element; and a count module coupled to the sampling module, the count module being configured to count a number of detected energisation events of the energisable
10 element.

The device may be detachably connected to the energisable element.

15 The device may be integrally connected to the energisable element.

The device may further comprise a display module capable of displaying information relating to a usability of the energisable element based on the counted number of detected energisation events.

20 The display module may further comprise a bistable display, wherein said information relating to a usability of the energisable element is arranged to be displayed on the bistable display.

25 The bistable display may be capable of displaying said information in the absence of power supply to power the display.

One energisation event may be counted based on a detection of a switch coupled to the energisable element being switched on.

30 The energisable element may be a coil of a relay.

Energisation of the coil may be provided by connecting a power supply to the coil.

35 The information relating to a usability of the energisable element may be based on an estimated maximum number of energisation events.

The information relating to a usability of the energisable element may be based on an estimated remaining life of the energisable element.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Example embodiments of the invention will be better understood and readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art from the following written description, by way of example only, and in conjunction with the drawings, in which:

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Figure 1(a) shows a device for counting energisable events in an example embodiment.

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Figure 1(b) shows a device for counting energisable events integrally connected to a socket coupled to an energisable element in an example embodiment.

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Figure 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating a device for counting energisable events in electrical connection with a relay in an example embodiment.

Figure 3(a) is a schematic illustration of a display displaying usability of a relay coil in an example embodiment.

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Figure 3(b) is a schematic illustration of a display displaying usability of a relay coil in another example embodiment.

Figure 4 is a schematic diagram of a bistable display in an example implementation.

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Figure 5 is a schematic circuit diagram of a device for counting energisable events for electrical connection to a relay using a direct current (DC) power supply in an example embodiment.

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Figure 6(a) is a schematic diagram illustrating a power supply module for connection to an external alternating current (AC) power supply in an example embodiment.

Figure 6(b) is a schematic diagram illustrating another power supply module for connection to an external alternating current (AC) power supply in an example embodiment.

Figure 6(c) is a schematic diagram illustrating another power supply module for connection to an external alternating current (AC) power supply in an example embodiment.

Figure 6(d) is a schematic diagram illustrating another power supply module for connection to an external alternating current (AC) power supply in an example embodiment.

Figure 7 is a schematic flowchart illustrating a method of counting energisation events in an example embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Example embodiments described below can provide a method and device for counting energisation events of an energisable element.

In the description herein, an energisable element can include, but is not limited to, any device that can be switched/powered on and off such as a coil of an electrical relay. The element can also include other electromechanical switching devices, components or parts. An energisation event of an energisable element can include, but is not limited to, an electrical powering on/off of the element and/or a mechanical switching on/off of the element.

The terms "coupled" or "connected" as used in this description are intended to cover both directly connected or connected through one or more intermediate means, unless otherwise stated.

The description herein may be, in certain portions, explicitly or implicitly described as algorithms and/or functional operations that operate on data within a computer memory or an electronic circuit. These algorithmic descriptions and/or functional operations are usually used by those skilled in the information/data processing arts for efficient description. An algorithm is generally relating to a self-consistent sequence of steps leading to a desired result. The algorithmic steps can include physical manipulations of physical quantities, such

as electrical, magnetic or optical signals capable of being stored, transmitted, transferred, combined, compared, and otherwise manipulated.

Further, unless specifically stated otherwise, and would ordinarily be apparent from the following, a person skilled in the art will appreciate that throughout the present specification, discussions utilizing terms such as “scanning”, “calculating”, “determining”, “replacing”, “generating”, “initializing”, “outputting”, and the like, refer to action and processes of a instructing processor/computer system, or similar electronic circuit/device/component, that manipulates/processes and transforms data represented as physical quantities within the described system into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the system or other information storage, transmission or display devices etc.

The description also discloses relevant device/apparatus for performing the steps of the described methods. Such apparatus may be specifically constructed for the purposes of the methods, or may comprise a general purpose computer/processor or other device selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program stored in a storage member. The algorithms and displays described herein are not inherently related to any particular computer or other apparatus. It is understood that general purpose devices/machines may be used in accordance with the teachings herein. Alternatively, the construction of a specialized device/apparatus to perform the method steps may be desired.

In addition, it is submitted that the description also implicitly covers a computer program, in that it would be clear that the steps of the methods described herein may be put into effect by computer code. It will be appreciated that a large variety of programming languages and coding can be used to implement the teachings of the description herein. Moreover, the computer program if applicable is not limited to any particular control flow and can use different control flows without departing from the scope of the invention.

Furthermore, one or more of the steps of the computer program if applicable may be performed in parallel and/or sequentially. Such a computer program if applicable may be stored on any computer readable medium. The computer readable medium may include storage devices such as magnetic or optical disks, memory chips, or other storage devices suitable for interfacing with a suitable reader/general purpose computer. The computer readable medium may even include a wired medium such as exemplified in the Internet system, or wireless medium such as exemplified in bluetooth technology. The computer

program when loaded and executed on a suitable reader effectively results in an apparatus that can implement the steps of the described methods.

The example embodiments may also be implemented as hardware modules. A module is a functional hardware unit designed for use with other components or modules. For example, a module may be implemented using digital or discrete electronic components, or it can form a portion of an entire electronic circuit such as an Application Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC). A person skilled in the art will understand that the example embodiments can also be implemented as a combination of hardware and software modules.

Figure 1(a) shows a device 102 for counting energisable events in an example embodiment. The device 102 comprises at least one connector member 104 for connecting to an energisable element. The device 102 also comprises a docking member 106 for facilitating efficient connection to an energisable element. The device 102 further comprises a display 108 for displaying a usability of an energisable element. In the example embodiment, the usability is determined based on a counted number of energisation events of the energisable element.

Figure 1(b) shows the device 102 integrally connected to a socket 109 coupled to an energisable element 110 in an example embodiment. The energisable element 110 can be e.g. a relay.

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating the device 102 in electrical connection with a relay 202 in an example embodiment. The device 102 is connected to the relay 202 using connector members e.g. 104. The relay 202 is an electro-mechanical relay in the example embodiment. In the example embodiment, the connector members e.g. 104 are used to detect energisation of a relay coil 204. It will be appreciated that detection of energisation events is not limited to detection of powering on/off of the relay coil and can include, for example, detection of switching on/off of the relay 202 mechanical contacts 206. In the example embodiment, the connector members e.g. 104 can take the form of a plug which can be inserted into a socket of the relay 202.

In the example embodiment, the relay coil 204 functions similar to an inductor. Due to this characteristic, if an external power supply 205 is available, the relay coil 204 is

energized and energy is stored in the relay coil 204. If the power supply 205 is cut off, the energy is released to the device 102. The mechanical contacts 206 are controlled to switch to different positions depending on whether the relay coil 204 is energized or is de-energized.

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The device 102 comprises a protection module 208 coupled to a power supply module 210, the power supply module 210 for powering various components of the device 102, a sampling module 212 in connection with the connector members e.g. 104, a count module 214 coupled to the sampling module 212, a reset module 216 coupled to the count module 214 and a display module 218 coupled to the count module 214.

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In the example embodiment, in use, the sampling module 212 detects an electrical powering on/off of the relay coil 204, e.g. the availability of a power supply 205 being provided to the relay coil 204. It will be appreciated that the power supply may be either an alternating current (AC) or direct current (DC) power source externally connected to the leads of the relay 202. That is, the relay coil 204 is energised/powered on when the power source is connected to it via the mechanical contacts 206 being closed, and de-energised/powered off when the power source is disconnected via the mechanical contacts 206 being open. In the example embodiment, each time the relay coil is powered on, a triggering signal is generated in the sampling module 212.

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The sampling module 212 can be in the form of an input sampling circuit that comprises a resistor; or a combination of a resistor, a transistor, a capacitor and/or a zener diode.

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The count module 214 receives input from the sampling module 212 and maintains a count on the number of times the relay coil 204 has been powered on/off. The count module 214 counts the number of triggering signals sent from the sampling module 212. For example, one energisation event is counted based on a detection of a switch coupled to the relay coil 204 being switched on. In the example embodiment, the count module 214 processes and transmits the number information to the display module 218. The number information is related to the usability of the relay coil 204. For example, a supplier of the relay 202 may have estimated a maximum number of times the relay coil may be switched on before it approaches failure and/or should be replaced. This is also known as the life cycle of the relay 202. The number information may be in the form of number of times the

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relay coil has been energised out of the estimated maximum number of times, for example, as a percentage-used information. The number information may also be in the form of the estimated remaining life cycle based on subtracting the number of times the relay coil has been energised from the estimated maximum number of times.

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The count module 214 can be in the form of a counting circuit that comprises a microcontroller or a microprocessor or a programmable logic device with supporting electronics components such as a crystal or an oscillator with reset capabilities.

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The display module 218 receives the number information from the count module 214 and displays information relating to the usability of the relay coil 204.

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Figure 3(a) is a schematic illustration of a display displaying usability of a relay coil in an example embodiment. The display is in the form of a progress bar. When the relay coil is unused and/or new, at portion (i), the display 302 shows that the remaining life cycle of the relay coil is 100%. When the relay is used until 50% of its estimated life cycle, at portion (ii), the display 302 shows that the remaining life cycle of the relay coil is 50%. When the relay is used until expiry of its estimated life cycle, at portion (iii), the display 302 shows that the relay should be replaced and/or it is the time for carrying out maintenance works.

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Figure 3(b) is a schematic illustration of a display displaying usability of a relay coil in another example embodiment. The display is in the form of a usage bar. When the relay coil is unused and/or new, at portion (i), the display 304 shows that the relay coil is 0% used of its estimated maximum number of times it is switched on. When the relay is used until 50% of its estimated life cycle, at portion (ii), the display 304 shows that the relay coil is 50% used of its estimated maximum number of times. When the relay is used until expiry of its estimated life cycle, at portion (iii), the display 304 shows that the relay coil is 100% used of its estimated maximum number of times and should be replaced, and/or it is the time for carrying out maintenance works.

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Returning to Figure 2, in the example embodiment, the display module 218 is preferably a display that is capable of displaying information with little or no power supply to power the display. That is, a bistable display may be used that can display information even in the absence of power supply to power the display. This can provide a so-called e-paper

display to the device 102. The bistable display can include, but is not limited to, an electrophoretic display, an electrowetting display, an electrofluidic display etc.

In the example embodiment, the display module 218 comprises a driver circuit 220 and a bistable display 222 coupled to the driver circuit 220. The driver circuit 220 is in turn coupled to the count module 214. The driver circuit 220 comprises an integrated circuit and functions to process/translate the number information from the count module 214 in order to instruct the bistable display 222 to display information relating to usability of the relay coil 204.

Figure 4 is a schematic diagram of a bistable display 402 in an example implementation. The bistable display 402 comprises an upper transparent electrode layer 404 and a lower electrode layer 406. The upper transparent electrode layer 404 faces a user of the display 402. The electrode layers 404, 406 are driven by a driver circuit (not shown) via driving means e.g. 408, 410 to provide polarity to pixels e.g. 412, 414 (by voltage application). The bistable display 402 further comprises a plurality of charged pigment particles/microcapsules e.g. 416, 418 suspended/held in a layer of e.g. liquid polymer/oil 420. In the schematic diagram, shaded particles/microcapsules e.g. 418 that hold negative charges are attracted to pixels that hold positive charges. Thus, by controlling the polarity of each pixel, the display 402 can be manipulated to display information.

Thus, by using a bistable display, even in the absence of a power supply, the polarity to the pixels can be retained over a period of time and therefore, the particles/microcapsules e.g. 416, 418 can continue to display desired information in the absence of a power supply. In an alternative implementation, if power supply is desired to be continuously provided to the bistable display, usage of the bistable display can also minimise power consumption, leading to a longer period of usage, since power consumption for providing polarity to the pixels is minimal.

In the example embodiment, the inventors have recognised that repeated energization and de-energization of the energisation element can create transient overvoltage phenomena especially when the energisation element is in a de-energization phase. Therefore, the protection module 208 (Figure 2) is preferably provided in the device 102 (Figure 2).

Referring to Figure 2, the protection module 208 comprises an overvoltage protection circuit 224.

In the example embodiment, the factory mode circuit 216 is provided as a reset option to the count module 214. That is, the factory mode circuit 216 is used for resetting the counts made by the count module 214 to zero so that the device 102 may be reused for counting energisation events. This can provide cost savings since users do not have to change to a new counting device. Instead, a user can detach the device 102 from the energisation element, reset the count to zero by activating the factory mode circuit 216 and re-attach the device 102 to an energisation element. The factory mode circuit 216 may be used also for resetting counts after an energisation element has been first tested at a production line prior to putting the energisation element for sale on the market. The factory mode circuit 216 can be implemented using a resistor, or a resistor with switch.

In the example embodiment, the power supply module 210 is provided to tap on the power source 205 and regulate a power supply to the various components of the device 102 such as the count module 214, the display module 218 etc.

Figure 5 is a schematic circuit diagram of a device for counting energisable events for electrical connection to a relay using a direct current (DC) power supply in an example embodiment. For illustration purposes only, numerals of the various modules from Figure 2 are used in Figure 5 but it will be appreciated that the numerals are not meant to be restrictive to the modules of Figure 2.

In Figure 5, the sampling module 212 comprises two resistors R5 and R6 functioning as a voltage divider. The voltage divider as sampling module 212 samples the availability of the power supply 205 and transmits that information to the count module 214 for processing.

The count module 214 comprises a microcontroller U1 226. U1 226 can be a controller from the STM32F100C series manufactured by STMicroelectronics. In the example shown, at numeral 230, oscillator QZ1 and capacitors C8, C9 function as a clocking circuit for U1 226. At numeral 232, capacitors C4, C5, C6, C7 function as electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) filtering for U1 226. At numeral 234, capacitor C10 and resistor R4 function as a reset circuit for U1 226. At numeral 236, resistors R2, R7, R3, R8 function as a booting selection circuit for U1 226. In the example, the count module 214 memorizes the

number of high signals or binary "1" counts when the signal received from the sampling module 212 transitions from low to high, or even high to low depending on the firmware algorithm design for U1 226. Further, the count module 214 comprises an interface circuit 242 for interfacing to the display module 218.

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In Figure 5, for the overvoltage protection circuit 224, a voltage suppressing component EC1 238 is provided. EC1 238 functions to suppress overvoltage phenomena created by the external power source 205 connecting on/off to the relay 202. As Figure 5 is shown to illustrate a DC power supply, EC1 238 can be a transient voltage suppression (TVS) diode known as transil. In this example, EC1 238 can clamp voltage characteristics of about 30V. In this case, when the overvoltage occurs and exceeding 30V, the overvoltage is clamped at about 30V and the overvoltage current is by-pass through EC1 238 thus preventing current flow into the rest of the modules of the device 102.

It has been recognised by the inventors that transient overvoltage can occur e.g. in the power source 205 or during a de-energization cycle of the coil 204. The protection module 208 can clamp the overvoltage at a pre-determined voltage level and can by-pass the transient current resulting from the transient voltage back to the power source 205. Thus, the transient current resulting from the transient overvoltage can be advantageously prevented from entering and damaging the various components of the device 102.

It will be appreciated that if the power supply is an alternating current (AC) supply, EC1 238 can be a voltage dependent resistor or varistor. If the power supply is both AC and DC, a varistor can also be used. Other components such as resistors, diodes, zener diodes and/or capacitors can also be used in combination with varistors and/or transils to obtain the protection described above.

In Figure 5, the factory mode circuit 216 comprises a switch BP1 240. BP1 240 provides a high signal or a low signal corresponding to whether BP1 240 is actuated or de-actuated respectively. In this example, if BP1 240 is actuated for more than about 5 seconds, the count module 214 (e.g. through U1 226) can sense this actuation duration and erase/reset all previous memorized counting information (e.g. through a reset pin of the U1 226).

In Figure 5, the power supply module 210 comprises a voltage supply regulator T1 240. T1 240 functions to regulate power supply from the external power source 205 for supplying to other components of the relay 102. In this example, T1 240 is a linear regulator given that the power supply is a DC supply.

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It will be appreciated that for a scenario whereby the external power source 205 is an alternating current (AC) power source, the power supply module 210 can take on various forms including being a transformer, a switched mode power supply, a limiting impedance circuit or a linear voltage step-down circuit. The power supply module 210, in this case of an external AC power source, is for stepping down the voltage of the external power source 205 to a lower voltage for powering the operations of the device 102.

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Figure 6(a) is a schematic diagram illustrating a power supply module for connection to an external alternating current (AC) power supply in an example embodiment. In this example, the power supply module 210 is a transformer 602.

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Figure 6(b) is a schematic diagram illustrating another power supply module for connection to an external alternating current (AC) power supply in an example embodiment. In this example, the power supply module 210 is a switched mode power supply that comprises an inductor element 604, a capacitor 606, a diode 608 and a switch 610.

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Figure 6(c) is a schematic diagram illustrating another power supply module for connection to an external alternating current (AC) power supply in an example embodiment. In this example, the power supply module 210 is a limiting impedance circuit that comprises a resistor element 612 and a capacitor 614.

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Figure 6(d) is a schematic diagram illustrating another power supply module for connection to an external alternating current (AC) power supply in an example embodiment. In this example, the power supply module 210 is a linear voltage step-down circuit that comprises a diode 616, a resistor 618, a zener diode 620 and a transistor element 622.

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Figure 7 is a schematic flowchart illustrating a method of counting energisation events in an example embodiment. At step 702, an energisable element is connected to a count device. At step 704, energisation of the energisable element is detected. At step 706, a number of detected energisation events of the energisable element is counted.

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The above described example embodiments can advantageously provide information relating to the usability of an energisable element. This can provide early warning to users before the energisable element reaches the end of its lifecycle. This can also reduce unnecessary replacement of devices comprising the energisable element. The information can also help to ensure that machines or equipment utilising the energisable element are working at their optimum conditions. Maintenance work can be thus be made simpler and cheaper. The above described example embodiments, when utilising a bistable display, can also provide cost savings as power requirements can be reduced, given that the display can display count information in the absence of power supply. That is, using a bistable display can advantageously reduce loss of information even when there is a power disruption to the count device or system. Hence, the count information can remain displayed on the bistable display even when no power is supplied to the display.

In the example embodiments, the device for counting energisable events of an energisable element may be integrally attached to a socket that is coupled to the energisable element. Alternatively, the device for counting energisable events can be integrally attached directly to the energisable element of an electrical device or relay. As yet another alternative, the device for counting energisable events may also be detachably attached to the energisable element of an electrical device.

The display module is not limited to providing a bistable display but can include other display means such as a liquid crystal display, a light-emitting diode display etc.

In the example embodiments, the count information can be displayed on a display that is coupled to the device for counting energisable events. However, the example embodiments are not limited as such and can include implementing e.g. a storage member, such as a memory chip/stick in communication with the count module, to store the count information. In such an instance, the count information can be read from the storage member when desired.

It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that other variations and/or modifications may be made to the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive.

CLAIMS

1. A device for counting energisation events, the device comprising,
a connector member for connecting to an energisable element;
5 a sampling module coupled to the connector member, the sampling module configured to detect energisation of the energisable element;
a count module coupled to the sampling module, the count module configured to count a number of detected energisation events of the energisable element.
- 10 2. The device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a display module capable of displaying information relating to a usability of the energisable element based on the counted number of detected energisation events.
3. The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the display module comprises a bistable
15 display, wherein said information relating to a usability of the energisable element is arranged to be displayed on the bistable display.
4. The device as claimed in claim 3, wherein the bistable display is capable of displaying said information in the absence of power supply to power the display.
- 20 5. The device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein one energisation event is counted based on a detection of a switch coupled to the energisable element being switched on.
- 25 6. The device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the energisable element is a coil of a relay.
7. The device as claimed in claim 6, wherein energisation of the coil is by connection of a power supply to the coil.
- 30 8. The device as claimed in any one of claims 2 to 7, wherein the information relating to a usability of the energisable element is based on an estimated maximum number of energisation events.

9. The device as claimed in any one of claims 2 to 8, wherein the information relating to a usability of the energisable element is based on an estimated remaining life of the energisable element.

5 10. A method of counting energisation events, the method comprising:
connecting a count device to an energisable element;
detecting energisation of the energisable element; and
counting a number of detected energisation events of the energisable element.

10 11. The method as claimed in claim 10, further comprising displaying information relating to a usability of the energisable element based on the counted number of detected energisation events.

12. The method as claimed in claim 11, further comprising displaying said information
15 relating to a usability of the energisable element on a bistable display, wherein the bistable display is capable of displaying said information in the absence of power supply to power the display.

13. The method as claimed in any one of claims 10 to 12, comprising counting one
20 energisation event based detecting a switch coupled to the energisable element being switched on.

14. The method as claimed in any one of claims 10 to 13, wherein the energisable
element is a coil of a relay.

25 15. The method as claimed in claim 14, wherein energisation of the coil is by connecting a power supply to the coil.

16. The method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 15, wherein the information
30 relating to a usability of the energisable element is based on an estimated maximum number of energisation events.

17. The method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 16, wherein the information
35 relating to a usability of the energisable element is based on an estimated remaining life of the energisable element.

18. A system for counting energisation events, the system comprising,
an energisable element;
a device for counting energisation events, the device being connected to the
5 energisable element;
the device further comprising:
a sampling module configured to detect energisation of the energisable
element; and
a count module coupled to the sampling module, the count module being
10 configured to count a number of detected energisation events of the energisable
element.

19. The system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the device is detachably connected to
the energisable element.

20. The system as claimed in claim 18, wherein the device is integrally connected to the
energisable element.

21. The system as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 20, wherein the device further
20 comprises a display module capable of displaying information relating to a usability of the
energisable element based on the counted number of detected energisation events.

22. The system as claimed in claim 21, wherein the display module further comprises a
bistable display, wherein said information relating to a usability of the energisable element is
25 arranged to be displayed on the bistable display.

23. The system as claimed in claim 22, wherein the bistable display is capable of
displaying said information in the absence of power supply to power the display.

24. The system as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 23, wherein one energisation event
is counted based on a detection of a switch coupled to the energisable element being
switched on.

25. The system as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 24, wherein the energisable
35 element is a coil of a relay.

26. The system as claimed in claim 25, wherein energisation of the coil is provided by connecting a power supply to the coil.

5 27. The system as claimed in any one of claims 21 to 26, wherein the information relating to a usability of the energisable element is based on an estimated maximum number of energisation events.

10 28. The system as claimed in any one of claims 21 to 27, wherein the information relating to a usability of the energisable element is based on an estimated remaining life of the energisable element.