BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] Non-limiting and non-exhaustive embodiments of the invention are described with reference to the following figures, wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the various views unless otherwise specified. Not all instances of an element are necessarily labeled so as not to clutter the drawings where appropriate. The drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon illustrating the principles being described.

[0007] FIG. 1 is a perspective view illustration of a demonstrative UAV that has landed on a charging pad in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0008] FIG. 2 depicts a block diagram showing components associated with generation and use of power communication to regulate charging of the UAV of FIG. 1 in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0009] FIG. 3 depicts a block diagram showing components included in the battery(ies)/BMS and CRB in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0010] FIG. 4 depicts a block diagram showing components included in the charging unit in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0011] FIG. 5 depicts an example process for achieving battery charge regulation without inclusion of battery charge regulation components in the UAV and using the same lines/wires/conductive traces/pins as used for power transmission to batteries included in the UAV in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0012] FIGs. 6A-6B depict example circuitry included in a switch in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0013] FIG. 7 depicts an example encoding scheme of the charge rate data in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0014] FIG. 8 depicts example charge rate data encoding waveforms in accordance with some embodiments of the present disclosure.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0014a] According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided an unmanned or autonomous vehicle comprising:

a plurality of electrical contacts, wherein first and second electrical contacts of the plurality of electrical contacts are configured to electrically couple with a charging

device that is external to the vehicle;

one or more rechargeable batteries configured to be charged from power received, via the first and second electrical contacts, from the charging device; and

circuitry configured to obtain battery state information associated with the one or more rechargeable batteries during charging of the one or more rechargeable batteries and generate battery charge rate data based on the battery state information,

wherein during charging of the one or more rechargeable batteries, the battery charge rate data is transmitted to the charging device via at least one of the first or second electrical contacts for use by the charging device to regulate charging of the one or more rechargeable batteries.

[0014b] According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is a system comprising:

a charging pad;

the unmanned or autonomous vehicle of any preceding claim, wherein the unmanned or autonomous vehicle comprises an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), wherein the UAV is configured to land on the charging pad and establish electrical contact between the charging pad and electrical contacts of the plurality of electrical contacts;

a power supply electrically coupled to the charging pad and configured to provide power for charging the at least one rechargeable battery via the first and second electrical contacts of the plurality of electrical contacts; and

a charging unit electrically coupled to the charging pad and the power supply, the charging unit configured to determine and control a level of the power provided by the power supply based on the battery charge rate data transmitted via the at least one of the first or second electrical contacts of the UAV.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] Embodiments of a system, apparatus, and method for generation and use of power communication to regulate charge of unmanned aerial vehicles are described herein. In the following description numerous specific details are set forth

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An unmanned or autonomous vehicle comprising:

a plurality of electrical contacts, wherein first and second electrical contacts of the plurality of electrical contacts are configured to electrically couple with a charging device that is external to the vehicle;

one or more rechargeable batteries configured to be charged from power received, via the first and second electrical contacts, from the charging device; and

circuitry configured to obtain battery state information associated with the one or more rechargeable batteries during charging of the one or more rechargeable batteries and generate battery charge rate data based on the battery state information,

wherein, during charging of the one or more rechargeable batteries, the battery charge rate data is transmitted to the charging device via at least one of the first or second electrical contacts for use by the charging device to regulate charging of the one or more rechargeable batteries.

2. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the circuitry is further configured to encode the battery charge rate data in the power provided by the charging device.

3. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the circuitry includes a switch in series with a diode, and wherein the circuitry is configured to cause the battery charge rate data to be encoded in the power by closing the switch in a particular pattern.

4. The vehicle of claim 3, wherein the circuitry further comprises another switch coupled in parallel with the diode,

wherein the circuitry is configured to open the other switch and close the switch when encoding the battery charge rate data.

5. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the battery charge rate data is encoded using first, second, third, and fourth pulses, the first and second pulses separated by a first time, the third and fourth pulses separated by a second time, and the second and third pulses separated by a third time.

6. The vehicle of claim 5, wherein the first time indicates a current command associated with charging the one or more rechargeable batteries.

7. The vehicle of claim 5, wherein the circuitry is configured to indicate a validity of the battery charge rate data to the charging device by generating first time equal to the second time.

8. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the plurality of electrical contacts comprises more than two electrical contacts.

9. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the vehicle comprises an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and wherein the first and second electrical contacts electrically couple with a charging pad of the charging device when the UAV lands on the charging pad.

10. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the circuitry is configured to periodically update the battery charge rate data.

11. The vehicle of claim 1, wherein the vehicle does not include battery charge regulation component or functionality for regulating charging of the one or more rechargeable batteries.

12. A system comprising:

a charging pad;

the unmanned or autonomous vehicle of any preceding claim, wherein the unmanned or autonomous vehicle comprises an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), wherein the UAV is configured to land on the charging pad and establish electrical contact between the charging pad and at least the first and second electrical contacts of the plurality of electrical contacts;

a power supply electrically coupled to the charging pad and configured to provide power for charging the at least one rechargeable battery via the first and second electrical contacts of the plurality of electrical contacts; and

a charging unit electrically coupled to the charging pad and the power supply, the charging unit configured to determine and control a level of the power provided by the power supply based on the battery charge rate data transmitted via the at least one of the first or second electrical contacts of the UAV.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the power supply comprises a direct current (DC) current-controlled voltage source; and/or

the charge data indicates at least one of a current, a voltage, battery charge rate, battery state information associated with the at least one rechargeable battery during charging, or data usable by the charging unit to regulate charging of the at least one

rechargeable battery.

14. The system of claim 12, wherein if the charging unit determines that the charge data is valid, the charging unit is configured to provide a command to the power supply to adjust the power provided to the first and second electrical contacts in accordance with the charge data, and/or wherein if the charging unit determines that the charge data is invalid, the power provided to the first and second electrical contacts is unchanged.

15. The system of claim 12, wherein two or more of the charging pad, power supply, and charging unit comprises a unitary device.