

TITLE

CONTAINER PANEL IMPROVEMENTS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 This invention relates to an improved container for materials handling purposes, and to improved panels and gates for such containers.

PRIORITY

This patent application claims priority from:

Australian Provisional Patent Application No 2010905404, titled "CONTAINER PANEL IMPROVEMENTS", and filed on 8 December 2010; and

10 Australian Provisional Patent Application No 2011903280, titled "CONTAINER PANEL IMPROVEMENTS", and filed on 17 August 2011.

The entire content of these applications is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

15 Collapsible containers having side and end panels or gates which are attached to the container base so as to be movable between upright erected positions and collapsed positions wherein they lie in a flat condition on top of the base, are known in the materials handling industry. Many different types of connections between the panels/gates and the base have been utilised, including both permanent pivotal attachments therebetween, as well as detachable connections which allow the panels/gates to be physically separated from the base if required.

20 When the panels/gates are erect, generally the opposite vertical perimeter frame members on one panel respectively abut against inner faces of adjacent panels, with adjacent panels being interlocked by means of manually releasable locking or latching mechanisms which are normally located at the top corners of the panels and which, when in their locking conditions, securely lock the adjacent panels together in their upright positions.

25 An example of a container of the above described type is disclosed in the US Patent No. 7,784,631. Such containers can be adapted for the storage and transport of products including fresh and frozen meat, grains, powders and cereals, by the installation of a food grade plastic liner panel inside all side frames, as well as the lid thereof.

These plastic liners are typically fixed to the frames using fasteners, such as screws, which are driven through the liner and into the frame from an inner face of the liner.

A potentially serious problem arises however, where one of these screws works loose and falls into the contents of the container.

- 5 It is an object of the invention therefore to substantially ameliorate one or more of the above stated difficulties, or at least provide useful alternatives to known containers and container panels and gates.

Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein, by way of illustration and example, an embodiment of the present invention is disclosed.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- In one aspect, the invention may be said to reside in a gate or panel for a storage container comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an elongate infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along at least a pair of opposing margins of the outer perimeter frame, each elongate infill panel attachment member comprising an infill panel retaining flange enabling the infill panel to be retained between the retaining flanges and an inner face of the outer perimeter frame; and wherein each elongate infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an intra-panel attachment flange secured to a margin of its associated outer perimeter frame.

- 15 20 In one form, the infill panel retaining flange extends in a plane parallel to an inner face of the perimeter frame.

In one form, the infill panel is clamped between the retaining flanges and the inner face of the outer perimeter frame.

In one form, the opposing margins are vertical margins of the gate or panel.

- 25 In one form, the opposing margins are horizontal margins of the gate or panel.

In one form, wherein the elongate infill panel attachment members extend along both opposing vertical and horizontal margins of the gate or panel.

In one form, each elongate infill panel attachment member is an elongate member of constant cross-sectional shape.

In one form, each elongate infill panel attachment member is an elongate member of constant cross-sectional shape terminating at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an inter-gate or panel attachment flange, which is attachable to another erected gate or panel of the container.

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In one form, the infill panel retaining flange extends from an intra-panel attachment portion secured to the vertical margin of its associated outer perimeter frame.

In one form, the infill panel is a solid plastic infill panel.

In one form, the infill panel is a solid sheet of food grade plastic.

10 In one form, the gate or panel comprises locking means arranged to releasably lock adjacently erected gates or panels together.

In one form, the locking means is a manually releasable locking or latching mechanism.

In one form, the gate or panel further comprises means for attaching the gate or panel to a container base.

15 In one form, the attachment means creates a permanent attachment.

In one form, the attachment means creates a pivotable attachment.

In one form, the attachment means creates a detachable attachment.

In one form, the gate or panel further comprises a plurality of hingedly connected sections.

20 A gate or panel for a storage container comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along at least a pair of opposing margins of the outer perimeter frame, each infill panel attachment member comprising an infill panel retaining flange enabling the infill panel to be retained between the retaining flanges and an inner face of the outer perimeter frame; and wherein each infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the
25 infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an inter-gate or panel attachment flange, which is attachable to another erected gate or panel of the container.

In a further aspect, the invention the may be said to reside in a gate or panel for a storage container comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an elongate infill panel attachment
30 member attached to and extending along a margin of the outer perimeter frame, wherein each elongate

infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an intra-panel attachment flange.

In one form, the intra-panel attachment flange is secured to a margin of its associated outer perimeter frame.

5 In a further aspect, the invention the may be said to reside in a storage container comprising a base, two pairs of opposing side and end gates or panels, each gate or panel comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an elongate infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along at least a pair of opposing margins of each of the outer perimeter frame, wherein each elongate
10 infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an intra-panel attachment flange.

In a further aspect, the invention the may be said to reside in a storage container comprising a base, two pairs of opposing side and end gates or panels, each gate or panel comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the
15 outer face of the infill panel, and an infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along at least a pair of opposing margins of each of the gates or panels, each infill panel attachment member comprising an infill panel retaining flange enabling the infill panel to be retained between the retaining flange and the inner face of the outer perimeter frame; and wherein each infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an inter-gate or
20 panel attachment flange, which is attachable to another erected gate or panel of the container.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a better understanding of this disclosure it will now be described with respect to an exemplary embodiment which shall be described herein with the assistance of drawings wherein:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a gate for a collapsible container, when viewed from its inner side;

25 Figure 2 is a perspective view of the gate in Figure 1, when viewed from its outer side;

Figure 3 is a top view of the gate in Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 4 is a detailed top view of an end of the gate illustrated in Figures 1 through 3;

Figure 5 is a top view of an infill panel attachment member from the gate illustrated in Figures 1 through 4;

30 Figure 6 is a top view of a gate according to a further embodiment of the invention;

Figure 7 is a detailed top view of an end of the gate illustrated in Figure 6;

Figure 8 is a top view of an infill panel attachment member from the gate illustrated in Figures 6 and 7;

Figure 9 is a top view of a gate according to a further embodiment of the invention;

5 Figure 10 is a detailed top view of an end of the gate illustrated in Figure 9; and

Figure 11 is top view of an infill panel attachment member from the gate illustrated in Figures 9 and 10.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF AN EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to Figure 1, where there is illustrated a gate 1 for a collapsible container of the kind
10 which includes a rectangular pallet base which is provided at each of its four corners with stub corner posts, the base having a horizontal removable floor panel supported by a plurality of floor support members and additional intermediate bearers.

In this embodiment, the container is provided with a first pair of folding side gates and a second pair of opposing folding end gates, each panel being pivotally mounted via hinges adjacent its bottom
15 corners to form a gate 1 which can be swung inwardly from its erect in-use position to a collapsed position on top of the pallet base. These erected gates 1 interlock with one another along their adjacent vertical margins, which enhances the stiffness and rigidity of the erected container.

It should be understood that while a hinged gate 1 is discussed here, the invention is equally applicable to a panel that is detachable from the base so that the panel may be laid down, and a panel that is
20 permanently fixed in an erected position.

The gate 1 comprises an outer perimeter metal frame 10 of tubular or angle section frame members. An infill (or liner) panel attachment member 20 (see Figure 5) comprises a laterally inwards directed infill panel retaining flange 30, and is attached to each of the opposing vertical margins of the outer perimeter frame 10.

25 As is best illustrated in Figure 4, the infill panel retaining flange 30 extends behind and lies in a plane parallel to an inner face of the perimeter frame 10 so that an infill panel (or liner) 40 of, in this embodiment, food grade plastic sheet is securely retained between the retaining flange 30 and the inner face of the perimeter frame 10 without need for fasteners. It will be apparent however that infill panels of practically any material may be retained by the infill panel retaining flanges 30.

As is best illustrated in Figure 5, the infill panel attachment member 20 is an approximate C-section shaped, elongate, steel channel which terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange 30, and at its other end in an inter-gate attachment flange 22, which is attachable to another gate 1 of the container in its erected position.

- 5 The infill panel retaining flange 30 extends from an intra-gate attachment portion 24 which is secured to the vertical margin of the perimeter frame 10 by welding.

As is best illustrated in Figure 2, retractable latch bolts 42 are slidably mounted in corner regions of the gate 1. Each latch bolt 42 is arranged to pass through aligned holes formed in the infill panel attachment member 20 of one vertical margin and into an aperture in either of the inter-gate

- 10 attachment flange 22 of an infill panel attachment member 20 of another gate 1, thereby securing these two gates 1 relative to each other in the erected position, or the stub corner posts.

Referring now to Figures 6 through 8, where there is illustrated a gate 100 comprising an outer perimeter metal frame 10 of tubular or angle section frame members as before. An infill (or liner) panel attachment member 120 (see Figure 8) comprising an infill panel retaining flange 130 is

- 15 attached to opposing margins of the outer perimeter frame 10.

As is best illustrated in Figures 7 and 8, the infill panel attachment member 120 is a generally L-shaped steel channel which terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange 130, and at its other end in an intra-panel attachment flange 132, which is secured by welding in this case to a margin of the outer perimeter frame 10.

- 20 Referring now to Figures 9 through 11, where there is illustrated a gate 200 comprising an outer perimeter metal frame 10 of tubular or angle section frame members as before. An infill (or liner) panel attachment member 220 (see Figure 11) comprising an infill panel retaining flange 230 is attached to opposing margins of the outer perimeter frame 10.

- 25 As is best illustrated in Figures 10 and 11, the infill panel attachment member 220 is a generally L-shaped steel angle section which terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange 230, and at its other end in an intra-panel attachment flange 232 which is secured by welding to opposing margins of the outer perimeter frame 10.

- It will be apparent that combinations of infill (or liner) panel attachment members 20, 120 and 220 can be employed on a gate or panel, and that one or more of these may be secured to the frame 10 by
30 releasable means, so as to permit access to the infill panel 40 when required.

It will be appreciated that the design of the gates eliminates the need for screws to retain the infill or liner panel 40. Moreover, the modular design construction of the panels provides increased design

flexibility. The same panel module can be used for both the side and end gates of the container. Also gates can be readily interchanged, eg by for example so as to convert a one-piece end gate into a bi-fold gate which is divided horizontally into two halves hinged together to permit the two halves to hinge relative to one another, or modified so as to include a hopper in its top or bottom half. In

- 5 addition the infill panels of the gates can be readily changed, for example from the one-piece solid plastics panel to a metal mesh infill panel, without the need to remove and reapply numerous fasteners.

Throughout the specification and the claims that follow, unless the context requires otherwise, the words “comprise” and “include” and variations such as “comprising” and “including” will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or group of integers, but not the exclusion of any

10 other integer or group of integers.

The reference to any prior art in this specification is not, and should not be taken as, an acknowledgement of any form of suggestion that such prior art forms part of the common general knowledge.

- It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the invention is not restricted in its use to the particular application described. Neither is the present invention restricted in its preferred embodiment with regard to the particular elements and/or features described or depicted herein. It will be appreciated that various modifications can be made without departing from the principles of the invention. Therefore, the invention should be understood to include all such modifications in its scope.
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THE CLAIMS:

1. A gate or panel for a storage container comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along at least a pair of
5 opposing margins of the outer perimeter frame, each infill panel attachment member comprising an infill panel retaining flange enabling the infill panel to be retained between the retaining flanges and an inner face of the outer perimeter frame; and wherein each infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an intra-panel attachment flange secured to a margin of its associated outer perimeter
10 frame.
2. The gate or panel of claim 1, wherein the infill panel is clamped between the retaining flanges and the inner face of the outer perimeter frame.
3. The gate or panel as in either of claims 1 or 2, wherein the opposing margins are vertical margins of the gate or panel.
- 15 4. The gate or panel as in either of claims 1 or 2, wherein the opposing margins are horizontal margins of the gate or panel.
5. The gate or panel as in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the infill panel attachment members extend along both opposing vertical and horizontal margins of the gate or panel.
- 20 6. The gate or panel as in any one of the preceding claims, wherein each infill panel attachment member is an elongate member of constant cross-sectional shape.
7. A gate or panel for a storage container comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along at least a pair of
25 opposing margins of the outer perimeter frame, each infill panel attachment member comprising an infill panel retaining flange enabling the infill panel to be retained between the retaining flanges and an inner face of the outer perimeter frame; and wherein each infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an inter-gate or panel attachment flange, which is attachable to another erected gate or panel of the container.
- 30 8. The gate or panel of claim 7, wherein the infill panel retaining flange extends from an intra-panel attachment portion secured to the vertical margin of its associated outer perimeter frame.

9. The gate or panel as in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the infill panel is a solid plastic infill panel.
10. The gate or panel as in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the infill panel is a solid sheet of food grade plastic.
- 5 11. The gate or panel as in any one of the preceding claims, further comprising locking means arranged to releasably lock adjacently erected gates or panels together.
12. The gate or panel of claim 11, wherein the locking means is a manually releasable locking or latching mechanism.
- 10 13. The gate or panel as in any one of the preceding claims, further comprising means for attaching the gate or panel to a container base.
14. The gate or panel of claim 13, wherein the attachment means creates a permanent attachment.
15. The gate or panel of either of claims 13 or 14, wherein the attachment means creates a pivotable attachment.
16. The gate or panel of claim 13, wherein the attachment means creates a detachable attachment.
- 15 17. The gate or panel as in any one of the preceding claims, further comprising a plurality of hingedly connected sections.
- 20 18. A gate or panel for a storage container comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along a margin of the outer perimeter frame, wherein each infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an intra-panel attachment flange.
19. The gate or panel as in claim 18, wherein the intra-panel attachment flange is secured to a margin of its associated outer perimeter frame.
20. A storage container comprising a panel or gate according to any one of claims 1 through 19.
- 25 21. A storage container comprising a base, two pairs of opposing side and end gates or panels, each gate or panel comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along at least a pair of opposing margins of each of the gates or panels, each infill panel attachment member comprising an infill panel

retaining flange enabling the infill panel to be retained between the retaining flange and the inner face of the outer perimeter frame; and wherein each infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an intra-panel attachment flange secured to a margin of its associated outer perimeter frame.

- 5 22. A storage container comprising a base, two pairs of opposing side and end gates or panels, each gate or panel comprising a rectangular or square infill panel having an inner face and an outer face, an outer perimeter frame adjacent to the outer face of the infill panel, and an infill panel attachment member attached to and extending along at least a pair of opposing margins of each of the gates or panels, each infill panel attachment member comprising an infill panel retaining flange enabling the infill panel to be retained between the retaining flange and the inner face of the outer perimeter frame; and wherein each infill panel attachment member terminates at one end in the infill panel retaining flange, and at its other end in an inter-gate or panel attachment flange, which is attachable to another erected gate or panel of the container.
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23. The storage container of claim 21 or 22, wherein the container is a collapsible storage container comprising gates or panels moveable between an erect in-use position and a collapsed position on top of the base.
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24. The storage container according to any one of claims 21 to 23, wherein the gates or panels comprise locking means arranged to releasably lock adjacently erected gates or panels together.
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25. The gate or panel as in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the infill panel retaining flange extends in a plane parallel to an inner face of the perimeter frame.