

REPLACEABLE UNIT FOR AN ELECTROPHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE FORMING
DEVICE HAVING AN ENGAGEMENT MEMBER FOR POSITIONING A MAGNETIC
SENSOR

BACKGROUND

5 [0001] 1. Field of the Disclosure

[0002] The present disclosure relates generally to image forming devices and more particularly to a replaceable unit for an electrophotographic image forming device having an engagement member for positioning a magnetic sensor.

[0003] 2. Description of the Related Art

10 [0004] During the electrophotographic printing process, an electrically charged rotating photoconductive drum is selectively exposed to a laser beam. The areas of the photoconductive drum exposed to the laser beam are discharged creating an electrostatic latent image of a page to be printed on the photoconductive drum. Toner particles are then electrostatically picked up by the latent image on the photoconductive drum creating a toned
15 image on the drum. The toned image is transferred to the print media (e.g., paper) either directly by the photoconductive drum or indirectly by an intermediate transfer member. The toner is then fused to the media using heat and pressure to complete the print.

[0005] The image forming device's toner supply is typically stored in one or more replaceable units that have a shorter lifespan than the image forming device. It is desired to
20 communicate various characteristics of the replaceable unit(s) to the image forming device for proper operation. For example, as these replaceable units run out of toner, the units must be replaced or refilled in order to continue printing. As a result, it may be desired to communicate the amount of toner remaining in the replaceable unit(s) to the image forming device in order to warn the user that the replaceable unit is near an empty state or to prevent
25 printing after the unit is empty in order to prevent damage to the image forming device. It may be desired to communicate other characteristics of the replaceable unit(s) to the image forming device such as toner type, toner color, toner capacity, replaceable unit serial number, replaceable unit type, etc.

SUMMARY

30 [0006] A replaceable unit for an electrophotographic image forming device according to one example embodiment includes a housing having a top, a bottom, a front, and a rear

positioned between a first side and a second side of the housing. The housing has a reservoir for storing toner. A rotatable shaft is positioned within the reservoir and has an axis of rotation. A magnet in the reservoir is movable in response to rotation of the shaft. An engagement member is positioned on an exterior of the top of the housing. The engagement member is aligned with a point in a path of movement of the magnet in the reservoir. The engagement member has a front surface that is unobstructed to contact and push a housing in the image forming device supporting a magnetic sensor to an operating position of the magnetic sensor during insertion of the replaceable unit into the image forming device.

[0007] In some embodiments, the magnet is rotatable around the axis of rotation of the shaft in response to rotation of the shaft. In some embodiments, the engagement member is axially aligned with the magnet relative to the axis of rotation of the shaft. Embodiments include those where the magnet passes in close proximity to an inner surface of the housing forming the reservoir at a location where the engagement member is positioned on the exterior of the housing. In some embodiments, the engagement member projects upward from the top of the housing. Embodiments include those where the front surface of the engagement member includes a pair of front engagement surfaces spaced axially apart from each other and aligned with each other along a front-to-rear dimension of the housing. Embodiments also include those where the engagement member includes a pair of side engagement surfaces that face each other and that are spaced axially apart from each other and aligned with each other along a front-to-rear dimension of the housing. In some embodiments, a ramp is positioned on the exterior of the housing in front of the engagement member and leading toward the engagement member. A top surface of the ramp inclines upward as the ramp extends toward the engagement member. A planar top surface may extend rearward from a rear end of the ramp to the engagement member. The planar top surface may be substantially horizontal when the toner cartridge is in its operative orientation.

[0008] A replaceable unit for an electrophotographic image forming device according to another example embodiment includes a housing having a top, a bottom, a front, and a rear positioned between a first side and a second side of the housing. The housing has a reservoir for storing toner. A rotatable shaft is positioned within the reservoir and has an axis of rotation. A magnet is connected to the shaft and rotatable around the axis of rotation in response to rotation of the shaft. An engagement member is positioned on an exterior of the top of the housing. The engagement member is axially aligned with the magnet relative to the axis of rotation of the shaft. The engagement member has a frontward facing portion that

is unobstructed to contact and align a housing in the image forming device supporting a magnetic sensor during insertion of the replaceable unit into the image forming device.

[0009] A replaceable unit for an electrophotographic image forming device according to another example embodiment includes a housing having a top, a bottom, a front, and a rear positioned between a first side and a second side of the housing. The housing has a reservoir for storing toner. A rotatable shaft is positioned within the reservoir and has an axis of rotation. A magnet in the reservoir is movable in response to rotation of the shaft. An engagement member is positioned on an exterior of the top of the housing. The engagement member is configured to align a magnetic sensor in the image forming device with a point in a path of movement of the magnet in the reservoir during insertion of the replaceable unit into the image forming device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] The accompanying drawings incorporated in and forming a part of the specification, illustrate several aspects of the present disclosure, and together with the description serve to explain the principles of the present disclosure.

[0011] Figure 1 is a block diagram of an imaging system according to one example embodiment.

[0012] Figure 2 is a perspective view of a toner cartridge and an imaging unit according to one example embodiment.

[0013] Figure 3 is a front perspective view of the toner cartridge shown in Figure 2.

[0014] Figure 4 is a rear perspective view of the toner cartridge shown in Figures 2 and 3.

[0015] Figure 5 is an exploded view of the toner cartridge shown in Figures 2-4 showing a reservoir for holding toner therein.

[0016] Figure 6 is a cross-sectional side view of the toner cartridge installed in an image forming device according to one example embodiment.

[0017] Figure 7 is a bottom perspective view of a magnetic sensor housing according to one example embodiment.

[0018] Figure 8 is a top perspective view of the magnetic sensor housing shown in Figure 7.

[0019] Figure 9 is a front perspective view of the toner cartridge shown in Figures 2-5 with a portion of a front wall of the toner cartridge removed to illustrate a portion of the reservoir according to one example embodiment.

5 [0020] Figure 10 is a top plan view of an engagement member of the toner cartridge shown in Figure 9 according to one example embodiment.

[0021] Figure 11 is a side elevation view of the toner cartridge as it enters the image forming device.

[0022] Figure 12 is a side elevation view of the toner cartridge inserted further into the image forming device with the toner cartridge contacting the magnetic sensor housing.

10 [0023] Figure 13 is a side elevation view of the toner cartridge inserted further into the image forming device with the toner cartridge having moved the magnetic sensor housing to its final vertical position.

[0024] Figures 14A and 14B are a side elevation view and a top cross sectional view, respectively, of the toner cartridge inserted further into the image forming device with the
15 engagement member of the toner cartridge approaching the magnetic sensor housing.

[0025] Figures 15A and 15B are a side elevation view and a top cross sectional view, respectively, of the toner cartridge inserted further into the image forming device with engagement surfaces of the engagement member of the toner cartridge contacting corresponding engagement surfaces of the magnetic sensor housing.

20 [0026] Figure 16 is a side elevation view of the toner cartridge fully installed in the image forming device and the magnetic sensor housing in its operating position.

[0027] Figure 17A is a top plan view of a first engagement member of the toner cartridge according to one example embodiment.

25 [0028] Figure 17B is a top plan view of a second engagement member of the toner cartridge according to one example embodiment.

[0029] Figure 17C is a top plan view of a third engagement member of the toner cartridge according to one example embodiment.

[0030] Figure 17D is front perspective view of a fourth engagement member of the toner cartridge according to one example embodiment.

[0031] Figure 18 is a perspective view of a paddle assembly of the toner cartridge according to one example embodiment.

[0032] Figures 19A-19C are cross-sectional side views of the toner cartridge illustrating the operation of a sensing linkage at various toner levels according to one
5 example embodiment.

[0033] Figure 20 is a perspective view of a paddle assembly of the toner cartridge according to another example embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0034] In the following description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings
10 where like numerals represent like elements. The embodiments are described in sufficient detail to enable those skilled in the art to practice the present disclosure. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and that process, electrical, and mechanical changes, etc., may be made without departing from the scope of the present disclosure. Examples merely typify possible variations. Portions and features of some
15 embodiments may be included in or substituted for those of others. The following description, therefore, is not to be taken in a limiting sense and the scope of the present disclosure is defined only by the appended claims and their equivalents.

[0035] Referring now to the drawings and particularly to Figure 1, there is shown a block diagram depiction of an imaging system 20 according to one example embodiment.
20 Imaging system 20 includes an image forming device 22 and a computer 24. Image forming device 22 communicates with computer 24 via a communications link 26. As used herein, the term “communications link” generally refers to any structure that facilitates electronic communication between multiple components and may operate using wired or wireless technology and may include communications over the Internet.

[0036] In the example embodiment shown in Figure 1, image forming device 22 is a multifunction machine (sometimes referred to as an all-in-one (AIO) device) that includes a controller 28, a print engine 30, a laser scan unit (LSU) 31, an imaging unit 32, a toner cartridge 35, a user interface 36, a media feed system 38, a media input tray 39 and a scanner system 40. Image forming device 22 may communicate with computer 24 via a standard
30 communication protocol, such as for example, universal serial bus (USB), Ethernet or IEEE 802.xx. Image forming device 22 may be, for example, an electrophotographic printer/copier including an integrated scanner system 40 or a standalone electrophotographic printer.

[0037] Controller 28 includes a processor unit and associated electronic memory 29. The processor may include one or more integrated circuits in the form of a microprocessor or central processing unit and may be formed as one or more Application-specific integrated circuits (ASICs). Memory 29 may be any volatile or non-volatile memory or combination thereof such as, for example, random access memory (RAM), read only memory (ROM),
5 flash memory and/or non-volatile RAM (NVRAM). Alternatively, memory 29 may be in the form of a separate memory (e.g., RAM, ROM, and/or NVRAM), a hard drive, a CD or DVD drive, or any memory device convenient for use with controller 28. Controller 28 may be, for example, a combined printer and scanner controller.

10 [0038] In the example embodiment illustrated, controller 28 communicates with print engine 30 via a communications link 50. Controller 28 communicates with imaging unit 32 and processing circuitry 44 thereon via a communications link 51. Controller 28 communicates with toner cartridge 35 and processing circuitry 45 thereon via a communications link 52. Controller 28 communicates with media feed system 38 via a
15 communications link 53. Controller 28 communicates with scanner system 40 via a communications link 54. User interface 36 is communicatively coupled to controller 28 via a communications link 55. Processing circuitry 44, 45 may provide authentication functions, safety and operational interlocks, operating parameters and usage information related to imaging unit 32 and toner cartridge 35, respectively. Controller 28 processes print and scan
20 data and operates print engine 30 during printing and scanner system 40 during scanning.

[0039] Computer 24, which is optional, may be, for example, a personal computer, including electronic memory 60, such as RAM, ROM, and/or NVRAM, an input device 62, such as a keyboard and/or a mouse, and a display monitor 64. Computer 24 also includes a processor, input/output (I/O) interfaces, and may include at least one mass data storage
25 device, such as a hard drive, a CD-ROM and/or a DVD unit (not shown). Computer 24 may also be a device capable of communicating with image forming device 22 other than a personal computer such as, for example, a tablet computer, a smartphone, or other electronic device.

[0040] In the example embodiment illustrated, computer 24 includes in its memory a
30 software program including program instructions that function as an imaging driver 66, e.g., printer/scanner driver software, for image forming device 22. Imaging driver 66 is in communication with controller 28 of image forming device 22 via communications link 26. Imaging driver 66 facilitates communication between image forming device 22 and computer

24. One aspect of imaging driver 66 may be, for example, to provide formatted print data to image forming device 22, and more particularly to print engine 30, to print an image.

Another aspect of imaging driver 66 may be, for example, to facilitate collection of scanned data from scanner system 40.

5 **[0041]** In some circumstances, it may be desirable to operate image forming device 22 in a standalone mode. In the standalone mode, image forming device 22 is capable of functioning without computer 24. Accordingly, all or a portion of imaging driver 66, or a similar driver, may be located in controller 28 of image forming device 22 so as to accommodate printing and/or scanning functionality when operating in the standalone mode.

10 **[0042]** Print engine 30 includes a laser scan unit (LSU) 31, toner cartridge 35, imaging unit 32, and a fuser 37, all mounted within image forming device 22. Imaging unit 32 is removably mounted in image forming device 22 and includes a developer unit 34 that houses a toner sump and a toner delivery system. In one embodiment, the toner delivery system utilizes what is commonly referred to as a single component development system. In
15 this embodiment, the toner delivery system includes a toner adder roll that provides toner from the toner sump to a developer roll. A doctor blade provides a metered uniform layer of toner on the surface of the developer roll. In another embodiment, the toner delivery system utilizes what is commonly referred to as a dual component development system. In this
20 embodiment, toner in the toner sump of developer unit 34 is mixed with magnetic carrier beads. The magnetic carrier beads may be coated with a polymeric film to provide triboelectric properties to attract toner to the carrier beads as the toner and the magnetic carrier beads are mixed in the toner sump. In this embodiment, developer unit 34 includes a magnetic roll that attracts the magnetic carrier beads having toner thereon to the magnetic roll through the use of magnetic fields.

25 **[0043]** Imaging unit 32 also includes a cleaner unit 33 that houses a photoconductive drum and a waste toner removal system. Toner cartridge 35 is removably mounted in image forming device 22 in a mating relationship with developer unit 34 of imaging unit 32. An outlet port on toner cartridge 35 communicates with an entrance port on developer unit 34 allowing toner to be periodically transferred from toner cartridge 35 to resupply the
30 toner sump in developer unit 34.

[0044] The electrophotographic printing process is well known in the art and, therefore, is described briefly herein. During a printing operation, laser scan unit 31 creates a

latent image on the photoconductive drum in cleaner unit 33. Toner is transferred from the toner sump in developer unit 34 to the latent image on the photoconductive drum by the developer roll (in the case of a single component development system) or by the magnetic roll (in the case of a dual component development system) to create a toned image. The
5 toned image is then transferred to a media sheet received by imaging unit 32 from media input tray 39 for printing. Toner may be transferred directly to the media sheet by the photoconductive drum or by an intermediate transfer member that receives the toner from the photoconductive drum. Toner remnants are removed from the photoconductive drum by the waste toner removal system. The toner image is bonded to the media sheet in fuser 37 and
10 then sent to an output location or to one or more finishing options such as a duplexer, a stapler or a hole-punch.

[0045] Referring now to Figure 2, a toner cartridge 100 and an imaging unit 200 are shown according to one example embodiment. Imaging unit 200 includes a developer unit 202 and a cleaner unit 204 mounted on a common frame 206. As discussed above, imaging
15 unit 200 and toner cartridge 100 are each removably installed in image forming device 22. Imaging unit 200 is first slidably inserted into image forming device 22. Toner cartridge 100 is then inserted into image forming device 22 and onto frame 206 in a mating relationship with developer unit 202 of imaging unit 200 as indicated by the arrow shown in Figure 2. This arrangement allows toner cartridge 100 to be removed and reinserted easily when
20 replacing an empty toner cartridge 100 without having to remove imaging unit 200. Imaging unit 200 may also be readily removed as desired in order to maintain, repair or replace the components associated with developer unit 202, cleaner unit 204 or frame 206 or to clear a media jam.

[0046] With reference to Figures 2-5, toner cartridge 100 includes a housing 102
25 having an enclosed reservoir 104 (Figure 5) for storing toner. Housing 102 may include a top or lid 106 mounted on a base 108. Base 108 includes first and second side walls 110, 112 connected to adjoining front and rear walls 114, 116 and a bottom 117. In one embodiment, top 106 is ultrasonically welded to base 108 thereby forming enclosed reservoir 104. First and second end caps 118, 120 may be mounted to side walls 110, 112, respectively, and may
30 include guides 122 to assist the insertion of toner cartridge 100 into image forming device 22 for mating with developer unit 202. First and second end caps 118, 120 may be snap fitted into place or attached by screws or other fasteners. Guides 122 travel in corresponding channels within image forming device 22. Legs 124 may also be provided on bottom 117 of

base 106 or end caps 118, 120 to assist with the insertion of toner cartridge 100 into image forming device 22. Legs 124 are received by frame 206 to facilitate the mating of toner cartridge 100 with developer unit 202. A handle 126 may be provided on top 106 or base 108 of toner cartridge 100 to assist with insertion and removal of toner cartridge 100 from imaging unit 200 and image forming device 22. An outlet port 128 is positioned on front wall 114 of toner cartridge 100 for exiting toner from toner cartridge 100.

[0047] With reference to Figure 5, various drive gears are housed within a space formed between end cap 118 and side wall 110. A main interface gear 130 engages with a drive system in image forming device 22 that provides torque to main interface gear 130. A paddle assembly 140 is rotatably mounted within toner reservoir 104 with first and second ends of a drive shaft 132 of paddle assembly 140 extending through aligned openings in side walls 110, 112, respectively. A drive gear 134 is provided on the first end of drive shaft 132 that engages with main interface gear 130 either directly or via one or more intermediate gears. Bushings may be provided on each end of drive shaft 132 where it passes through side walls 110, 112.

[0048] An auger 136 having first and second ends 136a, 136b and a spiral screw flight is positioned in a channel 138 extending along the width of front wall 114 between side walls 110, 112. Channel 138 may be integrally molded as part of front wall 114 or formed as a separate component that is attached to front wall 114. Channel 138 is generally horizontal in orientation along with toner cartridge 100 when toner cartridge 100 is installed in image forming device 22. First end 136a of auger 136 extends through side wall 110 and a drive gear (not shown) is provided on first end 136a that engages with main interface gear 130 either directly or via one or more intermediate gears. Channel 138 may include an open portion 138a and an enclosed portion 138b. Open portion 138a is open to toner reservoir 104 and extends from side wall 110 toward second end 136b of auger 136. Enclosed portion 138b of channel 138 extends from side wall 112 and encloses an optional shutter and second end 136b of auger 136. In this embodiment, outlet port 128 is positioned at the bottom of enclosed portion 138b of channel 138 so that gravity will assist in exiting toner through outlet port 128. The shutter is movable between a closed position blocking toner from exiting outlet port 128 and an open position permitting toner to exit outlet port 128.

[0049] As paddle assembly 140 rotates, it delivers toner from toner reservoir 104 into open portion 138a of channel 138. As auger 136 rotates, it delivers toner received in channel 138 into enclosed portion 138b of channel 138 where the toner passes out of outlet port 128

into a corresponding entrance port 208 in developer unit 202 (Figure 2). In one embodiment, entrance port 208 of developer unit 202 is surrounded by a foam seal 210 that traps residual toner and prevents toner leakage at the interface between outlet port 128 and entrance port 208.

5 **[0050]** The drive system in image forming device 22 includes a drive motor and a drive transmission from the drive motor to a drive gear that mates with main interface gear 130 when toner cartridge 100 is installed in image forming device 22. The drive system in image forming device 22 may include an encoded device, such as an encoder wheel, (e.g., coupled to a shaft of the drive motor) and an associated code reader, such as an infrared
10 sensor, to sense the motion of the encoded device. The code reader is in communication with controller 28 in order to permit controller 28 to track the amount of rotation of main interface gear 130, auger 136 and paddle assembly 140.

[0051] Although the example embodiment shown in Figures 2-5 includes a pair of replaceable units in the form of toner cartridge 100 and imaging unit 200, it will be
15 appreciated that the replaceable unit(s) of the image forming device may employ any suitable configuration as desired. For example, in one embodiment, the main toner supply for the image forming device, the developer unit, and the cleaner unit are housed in one replaceable unit. In another embodiment, the main toner supply for the image forming device and the developer unit are provided in a first replaceable unit and the cleaner unit is provided in a
20 second replaceable unit. Further, although the example image forming device 22 discussed above includes one toner cartridge and corresponding imaging unit, in the case of an image forming device configured to print in color, separate replaceable units may be used for each toner color needed. For example, in one embodiment, the image forming device includes four toner cartridges and four corresponding imaging units, each toner cartridge containing a
25 particular toner color (e.g., black, cyan, yellow and magenta) and each imaging unit corresponding with one of the toner cartridges to permit color printing.

[0052] Figure 6 is a cross-sectional side view of toner cartridge 100 installed in image forming device 22 according to one example embodiment. Paddle assembly 140 includes at
30 least one permanent magnet, such as magnets 150, 168a and 168b shown in Figure 6, that moves within reservoir 104 in response to the rotation of drive shaft 132 and paddle assembly 140. As discussed in greater detail below, the permanent magnet(s) communicate information about toner cartridge 100 to controller 28 of image forming device 22. Image forming device 22 includes a magnetic sensor 300 positioned to detect the motion of the

permanent magnet(s) during rotation of shaft 132 when toner cartridge 100 is installed in image forming device 22. Magnetic sensor 300 is in electronic communication with controller 28. In the example embodiment illustrated, magnetic sensor 300 is positioned adjacent to top 106 of housing 102. In other embodiments, magnetic sensor 300 is positioned adjacent to bottom 117, front wall 114, rear wall 116 or side wall 110 or 112. In those embodiments where magnetic sensor 300 is positioned adjacent to top 106, bottom 117, front wall 114 or rear wall 116, the magnet(s) are positioned adjacent to the inner surfaces of top 106, bottom 117, front wall 114 or rear wall 116 as shaft 132 rotates. In those embodiments where magnetic sensor 300 is positioned adjacent to side wall 110 or 112, the magnet(s) are positioned adjacent to the inner surface of side wall 110 or 112. Magnetic sensor 300 may be any suitable device capable of detecting the presence or absence of a magnetic field. For example, magnetic sensor 300 may be a hall-effect sensor, which is a transducer that varies its electrical output in response to a magnetic field.

[0053] Magnetic sensor 300 is supported by a housing 302 that is movable within image forming device 22. As discussed in greater detail below, housing 302 is biased toward a home position that is in the insertion path of toner cartridge 100 such that as toner cartridge 100 is installed in image forming device 22, an engagement member (not shown in Figure 6 for clarity) on toner cartridge 100 contacts and moves housing 302 into position to detect the permanent magnet(s) in reservoir 104. The positioning of housing 302 by toner cartridge 100 upon installation of toner cartridge 100 into image forming device 22 permits the accurate positioning of magnetic sensor 300 relative to the permanent magnet(s) of each individual toner cartridge 100 installed in image forming device 22 regardless of manufacturing variations between different toner cartridges 100. If instead housing 302 is positioned at a fixed location in image forming device 22, depending on physical variations between different toner cartridges 100, magnetic sensor 300 may not be properly positioned to detect the permanent magnet(s) of a given toner cartridge 100.

[0054] Figures 7 and 8 show housing 302 according to one example embodiment. In this embodiment, housing 302 is positioned adjacent to top 106 of housing 102 as shown in Figure 6. Housing 302 includes a bottom 304 that faces toward top 106 of housing 102 when toner cartridge 100 is installed in image forming device 22 and a top 306 that faces away from toner cartridge 100. As shown in Figure 7, in the embodiment illustrated, magnetic sensor 300 is exposed on bottom 304 of housing 302 to permit detection of the permanent magnet(s) of toner cartridge 100. Housing 302 includes a rear 310 that faces toward the

direction from which toner cartridge 100 is inserted into image forming device 22 and a front 308 opposite rear 310. Housing 302 also includes a pair of sides 312, 314.

[0055] Housing 302 is loosely mounted to a frame 316 that is fixedly positioned in image forming device 22. Housing 302 is slidable forward and rearward within an opening 322 in frame 316 between a front end 318 of frame 316 and a rear end 320 of frame 316. Housing 302 is biased toward rear end 320 such as, for example, by one or more extension springs 324. In the embodiment illustrated, extension springs 324 are attached at one end to housing 302 and at the opposite end to rear end 320 of frame 316. Other suitable biasing members may be used such as, for example, one or more compression springs or a material having resilient properties that bias housing 302 toward rear end 320. Housing 302 is movable vertically up and down relative to frame 316 and biased downward such as, for example, by one or more compression springs. In the embodiment illustrated, a compression spring (not shown) is positioned between housing 302 and a plunger 328 that is loosely attached to housing 302 and movable up and down relative to housing 302. A top contact surface 330 of plunger 328 is in pressed contact with the bottom side of a frame 332 (Figure 6) of image forming device 22. Other suitable biasing members may be used such as, for example, one or more extension springs or a material having resilient properties that bias housing 302 downward. Housing 302 is also movable side-to-side within opening 322.

[0056] In the example embodiment illustrated, frame 316 includes a pair of ledges 334, 335 on opposite sides of opening 322 that run from front end 318 to rear end 320. Housing 302 includes a corresponding pair of guides 336, 337 that run along sides 312, 314 of housing 302 along a front-to-rear dimension of housing 302. The downward bias on housing 302 (e.g., the force from the compression spring on housing 302 resulting from the contact between plunger 328 and frame 332) pushes the bottom surfaces of guides 336, 337 into contact with top surfaces 334a, 335a of ledges 334, 335, respectively. Top surfaces 334a, 335a of ledges 334, 335 also guide the front-to-rear sliding movement of housing 302 when the bottom surfaces of guides 336, 337 are in contact with top surfaces 334a, 335a of ledges 334, 335. Inner surfaces 334b, 335b of ledges 334, 335 limit the side-to-side movement of housing 302 relative to frame 316.

[0057] As shown in Figure 7, in the embodiment illustrated, housing 302 includes a tapered nose 340 at its rear 310. A bottom surface 340a of nose 340 projects further downward as bottom surface 340a extends from rear 310 toward front 308. The side surfaces 340b, 340c of nose 340 project further outward as side surfaces 340b, 340c extend from rear

310 toward front 308. Nose 340 may include a planar rear surface 340d as illustrated or a curved or pointed rear surface 340d. In the embodiment illustrated, housing 302 also includes a pair of rearward facing engagement surfaces 342, 343. In one embodiment, engagement surfaces 342, 343 receive contact from a corresponding engagement member on toner cartridge 100 to move housing 302 to its operating position where magnetic sensor 300 is aligned with the permanent magnet(s) in reservoir 104 as discussed in greater detail below.

[0058] With reference to Figures 9 and 10, toner cartridge 100 is shown with a portion of front wall 114 removed in order to illustrate a portion of reservoir 104. Toner cartridge 100 includes an engagement member 190 positioned on the exterior of housing 102 to contact and move housing 302 into position for magnetic sensor 300 to detect the permanent magnet(s) in reservoir 104. In the example embodiment illustrated, engagement member 190 projects upward from top 106 of housing 102; however, engagement member 190 may be positioned in other locations on housing 102 depending on the position of magnetic sensor 300 in image forming device 22 and the position(s) of the permanent magnet(s) in reservoir 104. In the example embodiment illustrated, engagement member 190 includes a U-shaped projection; however, engagement member 190 may take any suitable form.

[0059] In one embodiment, the permanent magnet(s) in reservoir 104 are positioned to pass in close proximity to the inner surface of housing 102 at the location where engagement member 190 is positioned on the exterior of housing 102. In some embodiments where magnetic sensor 300 is positioned adjacent to bottom 117, front wall 114, rear wall 116 or side wall 110 or 112, engagement member 190 is axially aligned relative to drive shaft 132 with the permanent magnet(s), e.g., magnets 150, 168a and 168b, of paddle assembly 140. A front surface 191 of engagement member 190 is unobstructed to allow front surface 191 to directly contact housing 302 during insertion of toner cartridge 100 into image forming device 22. In the example embodiment illustrated, engagement member 190 includes a rear portion 192 that forms the bottom of the “U” shape and a pair of forward extending portions 193 that are spaced axially apart from each other and form the upper portions of the “U” shape. In the example embodiment illustrated, front surface 191 of engagement member 190 includes a pair of front engagement surfaces 194, 195 positioned at frontmost ends of forward extending portions 193. In one embodiment, front engagement surfaces 194, 195 are aligned with each other in the front-to-rear dimension of housing 102. Engagement surfaces 194, 195 are positioned to directly contact engagement surfaces 342,

343 of housing 302 as toner cartridge 100 is inserted into image forming device 22 to move housing 302 to its operating position as discussed in greater detail below. In the example embodiment illustrated, forward extending portions 193 include inner side surfaces 193a, 193b that face each other and are aligned with each other in the front-to-rear dimension of housing 102.

[0060] Toner cartridge 100 may also include a lead-in ramp 196 positioned in front of and leading toward engagement member 190 and axially aligned relative to drive shaft 132 with the permanent magnet(s) of paddle assembly 140. The top surface of ramp 196 inclines upward as ramp 196 extends toward engagement member 190. In one embodiment, the top surface of ramp 196 is substantially planar and includes a substantially constant slope. Toner cartridge 100 may include a planar top surface 198 that extends forward from engagement member 190 and that is axially aligned relative to drive shaft 132 with the permanent magnet(s) of paddle assembly 140. In the embodiment illustrated, ramp 196 leads to planar top surface 198, which continues rearward along top 106 of housing 102 from ramp 196 to rear portion 192 of engagement member 190. In one embodiment, planar top surface 198 is substantially horizontal when toner cartridge 100 is in its operative orientation, i.e., the orientation of toner cartridge 100 when it is fully installed in image forming device 22.

[0061] Figures 11-16 are sequential views that illustrate the interaction between engagement member 190 of toner cartridge 100 and housing 302 of magnetic sensor 300 when toner cartridge 100 is inserted into image forming device 22. Figure 11 shows toner cartridge 100 as it enters image forming device 22 before contacting housing 302 of magnetic sensor 300. As shown in Figure 11, housing 302 is biased rearward against rear end 320 of opening 322 in frame 316. Housing 302 is also biased downward against top surfaces 334a, 335a of ledges 334, 335 with top contact surface 330 of plunger 328 in contact with the bottom side of frame 332 of image forming device 22.

[0062] Figure 12 shows toner cartridge 100 inserted further into image forming device 22. As toner cartridge 100 first contacts housing 302, lead-in ramp 196 of toner cartridge 100 contacts tapered bottom surface 340a of nose 340 of housing 302. As toner cartridge 100 advances, lead-in ramp 196 slides across tapered bottom surface 340a of nose 340 applying an upward force on housing 302 that overcomes the downward bias on housing 302 causing housing 302 to gradually lift upward. As shown in Figure 13, housing 302 reaches its final vertical position once the rear end of ramp 196 reaches the bottom 304 of

housing 302. As toner cartridge 100 advances further, planar top surface 198 slides across bottom 304 of housing 302 and engagement member 190 advances toward housing 302.

[0063] With reference to Figures 14A and 14B, as toner cartridge 100 advances further, rear 310 of housing 302 reaches engagement member 190. If housing 302 is
5 misaligned with toner cartridge 100 in the side-to-side direction, inner side surfaces 193a, 193b of forward extending portions 193 of engagement members 190 directly contact one or both of the tapered side surfaces 340b, 340c of nose 340. The contact between inner side surfaces 193a, 193b of forward extending portions 193 of engagement members 190 and side surfaces 340b, 340c of nose 340 align housing 302 with engagement member 190 in the side-
10 to-side direction as toner cartridge 100 advances. Figures 15A and 15B show housing 302 aligned in the side-to-side direction with engagement member 190 and toner cartridge 100 advanced to the point where engagement surfaces 194, 195 have begun to contact corresponding rearward facing engagement surfaces 342, 343 of housing 302. As toner cartridge 100 advances further, the contact between bottom 304 and planar top surface 198
15 maintains the vertical position of housing 302 relative to toner cartridge 100 and the inner side surfaces 193a, 193b of forward extending portions 193 of engagement members 190 ensure that the side-to-side alignment of housing 302 relative to toner cartridge 100 is maintained.

[0064] As toner cartridge 100 continues to advance to its operating position, the
20 contact between engagement surfaces 194, 195 of engagement member 190 of toner cartridge 100 and rearward facing engagement surfaces 342, 343 of housing 302 overcomes the rearward bias on housing 302 causing housing 302 to slide in opening 322 toward front end 318 of frame 316. In this manner, engagement surfaces 194, 195 of engagement member 190 push against rearward facing engagement surfaces 342, 343 of housing 302 causing housing
25 302 to move forward with toner cartridge 100. Housing 302 reaches its operating position with magnetic sensor 300 positioned to detect the permanent magnet(s) in reservoir 104 once toner cartridge 100 is fully installed in image forming device 22 as shown in Figure 16. The contact between engagement surfaces 194, 195 and rearward facing engagement surfaces 342, 343 of housing 302 maintains the front-to-rear position of housing 302 relative to toner
30 cartridge 100. When toner cartridge 100 is removed from image forming device 22, this sequence is reversed and the downward and rearward bias on housing 302 returns housing 302 to the position shown in Figure 11. While the example embodiment illustrated in Figures 11-16 shows engagement member 190 of toner cartridge 100 contacting housing 302 of

magnetic sensor 300 directly, in other embodiments, engagement member 190 contacts an intermediate linkage that, in turn, moves housing 302 from its home position to its operating position.

[0065] As discussed above, engagement member 190 may take many suitable forms.

5 Figures 17A-17D illustrate several additional examples. Figure 17A shows an engagement member 1190 that includes a pair of cylinders 1192, 1193 that project from top 106 of housing 102. Engagement member 1190 has a front surface 1191 that includes a pair of front engagement surfaces 1194, 1195 positioned to contact corresponding engagement surfaces 342, 343 of housing 302. In one embodiment, front engagement surfaces 1194, 1195 are
10 positioned at substantially the same locations as front engagement surfaces 194, 195 of engagement member 190 discussed above. Side surfaces 1196, 1197 of cylinders 1192, 1193 are positioned to realign housing 302 in the side-to-side direction if housing 302 is misaligned upon insertion of toner cartridge 100 into image forming device 22 similar to inner side surfaces 193a, 193b discussed above.

15 [0066] Figure 17B shows an engagement member 2190 that includes a pair of generally rectangular projections 2192, 2193 from top 106 of housing 102. Engagement member 2190 has a front surface 2191 that includes a pair of front engagement surfaces 2194, 2195 positioned to contact corresponding engagement surfaces 342, 343 of housing 302. In one embodiment, front engagement surfaces 2194, 2195 are positioned at substantially the
20 same locations as front engagement surfaces 194, 195 of engagement member 190 discussed above. Side surfaces 2196, 2197 of rectangular projections 2192, 2193 are positioned to realign housing 302 in the side-to-side direction if housing 302 is misaligned upon insertion of toner cartridge 100 into image forming device 22 similar to inner side surfaces 193a, 193b discussed above.

25 [0067] Figure 17C shows an engagement member 3190 that includes a projection 3192 from top 106 of housing 102. Engagement member 3190 has a front surface 3191 that includes a front engagement surface 3194 positioned to contact rear 310 of housing 302, which serves as an engagement surface of housing 302 in this embodiment. In one embodiment, engagement surface 3194 is positioned at substantially the same location as rear
30 portion 192 of engagement member 190 discussed above.

[0068] Figure 17D shows an engagement member 4190 that includes a cutout or recess 4191 in top 106 of housing 102. A top surface of housing 302 inside of recess 4191

forms a planar top surface 4196 similar to planar top surface 196 discussed above. A rear wall 4192 is positioned at a rearmost end of recess 4191 and may be positioned at substantially the same location as rear portion 192 of engagement member 190 discussed above. Side walls 4197, 4198 of recess 4191 are positioned to realign housing 302 in the side-to-side direction if housing 302 is misaligned upon insertion of toner cartridge 100 into image forming device 22 similar to inner side surfaces 193a, 193b discussed above. A front engagement surface 4194, 4195 is positioned at the front of each side wall 4196, 4197. Front engagement surfaces 4194, 4195 are positioned to contact corresponding engagement surfaces 342, 343 of housing 302. In one embodiment, front engagement surfaces 4194, 4195 are positioned at substantially the same locations as front engagement surfaces 194, 195 of engagement member 190 discussed above. In another embodiment, rear wall 4192 is positioned to contact rear 310 of housing 302, which serves as an engagement surface of housing 302 in this embodiment.

[0069] As discussed above, paddle assembly 140 includes at least one permanent magnet that moves within reservoir 104 in response to the rotation of drive shaft 132 and that communicates information about toner cartridge 100 to controller 28 of image forming device 22. Figure 18 shows paddle assembly 140 having permanent magnets for toner level sensing in greater detail according to one example embodiment. In operation, shaft 132 rotates in the direction shown by arrow A in Figure 18. Paddle assembly 140 includes a fixed paddle 141 that is fixed to shaft 132 such that fixed paddle 141 rotates with shaft 132. In one embodiment shaft 132 extends from side wall 110 to side wall 112. In the embodiment illustrated, fixed paddle 141 includes a plurality of arms 142 extending radially from shaft 132. In the example embodiment illustrated, fixed paddle 141 includes two sets 142a, 142b of arms 142. In this embodiment, in the position illustrated in Figure 18, arms 142 of first set 142a extend from shaft 132 toward rear wall 116 and arms 142 of second set 142b extend from shaft 132 toward front wall 114. Of course these positions change as shaft 132 rotates. The arms 142 of each set 142a, 142b are radially aligned and axially offset from each other. The arms 142 of first set 142a are offset circumferentially by approximately 180 degrees from the arms 142 of second set 142b. Other embodiments include one set of arms 142 or more than two sets of arms 142 extending from shaft 132. In other embodiments, arms 142 are not arranged in sets. Further, arms 142 may extend radially or non-radially from shaft 132 in any manner desired.

[0070] Fixed paddle 141 may include a cross member 144 connected to each set 142a, 142b of arms 142. Cross members 144 may extend across all or a portion of the arms 142 of sets 142a, 142b. Cross members 144 help arms 142 stir and mix toner in reservoir 104 as shaft 132 rotates. A breaker bar 146 that is generally parallel to shaft 132 may be positioned radially outward from each cross member 144 and connected to the distal ends of arms 142. Breaker bars 146 are positioned in close proximity to inner surfaces of housing 102 without making contact with the inner surfaces of housing 102 to help break apart toner clumped near the inner surfaces of housing 102. Scrapers 148 may extend in a cantilevered manner from cross members 144. Scrapers 148 are formed from a flexible material such as a polyethylene terephthalate (PET) material, e.g., MYLAR® available from DuPont Teijin Films, Chester, Virginia, USA. Scrapers 148 form an interference fit with the inner surfaces of top 106, front wall 114, rear wall 116 and bottom 117 to wipe toner from the inner surfaces of reservoir 104. Scrapers 148 also push toner into open portion 138a of channel 138 as shaft 132 rotates. Specifically, as cross member 144 rotates past open portion 138a of channel 138, from bottom 117 to top 106, the interference fit between scraper 148 and the inner surface of front wall 114 causes scraper 148 to have an elastic response as the scraper 148 passes open portion 138a of channel 138 thereby flicking or pushing toner toward open portion 138a of channel 138. Additional scrapers may be provided on arms 142 at the axial ends of shaft 132 to wipe toner from the inner surfaces of side walls 110 and 112 as desired. The arrangement of fixed paddle 141 shown in Figure 18 is not intended to be limiting. Fixed paddle 141 may include any suitable combination of projections, agitators, paddles, scrapers and linkages to agitate and move the toner stored in reservoir 104 as desired.

[0071] In the example embodiment illustrated, a permanent magnet 150 is rotatable with shaft 132 and detectable by a magnetic sensor as discussed in greater detail below. In one embodiment, magnet 150 is connected to shaft 132 by fixed paddle 141. In the example embodiment illustrated, first set 142a of arms 142 includes a pair of axially spaced arms 143 positioned at one axial end of shaft 132. Arms 143 initially extend radially outward from shaft 132 and then bend opposite the operative rotational direction of shaft 132 at the distal ends of arms 143. A cross member 145 connects the distal ends of arms 143 and extends substantially parallel to shaft 132. In the example embodiment shown, magnet 150 is positioned in a finger 152 that extends outward from cross member 145 toward the inner surfaces of housing 102. Finger 152 extends in close proximity to but does not contact the inner surfaces of housing 102 so that magnet 150 is positioned in close proximity to the inner

surfaces of housing 102. In one embodiment, fixed paddle 141 is composed of a non-magnetic material and magnet 150 is held by a friction fit in a cavity in finger 152. Magnet 150 may also be attached to finger 152 using an adhesive or fastener(s) so long as magnet 150 will not dislodge from finger 152 during operation of toner cartridge 100. Magnet 150
5 may be any suitable size and shape so as to be detectable by a magnetic sensor. For example, magnet 150 may be a cube, a rectangular, octagonal or other form of prism, a sphere or cylinder, a thin sheet or an amorphous object. In another embodiment, finger 152 is composed of a magnetic material such that the body of finger 152 forms the magnet 150. Magnet 150 may be composed of any suitable material such as steel, iron, nickel, etc. While
10 the example embodiment illustrated in Figure 18 shows magnet 150 mounted on finger 152 of fixed paddle 141, magnet 150 may be positioned on any suitable linkage to shaft 132 such as a cross member, arm, projection, finger, agitator, paddle, etc. of fixed paddle 141 or separate from fixed paddle 141.

[0072] A sensing linkage 160 is mounted to shaft 132. Sensing linkage 160 rotates
15 with shaft 132 but is movable to a certain degree independent of shaft 132. Sensing linkage 160 is free to rotate forward and backward on shaft 132 relative to fixed paddle 141 and to magnet 150 between a forward rotational stop and a rearward rotational stop. Sensing linkage 160 includes a leading paddle member 162. In the embodiment illustrated, leading paddle member 162 is connected to shaft 132 by a pair of arms 164 positioned between and
20 next to arms 143 of fixed paddle 141. Leading paddle member 162 includes a paddle surface 166 that engages the toner in reservoir 104 as discussed in greater detail below. In the example embodiment illustrated, paddle surface 166 is substantially planar and normal to the direction of motion of sensing linkage 160 to allow paddle surface 166 to strike toner in reservoir 104.

25 [0073] Sensing linkage 160 also includes one or more permanent magnets 168. Magnet(s) 168 are mounted on one or more magnet support(s) 170 of sensing linkage 160 that are positioned in close proximity to but do not contact the inner surfaces of housing 102. In this manner, magnet(s) 168 are positioned in close proximity to the inner surfaces of housing 102 but the inner surfaces of housing 102 do not impede the motion of sensing
30 linkage 160. In the example embodiment illustrated, magnet support 170 is connected to shaft 132 by a pair of arms 172 positioned between and next to arms 143 of fixed paddle 141. Arms 172 are connected to arms 164. In this embodiment, in the position illustrated in Figure 18, arms 172 extend from shaft 132 toward top 106. Of course the position of arms 172

changes as shaft 132 rotates. In this embodiment, magnet support 170 is relatively thin in the radial dimension and extends circumferentially relative to shaft 132 between distal ends of arms 172 along the rotational path of magnet(s) 168 to minimize the drag on magnet support 170 as it passes through toner in reservoir 104. Along the operative rotational direction A of shaft 132, leading paddle member 162 is positioned ahead of magnet 150 which is positioned ahead of magnet(s) 168.

[0074] In the example embodiment illustrated in Figures 6 and 18, two magnets 168a, 168b are mounted on magnet support 170; however, one magnet 168 (as shown in Figure 5) or more than two magnets 168 may be used as desired. Magnets 168a, 168b are substantially radially and axially aligned and spaced circumferentially from each other relative to shaft 132. Magnet(s) 168 are also substantially radially and axially aligned and spaced circumferentially from magnet 150 relative to shaft 132. In one embodiment, magnet support 170 is composed of a non-magnetic material and magnet(s) 168 are held by a friction fit in one or more cavities in magnetic support 170. Magnet(s) 168 may also be attached to magnet support 170 using an adhesive or fastener(s) so long as magnet(s) 168 will not dislodge from magnet support 170 during operation of toner cartridge 100. As discussed above, magnet(s) 168 may be any suitable size and shape and composed of any suitable material. Magnet support 170 may take many different forms including an arm, projection, linkage, cross member, etc.

[0075] In some embodiments, sensing linkage 160 is biased in the operative rotational direction toward a forward rotational stop by one or more biasing members. In the example embodiment illustrated, sensing linkage 160 is biased by an extension spring 176 connected at one end to an arm 172 of magnet support 170 and at the other end to arm 143 of fixed paddle 141. However, any suitable biasing member may be used as desired. For example, in another embodiment, a torsion spring biases sensing linkage 160 in the operative rotational direction. In another embodiment, a compression spring is connected at one end to an arm 164 of leading paddle member 162 and at the other end to arm 143 of fixed paddle 141. In another embodiment, sensing linkage 160 is free to fall by gravity toward its forward rotational stop as sensing linkage 160 rotates past the uppermost point of its rotational path. In the example embodiment illustrated, the forward rotational stop includes a stop 178 that extends axially from the side of one or both of the arms 172 of magnet support 170. Stop 178 is arched and includes a leading surface 180 that contacts arm 143 of fixed paddle 141 to limit the motion of sensing linkage 160 relative to magnet 150 in the operative rotational

direction. In the example embodiment illustrated, the rearward rotational stop includes a trailing portion 182 of leading paddle member 162. Trailing portion 182 of leading paddle member 162 contacts a leading portion 184 of cross member 145 to limit the motion of sensing linkage 160 relative to magnet 150 in a direction opposite the operative rotational direction. It will be appreciated that the forward and rearward rotational stops may take other forms as desired.

[0076] Figures 19A-19C depict the operation of magnets 150 and 168 at various toner levels with engagement member 190 removed from toner cartridge 100 for clarity. Figures 19A-19C depict a clock face in dashed lines along the rotational path of shaft 132 and paddle assembly 140 in order to aid in the description of the operation of magnets 150 and 168. In one embodiment, the poles of magnets 150, 168 are directed toward the position of magnetic sensor 300 in order to facilitate the detection of magnets 150, 168 by magnetic sensor 300. Magnetic sensor 300 may be configured to detect one of a north pole and a south pole or both. Where magnetic sensor 300 detects one of a north pole and a south pole, magnets 150, 168 may be positioned such that the detected pole is directed toward magnetic sensor 300.

[0077] The motion of sensing linkage 160 and magnet(s) 168 relative to magnet 150 as shaft 132 rotates may be used to determine the amount of toner remaining in reservoir 104. As shaft 132 rotates, in the embodiment illustrated, fixed paddle 141 rotates with shaft 132 causing magnet 150 to pass magnetic sensor 300 at the same point during each revolution of shaft 132. On the other hand, the motion of sensing linkage 160, which is free to rotate relative to shaft 132 between its forward and rearward rotational stops, depends on the amount of toner 105 present in reservoir 104. As a result, magnet(s) 168 pass magnetic sensor 300 at different points during the revolution of shaft 132 depending on the toner level in reservoir 104. Accordingly, variation in the angular separation or offset between magnet 150, which serves as a reference point, and magnet(s) 168, which provide(s) sense points, as they pass magnetic sensor 300 may be used to determine the amount of toner remaining in reservoir 104. In an alternative embodiment, the linkage connecting magnet 150 to shaft 132, such as fixed paddle 141, is movable to a certain degree independent of shaft 132; however, it is preferred that magnet 150 passes magnetic sensor 190 in the same position relative to shaft 132 during each revolution of shaft 132 so that the position(s) of magnet(s) 168 may be consistently evaluated relative to the position of magnet 150.

[0078] When toner reservoir 104 is relatively full, toner 105 present in reservoir 104 prevents sensing linkage 160 from advancing ahead of its rearward rotational stop. Instead,

sensing linkage 160 is pushed through its rotational path by fixed paddle 141 when shaft 132 rotates. Accordingly, when toner reservoir 104 is relatively full, the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnets 168a, 168b on sensing linkage 160 passing magnetic sensor 300 is at its maximum. In other words, because
5 sensing linkage 160 is at its rearward rotational stop, the angular separation from magnet 168a to magnet 150 when magnet 168a reaches magnetic sensor 300 and from magnet 168b to magnet 150 when magnet 168b reaches magnetic sensor 300 are at their maximum limits.

[0079] As the toner level in reservoir 104 decreases as shown in Figure 19A, sensing linkage 160 is positioned forward from its rearward rotational stop as leading paddle member
10 162 rotates forward from the “12 o’clock” position. Leading paddle member 162 advances ahead of the rearward rotational stop of sensing linkage 160 until paddle surface 166 contacts toner 105, which stops the advance of sensing linkage 160. In one embodiment where paddle assembly 140 includes scrapers 148, scrapers 148 are not present on cross member 144 connected to set 142b of arms 142 along the axial portion of shaft 132 spanned by leading
15 paddle member 162 so that toner 105 is not disturbed immediately before paddle surface 166 contacts toner 105 after leading paddle member 162 rotates forward from the “12 o’clock” position. At higher toner levels, leading paddle member 162 is stopped by toner 105 before magnets 168a, 168b reach magnetic sensor 300 such that the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnets 168a, 168b passing magnetic
20 sensor 300 remains at its maximum. Sensing linkage 160 then remains generally stationary on top of (or slightly below) toner 105 until fixed paddle 141 catches up to leading paddle member 162 at the rearward rotational stop of sensing linkage 160 and fixed paddle 141 resumes pushing sensing linkage 160.

[0080] With reference to Figure 19B, as the toner level in reservoir 104 continues to
25 decrease, at the point where leading paddle member 162 encounters toner 105 magnet 168a is detected by magnetic sensor 300. As a result, the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnet 168a passing magnetic sensor 300 decreases. Sensing linkage 160 then remains generally stationary on top of (or slightly below) toner 105 with magnet 168a in the sensing window of magnetic sensor 300 until fixed
30 paddle 141 catches up to leading paddle member 162 and resumes pushing sensing linkage 160. As a result, leading paddle member 162 is stopped by toner 105 before magnet 168b reaches magnetic sensor 300 such that the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet

150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnet 168b passing magnetic sensor 300 remains at its maximum.

[0081] With reference to Figure 19C, as the toner level in reservoir 104 decreases even further, at the point where leading paddle member 162 encounters toner 105 magnet 168a has passed magnetic sensor 300 and magnet 168b is detected by magnetic sensor 300. As a result, the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnets 168a and 168b passing magnetic sensor 300 are both decreased relative to their maximums. As a result, it will be appreciated that the motion of magnets 168a, 168b relative to the motion of magnet 150 relates to the amount of toner 105 remaining in reservoir 104.

[0082] In one embodiment, the initial amount of toner 105 in reservoir 104 is recorded in memory associated with processing circuitry 45 upon filling the toner cartridge 100. Accordingly, upon installing toner cartridge 100 in image forming device 22, controller 28 is able to determine the initial toner level in reservoir 104. Alternatively, each toner cartridge 100 for a particular type of image forming device 22 may be filled with the same amount of toner so that the initial toner level in reservoir 104 used by controller 28 may be a fixed value for all toner cartridges 100. Controller 28 then estimates the amount of toner remaining in reservoir 104 as toner is fed from toner cartridge to imaging unit 200 based on one or more operating conditions of image forming device 22 and/or toner cartridge 100. In one embodiment, the amount of toner 105 remaining in reservoir 104 is approximated based on an empirically derived feed rate of toner 105 from toner reservoir 104 when shaft 132 and auger 136 are rotated to deliver toner from toner cartridge 100 to imaging unit 200. In this embodiment, the estimate of the amount of toner 105 remaining is decreased based on the amount of rotation of the drive motor of image forming device 22 that provides rotational force to main interface gear 130 as determined by controller 28. In another embodiment, the estimate of the amount of toner 105 remaining is decreased based on the number of printable elements (pels) printed using the color of toner contained in toner cartridge 100 while toner cartridge 100 is installed in image forming device 22. In another embodiment, the estimate of the amount of toner 105 remaining is decreased based on the number of pages printed.

[0083] The amount of toner 105 remaining in reservoir 104 where the amount of rotation of shaft 132 that occurs between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and each of the magnets 168 passing magnetic sensor 300 decreases may be determined empirically for a particular toner cartridge design. As a result, each time the amount of rotation of shaft 132

between the detection of magnet 150 and the detection of one of the magnets 168 decreases from its maximum value, controller 28 may adjust the estimate of the amount of toner remaining in reservoir 104 based on the empirically determined amount of toner associated with the decrease in the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and the respective magnet 168 passing magnetic sensor 300.

[0084] For example, the toner level in reservoir 104 can be approximated by starting with the initial amount of toner 105 supplied in reservoir 104 and reducing the estimate of the amount of toner 105 remaining in reservoir 104 as toner 105 from reservoir 104 is consumed. As discussed above, the estimate of the toner remaining may be decreased based on one or more conditions such as the number of rotations of the drive motor, main interface gear 130 or shaft 132, the number of pels printed, the number of pages printed, etc. The estimated amount of toner remaining may be recalculated when the amount of rotation of shaft 132 as determined by controller 28 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnet 168a of sensing linkage 160 passing magnetic sensor 300 decreases from its maximum value. In one embodiment, this includes replacing the estimate of the amount of toner remaining with the empirical value associated with the decrease in the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnet 168a passing magnetic sensor 300. In another embodiment, the recalculation gives weight to both the present estimate of the amount of toner remaining and the empirical value associated with the decrease in the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnet 168a passing magnetic sensor 300. The revised estimate of the amount of toner 105 remaining in reservoir 104 is then decreased as toner 105 from reservoir 104 is consumed using one or more conditions as discussed above. The estimated amount of toner remaining may be recalculated again when the amount of rotation of shaft 132 as determined by controller 28 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnet 168b of sensing linkage 160 passing magnetic sensor 300 decreases from its maximum value. As discussed above, this may include replacing the estimate of the amount of toner remaining or recalculating the estimate giving weight to both the present estimate of the amount of toner remaining and the empirical value associated with the decrease in the amount of rotation of shaft 132 between magnet 150 passing magnetic sensor 300 and magnet 168b passing magnetic sensor 300. This process may be repeated until reservoir 104 is out of toner 105. In one embodiment, the present estimate of the amount of toner 105 remaining in reservoir 104 is stored in memory associated with processing circuitry 45 of toner cartridge 100 so that the

estimate travels with toner cartridge 100 in case toner cartridge 100 is removed from one image forming device 22 and installed in another image forming device 22.

[0085] In this manner, the detection of the motion of magnets 168 relative to the motion of magnet 150 may serve as a correction for an estimate of the toner level in reservoir 104 based on other conditions such as an empirically derived feed rate of toner or the number of pels or pages printed as discussed above to account for variability and to correct potential error in such an estimate. For example, an estimate of the toner level based on conditions such as an empirically derived feed rate of toner or the number of pels or pages printed may drift from the actual amount of toner 105 remaining in reservoir 104 over the life of toner cartridge 100, i.e., a difference between an estimate of the toner level and the actual toner level may tend to increase over the life of toner cartridge 100. Recalculating the estimate of the amount of toner 105 remaining based on the motion of magnet(s) 168 relative to the motion of magnet 150 helps correct this drift to provide a more accurate estimate of the amount of toner 105 remaining in reservoir 104.

[0086] It will be appreciated that sensing linkage 160 may include any suitable number of magnets 168 desired depending on how many recalculations of the estimate of the amount of toner remaining are desired. For example, sensing linkage 160 may include more than two magnets 168 spaced circumferentially from each other where recalculation of the estimated toner level is desired more frequently. Alternatively, sensing linkage 160 may include a single magnet 168 where recalculation of the estimated toner level is desired only once, such as near the point where reservoir 104 is nearly empty. The positions of magnets 168 relative to leading paddle member 162 may be selected in order to sense particular toner levels desired (e.g., 300 grams of toner remaining, 100 grams of toner remaining, etc.). Further, where shaft 132 rotates at a constant speed during operation of toner cartridge 100, time differences between the detection of magnet 150 and magnet(s) 168 by magnetic sensor 300 may be used instead of the amount of rotation of shaft 132. In this embodiment, time differences greater than a predetermined threshold between the detection of magnet 150 and one or more of magnet(s) 168 may be ignored by the processor to account for shaft 132 stopping between print jobs.

[0087] Sensing linkage 160 is not limited to the shape and architecture shown in Figure 18 and may take many shapes and sizes as desired. The leading paddle member 162 having paddle surface 166 that engages the toner in reservoir 104 may also take many shapes and sizes as desired. For example, in one embodiment, paddle surface 166 is angled with

respect to the direction of motion of the sensing linkage 160. For example, paddle surface 166 may be V-shaped and have a front face that forms a concave portion of the V-shaped profile. In another embodiment, paddle surface 166 includes a comb portion with a series of teeth that are spaced axially from each other to decrease the friction between the sensing linkage and the toner. The surface area of paddle surface 166 may also vary as desired.

[0088] While the example embodiments illustrated in Figures 19A-19C show magnetic sensor 300 positioned at about “12 o’clock” with respect to paddle assembly 140, magnetic sensor 300 may be positioned elsewhere in the rotational path of paddle assembly 140 as desired. For example, magnetic sensor 300 may be positioned at about “6 o’clock” with respect to paddle assembly 140 by changing the positions of magnet 150 and magnet(s) 168 relative to leading paddle member 162 by 180 degrees.

[0089] Although the example embodiments discussed above utilize a sensing linkage and a fixed linkage in the reservoir of the toner cartridge, it will be appreciated that a sensing linkage and a fixed linkage each having a magnet may be used to determine the toner level in any reservoir or sump storing toner in image forming device 22 such as, for example, a reservoir of the imaging unit or a storage area for waste toner.

[0090] Further, the configuration of permanent magnet(s) for toner level sensing is not limited to the example embodiment shown in Figures 18 and 19A-19C. For example, in another embodiment, a paddle having a permanent magnet is mounted on drive shaft 132 and rotatable independent of drive shaft 132 as described in United States Published Patent Application No. 2014/0169806, which is assigned to the same assignee as the present application. In this embodiment, the paddle is pushed through its rotational path by a driving member mounted on drive shaft 132 and free to fall ahead of the driving member subject to resistance by toner present in reservoir 104. Accordingly, it will be appreciated that the motion of the paddle (and the permanent magnet attached thereto) is dependent on the amount of toner in reservoir 104.

[0091] Figure 20 shows another example embodiment of a paddle assembly 5140. In this embodiment, the toner cartridge includes a paddle 5141 that is fixed to a shaft 5132 such that paddle 5141 rotates with shaft 5132. Paddle 5141 includes one or more permanent magnet(s) 5168 mounted on one or more magnet support(s) 5170. Magnet(s) 5168 are positioned in close proximity to but do not contact the inner surfaces of the housing of the toner cartridge as discussed above. In the example embodiment illustrated, magnet support

5170 is connected to shaft 5132 by a pair of arms 5172. In the example embodiment illustrated, two magnets 5168 are mounted on magnet support 5170; however, more or fewer than two magnets 5168 may be used as desired. Magnets 5168 may be oriented, shaped and mounted to shaft 5132 in various ways as discussed above. In this embodiment, magnetic sensor 300 detects magnets 5168 as shaft 5132 rotates. In this manner, magnetic sensor 300 may be used to detect the presence of the toner cartridge in the image forming device and to confirm that shaft 5132 is rotating properly thereby eliminating the need for additional sensors to perform these functions. Magnetic sensor 300 may also be used to determine the speed of rotation of shaft 5132 by measuring the time difference between the detection of the first magnet and the detection of the second magnet as shaft 5132 rotates. The arrangement of magnet(s) 5168 may communicate additional characteristics of toner cartridge 100 as desired. For example, the number of magnets 5168 attached to shaft 5132 may indicate a characteristic of toner cartridge 100. By way of example, one magnet 5186 may indicate a toner cartridge containing black toner, two magnets 5168 may indicate a toner cartridge containing cyan toner, three magnets 5168 may indicate a toner cartridge containing yellow toner and four magnets 5168 may indicate a toner cartridge containing magenta toner. Further, the spacing between magnets 5168 may indicate a characteristic of toner cartridge 100. For example, a first spacing between magnets 5168 (e.g., 45 degrees) may indicate a low capacity toner cartridge and a second spacing between magnets 5168 (e.g., 90 degrees) may indicate a high capacity toner cartridge. Various other aspects of the arrangement of magnet(s) 5168 may communicate characteristics of toner cartridge 100 and various other characteristics may be encoded in magnet(s) 5168 as desired.

[0092] The foregoing description illustrates various aspects of the present disclosure. It is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, it is chosen to illustrate the principles of the present disclosure and its practical application to enable one of ordinary skill in the art to utilize the present disclosure, including its various modifications that naturally follow. All modifications and variations are contemplated within the scope of the present disclosure as determined by the appended claims. Relatively apparent modifications include combining one or more features of various embodiments with features of other embodiments.

CLAIMS

1. A toner cartridge for an electrophotographic image forming device, comprising:
 - a housing having a top, a bottom, a front, and a rear positioned between a first side and a second side of the housing, the housing having a reservoir for storing toner;
 - an outlet port in fluid communication with the reservoir and positioned on the front of the housing near the first side of the housing for exiting toner from the toner cartridge;
 - an interface gear exposed on the front of the housing near the top of the second side of the housing for engaging with a corresponding drive gear in the image forming device;
 - a magnet movable in response to rotation of the interface gear; and
 - an engagement member positioned on an exterior of the top of the housing proximate the second side of the housing, the engagement member is aligned with a point in a path of movement of the magnet, the engagement member has a front surface that is unobstructed to contact and push a sensor housing in the image forming device supporting a magnetic sensor to an operating position of the magnetic sensor during insertion of the toner cartridge into the image forming device.
2. The toner cartridge of claim 1, wherein the magnet passes in close proximity to an inner surface of the housing forming the reservoir at a location where the engagement member is positioned on the exterior of the housing during rotation of the interface gear.
3. The toner cartridge of claim 1, wherein the engagement member projects upward from the top of the housing.
4. The toner cartridge of claim 1, wherein the front surface of the engagement member includes a pair of front engagement surfaces spaced apart from each other along a side-to-side dimension of the housing and aligned with each other along a front-to-rear dimension of the housing.
5. The toner cartridge of claim 1, wherein the engagement member includes a pair of side engagement surfaces that face each other, the side engagement surfaces are spaced apart from each other along a side-to-side dimension of the housing and are aligned with each other along a front-to-rear dimension of the housing.

6. The toner cartridge of claim 1, further comprising a ramp positioned on the exterior of the housing in front of the engagement member and leading toward the engagement member, a top surface of the ramp inclines upward as the ramp extends toward the engagement member.

7. The toner cartridge of claim 6, further comprising a planar top surface that extends rearward from a rear end of the ramp to the engagement member, the planar top surface is substantially horizontal when the toner cartridge is in its operative orientation.

8. A toner cartridge for an electrophotographic image forming device, comprising:

a housing having a top, a bottom, a front, and a rear positioned between a first side and a second side of the housing, the housing having a reservoir for storing toner;

an outlet port in fluid communication with the reservoir and positioned on the front of the housing near the first side of the housing for exiting toner from the toner cartridge;

an interface gear exposed on the front of the housing near the top of the second side of the housing for engaging with a corresponding drive gear in the image forming device;

a magnet movable in response to rotation of the interface gear; and

a projection on an exterior of the top of the housing proximate the second side of the housing, the projection is aligned with a point in a path of movement of the magnet, the projection has a front surface that is unobstructed to contact and push a sensor housing in the image forming device supporting a magnetic sensor to an operating position of the magnetic sensor during insertion of the toner cartridge into the image forming device.

9. The toner cartridge of claim 8, wherein the magnet passes in close proximity to an inner surface of the housing forming the reservoir at a location where the projection is positioned on the exterior of the housing during rotation of the interface gear.

10. The toner cartridge of claim 8, wherein the front surface of the projection includes a pair of front engagement surfaces spaced apart from each other along a side-to-side dimension of the housing and aligned with each other along a front-to-rear dimension of the housing.

11. The toner cartridge of claim 8, wherein the projection includes a pair of side engagement surfaces that face each other, the side engagement surfaces are spaced apart from each other along a side-to-side dimension of the housing and are aligned with each other along a front-to-rear dimension of the housing.

12. The toner cartridge of claim 8, further comprising a ramp positioned on the exterior of the housing in front of the projection and leading toward the projection, a top surface of the ramp inclines upward as the ramp extends toward the projection.

13. The toner cartridge of claim 12, further comprising a planar top surface that extends rearward from a rear end of the ramp to the projection, the planar top surface is substantially horizontal when the toner cartridge is in its operative orientation.

14. A toner cartridge for an electrophotographic image forming device, comprising:

a housing having a top, a bottom, a front, and a rear positioned between a first side and a second side of the housing, the housing having a reservoir for storing toner;

an outlet port in fluid communication with the reservoir and positioned on the front of the housing near the first side of the housing for exiting toner from the toner cartridge;

a rotatable shaft positioned within the reservoir and having an axis of rotation;

an interface gear operatively connected to the rotatable shaft for providing rotational motion to the rotatable shaft, a portion of the interface gear being exposed on the front of the housing near the top of the second side of the housing and engagable with a corresponding drive gear in the image forming device;

a magnet in the reservoir movable in response to rotation of the shaft; and

a U-shaped projection on an exterior of the top of the housing proximate the second side of the housing, the U-shaped projection is aligned with a point in a path of movement of the magnet in the reservoir, the U-shaped projection includes a pair of front engagement surfaces that are spaced axially apart from each other and aligned with each other along a front-to-rear dimension of the housing, the front engagement surfaces are unobstructed to contact and push a sensor housing in the image forming device supporting a magnetic sensor to an operating position of the magnetic sensor during insertion of the toner cartridge into the image forming device.

15. The toner cartridge of claim 14, wherein the magnet is rotatable around the axis of rotation of the shaft in response to rotation of the shaft.
16. The toner cartridge of claim 14, wherein the U-shaped projection is axially aligned with the magnet relative to the axis of rotation of the shaft.
17. The toner cartridge of claim 14, wherein the magnet passes in close proximity to an inner surface of the housing forming the reservoir at a location where the U-shaped projection is positioned on the exterior of the housing.
18. The toner cartridge of claim 14, wherein the U-shaped projection includes a pair of side engagement surfaces that face each other, the side engagement surfaces are spaced axially apart from each other and aligned with each other along a front-to-rear dimension of the housing.
19. The toner cartridge of claim 14, further comprising a ramp positioned on the exterior of the housing in front of the U-shaped projection and leading toward the U-shaped projection, a top surface of the ramp inclines upward as the ramp extends toward the U-shaped projection.
20. The toner cartridge of claim 19, further comprising a planar top surface that extends rearward from a rear end of the ramp to the U-shaped projection, the planar top surface is substantially horizontal when the toner cartridge is in its operative orientation.