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(54) **DUAL FUEL LOCKOUT SWITCH FOR GENERATOR ENGINE**

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC F02D 19/0613; F02D 16/0605; F02D 19/0647; Y02T 10/36
See application file for complete search history.

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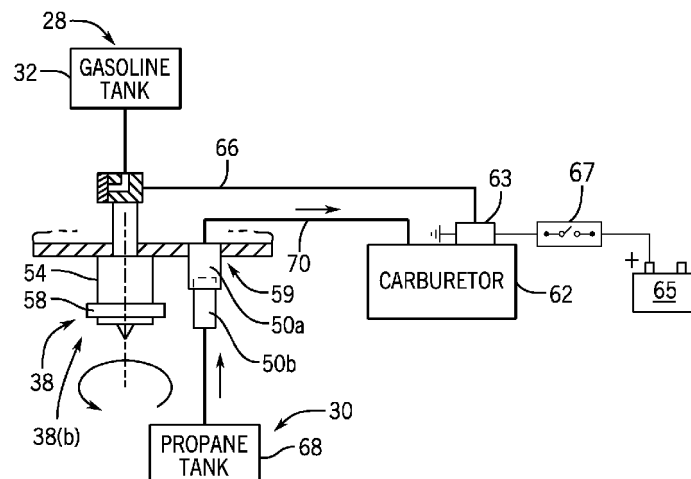
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine includes a mechanical fuel valve actuatable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel engine from a first fuel source through a first fuel line and a second fuel source through a second fuel line. The mechanical fuel lockout switch also includes a fuel lockout apparatus coupled to the mechanical fuel valve. The mechanical fuel lockout switch communicates the first fuel source to the dual fuel engine and prevents communication between the second fuel source and the dual fuel engine when the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position, and communicates the second fuel source to the dual fuel engine and interrupts the first fuel source communication with the dual fuel engine when in the second position.

15 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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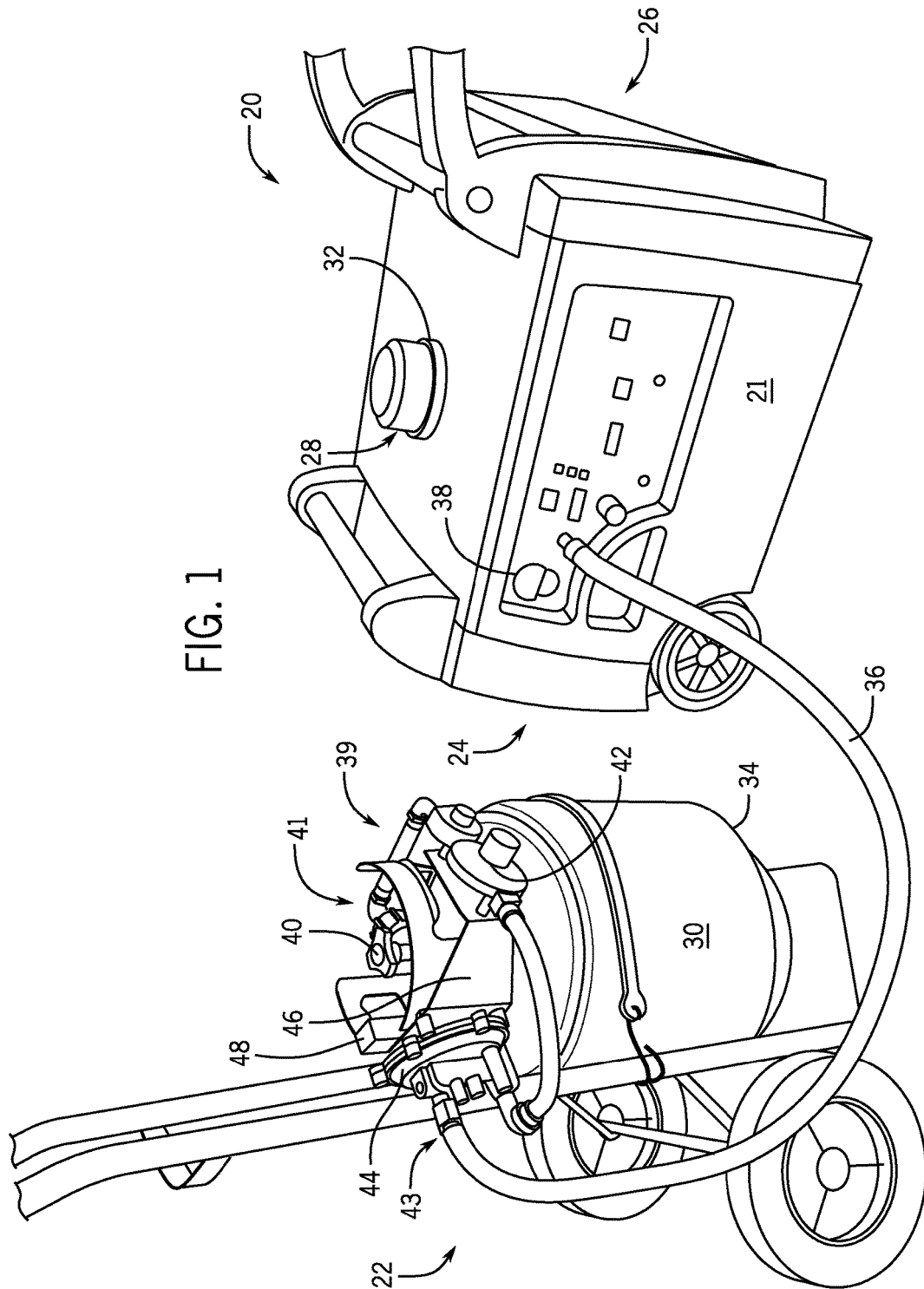
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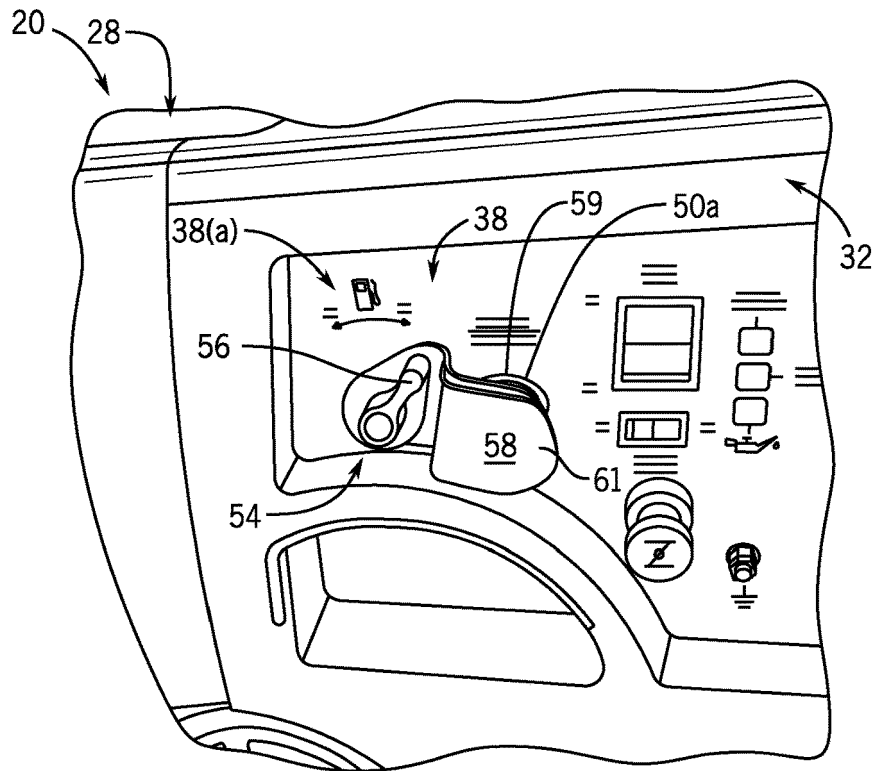


FIG. 2

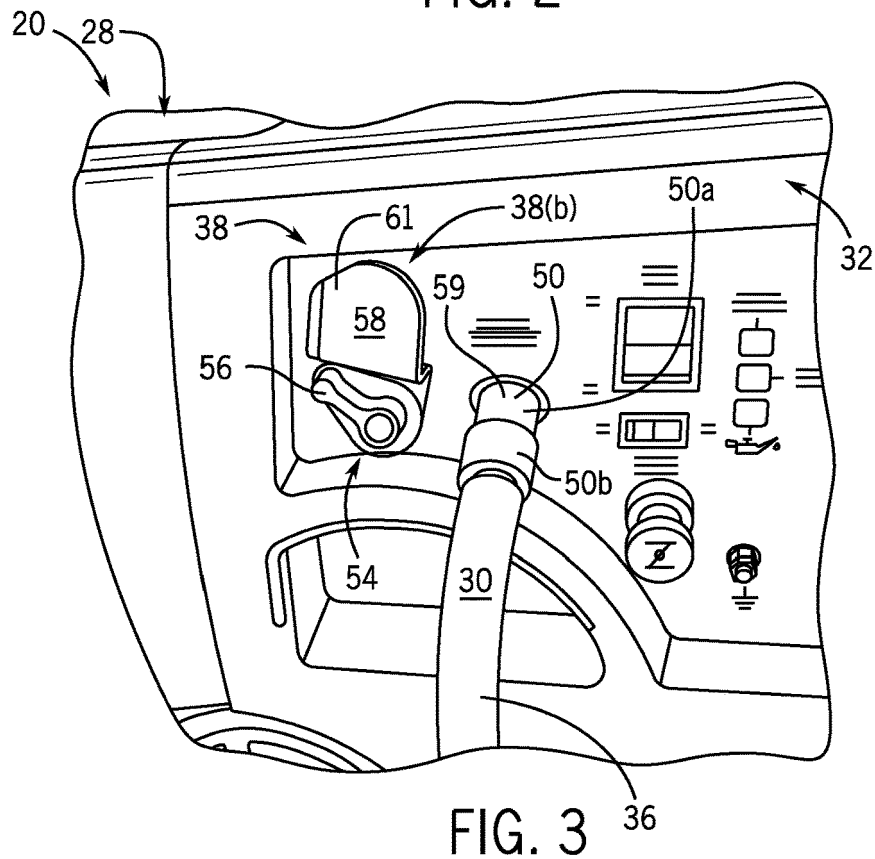


FIG. 3

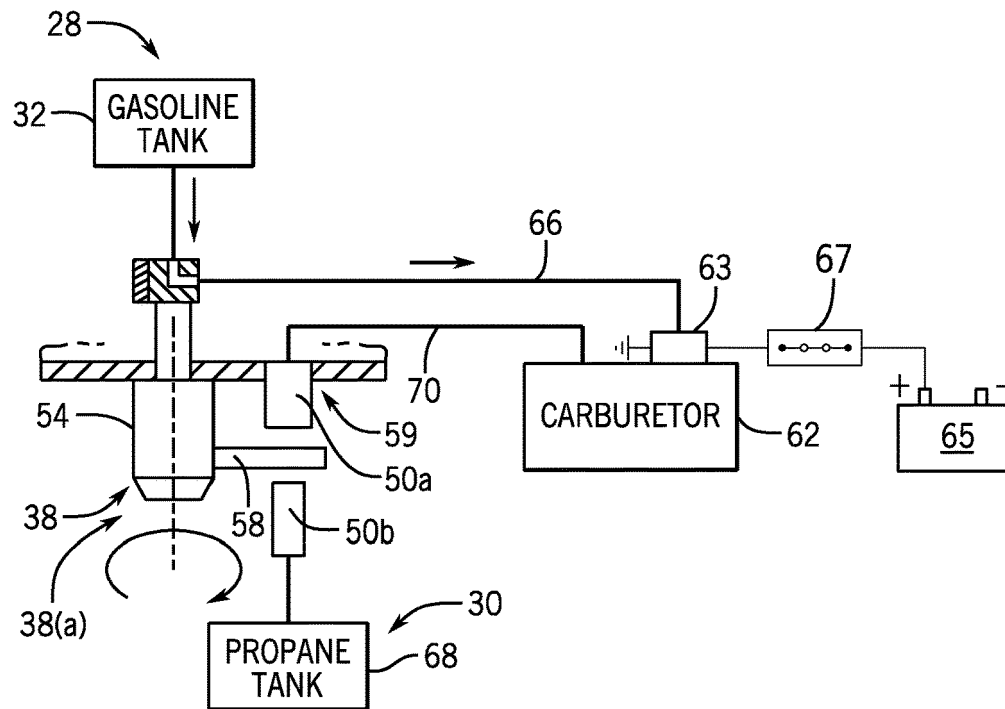


FIG. 4A

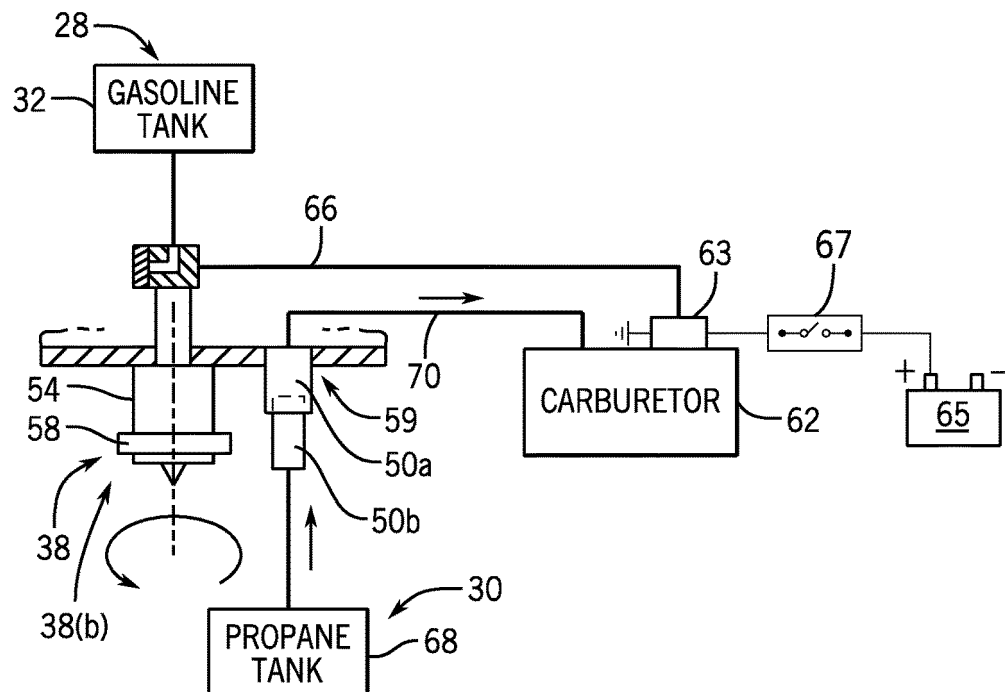


FIG. 4B

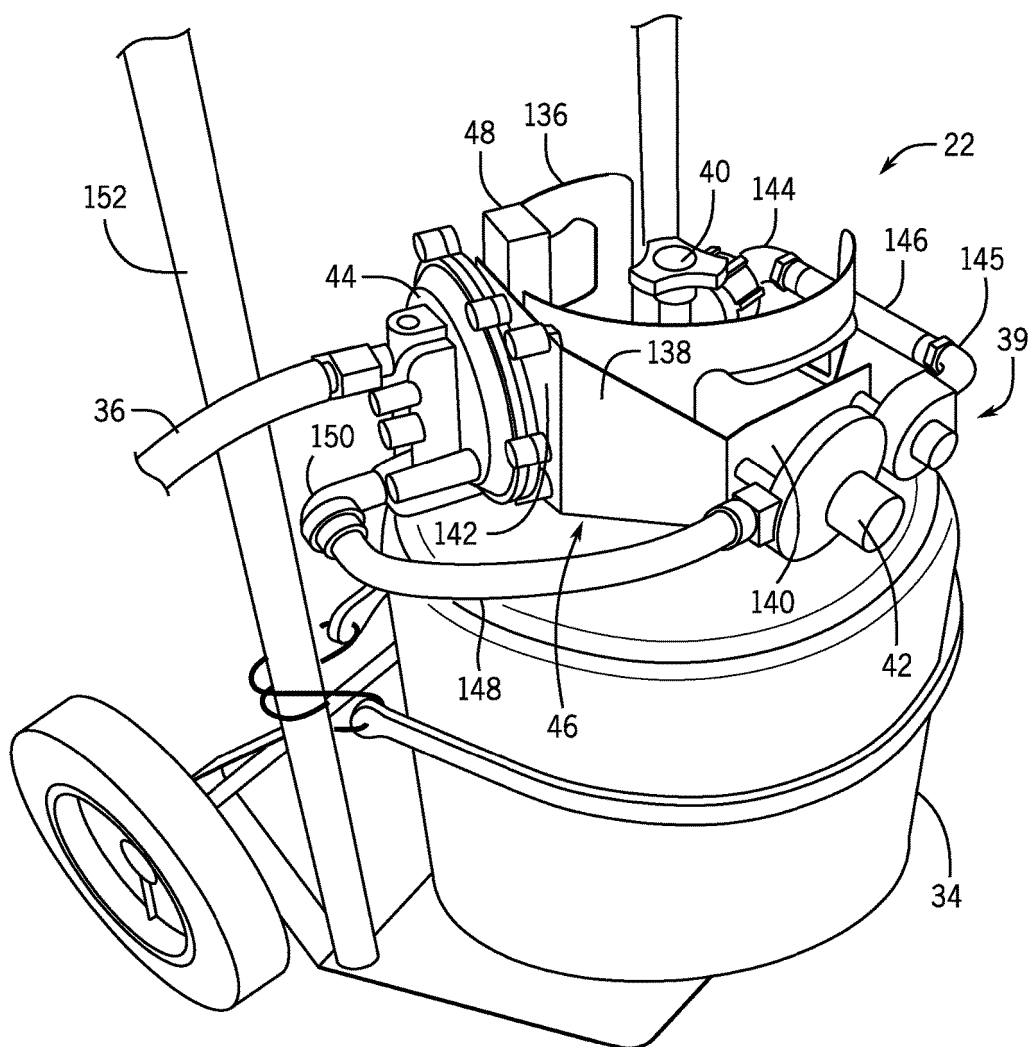


FIG. 5

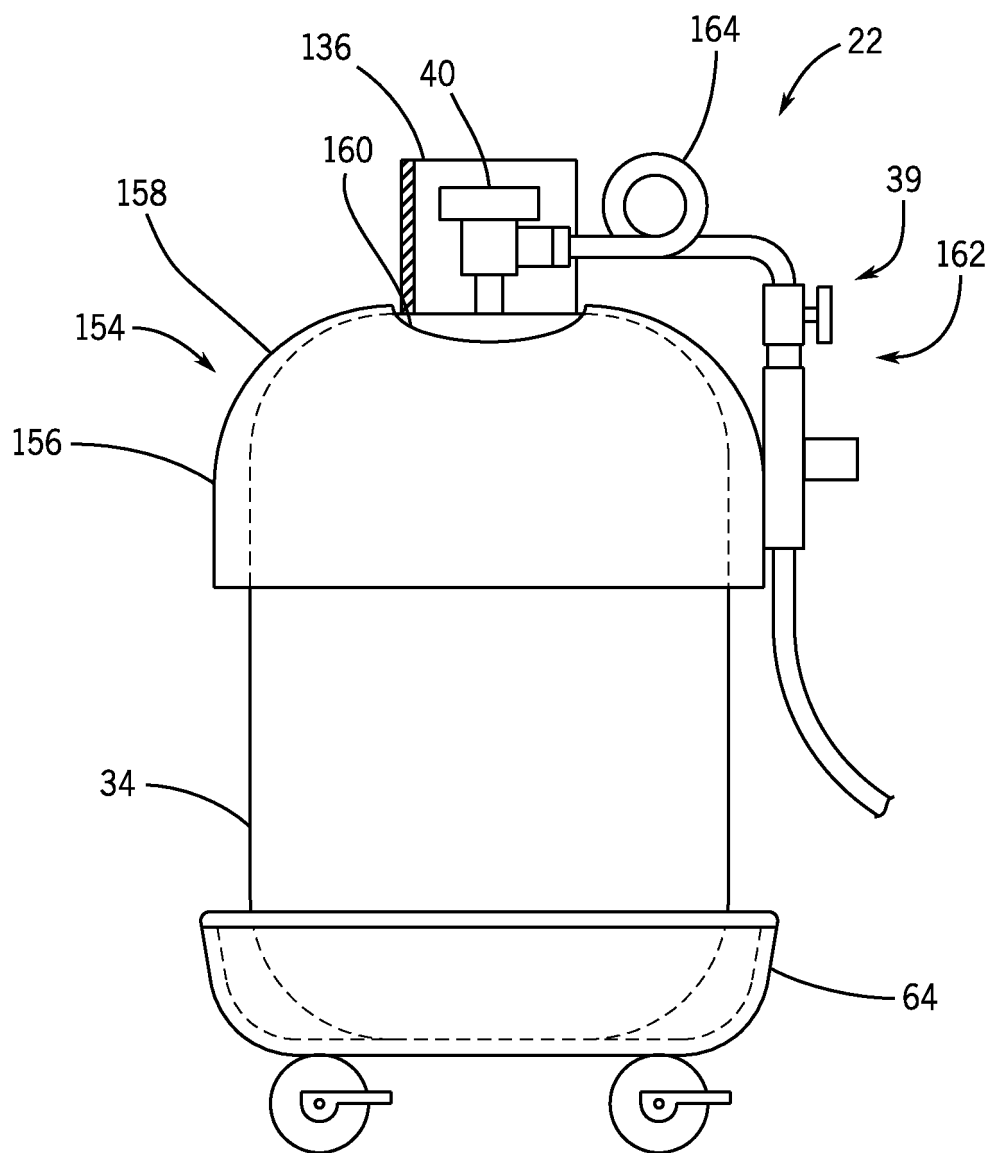


FIG. 6

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DUAL FUEL LOCKOUT SWITCH FOR GENERATOR ENGINE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Embodiments of the invention relate generally to dual fuel generators, and more particularly, to an apparatus and method for delivering liquid fuel and gaseous fuel to a dual fuel generator.

Electric generators are frequently driven by internal combustion engines that use gasoline as a fuel source. Gasoline is a common fuel source for generators in a variety of applications. However, alternative fuel sources also provide a desirable fuel source. For instance, alternative fuels may provide a clean burning fuel that limits hazardous emissions. Alternative fuels may also be stored for long periods of time without degradation, whereas gasoline can degrade over a period of months leading to hard starting, rough running, and also lead to gum and varnish deposit left in the fuel system. In addition, generators that operate on alternative fuels may generate electricity when gasoline is not readily available. For instance, generators are frequently used when power outages in the utility grid result from severe weather. Unfortunately, gas stations may also be closed as a result of the power outage. Such a circumstance presents just one example where it would be advantageous to operate electrical generators on alternative fuels.

Certain generators are configured to operate as "dual fuel" generators, otherwise known as bi-fuel generators. These generators are driven by an internal combustion engine that is configured to operate on a liquid fuel for a period of operation and an alternative fuel for another period of operation. The alternative fuel source may exist in a gaseous state at normal temperature and pressure and can be any one of liquefied petroleum gas, compressed natural gas, hydrogen, or the like. Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), often referred to as propane, exists in a gaseous state at normal temperature and pressure but can be conveniently stored under pressure in a liquid state. LPG may be a desirable fuel source for internal combustion engines because it can be stored for longer periods of time and contains fewer impurities than gasoline, resulting in smoother and cleaner operation, and often resulting in a longer lasting engine.

In order to provide the liquid and gaseous fuel to the engine, the dual fuel engine may have a first fuel line for liquid fuel and a second fuel line for gaseous fuel. A liquid fuel source and a gaseous fuel source may be coupled to the respective lines to provide fuel to the engine. However, a common problem with such configurations that couple two fuel sources to a single engine is the engine can experience overly rich air-fuel ratio when both fuels are simultaneously engaged during cross-over switching between the fuel sources. Further, such simultaneous delivery of fuel from the first fuel line and the second fuel line may make the engine hard to start or lead to unstable operating conditions.

Therefore, it would be desirable to design a dual fuel generator having a liquid fuel and gaseous fuel delivery system that overcomes the aforementioned detriments without substantially increasing the overall cost of the system.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with one aspect of the invention, a mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine provides for the selection of a desired fuel to operate the engine. The mechanical fuel lockout switch includes a mechanical fuel valve and a fuel lockout apparatus. The

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mechanical fuel valve actuates between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel engine from a first fuel source through a first fuel line and a second fuel source through a second fuel line. The fuel lockout apparatus couples to the mechanical fuel valve ensuring individual communication of the fuel sources to the engine. The mechanical fuel lockout switch communicates the first fuel source to the dual fuel engine and prevents communication between the second fuel source and the dual fuel engine when the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position, and communicates the second fuel source to the dual fuel engine and interrupts the first fuel source communication with the dual fuel engine when in the second position.

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a dual fuel generator and fuel delivery system includes a dual fuel generator configured to operate on a liquid fuel supplied from a liquid fuel source through a liquid fuel line and a gaseous fuel supplied from a pressurized fuel source through a gaseous fuel line. The dual fuel generator and fuel delivery system also includes a fuel regulator system located off board the dual fuel generator to control the pressure of fuel from the pressurized fuel source and deliver the fuel at a desired pressure for operation of the generator. The fuel regulator system includes a primary pressure regulator coupled to a service valve of the pressurized fuel source and configured to regulate the fuel supplied from the pressurized fuel source to a reduced pressure. The fuel regulator system also includes a secondary pressure regulator coupled to the primary pressure regulator and configured to regulate the gaseous fuel supplied from the primary pressure regulator to a desired pressure for delivery through the gaseous fuel line to operate the dual fuel generator. The dual fuel generator and fuel delivery system further includes a mechanical fuel valve actuatable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel generator from the liquid fuel source through the liquid fuel line and the pressurized fuel source through the gaseous fuel line.

In accordance with yet another aspect of the invention, a method of assembling a mechanical fuel lockout switch for an internal combustion engine includes providing an internal combustion engine configured to operate on a fuel from a first fuel source and a different fuel from a second fuel source. The method also includes coupling a mechanical fuel valve to the internal combustion engine actuatable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the internal combustion engine from the first fuel source through a first fuel line and the second fuel source through a second fuel line. The method further includes coupling a fuel lockout apparatus to the mechanical fuel valve. When the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position, the fuel lockout apparatus communicates the first fuel source to the internal combustion engine and prevents the second fuel source from coupling to the internal combustion engine, and actuation of the mechanical fuel valve to the second position causes the fuel lockout apparatus to permit the second fuel source to couple to the internal combustion engine, and interrupts the first fuel source communication with the internal combustion engine.

Various other features and advantages will be made apparent from the following detailed description and the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The drawings illustrate preferred embodiments presently contemplated for carrying out the invention.

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In the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a dual fuel generator coupled to a fuel delivery system, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a detail view of a portion of the generator of FIG. 1 about a mechanical fuel lockout switch with the switch in a first position, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 3 is a detail view similar to FIG. 2 and showing the mechanical fuel lockout switch in a second position, with an LPG supply line connected thereto, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 4A is a schematic diagram of a fuel system for the dual fuel generator of FIG. 1 showing a liquid fuel source in communication with a carburetor of the generator consistent with the first position of the switch as shown in FIG. 2, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 4B is a schematic diagram of the fuel system of FIG. 4A showing a gaseous fuel source in communication with a carburetor of the generator of FIG. 1 consistent with the second position of the switch as shown in FIG. 3, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a fuel delivery system for the dual fuel generator of FIG. 1, according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 6 is a side view of a fuel delivery system for the dual fuel generator of FIG. 1, according to an embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The operating environment of the invention is described with respect to a dual fuel generator. However, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the invention is equally applicable for use with any dual fuel internal combustion engine. Moreover, the invention will be described with respect to a dual fuel generator configured to operate on a liquid fuel and a gaseous fuel. However, one skilled in the art will further appreciate that the invention is equally applicable for use with other fuel combinations for dual fuel generators and internal combustion engines.

Referring to FIG. 1, a dual fuel generator 20 is coupled to a fuel delivery system 22, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. Dual fuel generator 20 includes an internal combustion engine (not shown) within housing 21 at one end 24, operatively connected to an alternator also enclosed in housing 21 at another end 26, by conventional means. Dual fuel generator 20 is configured to operate on different fuels via either a first fuel source 28 or a second fuel source 30. In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, first fuel source 28 is a liquid fuel and second fuel source 30 is a gaseous fuel. The liquid fuel may be gasoline and the gaseous fuel may be liquid petroleum gas (LPG). Each can selectively operate the generator as desired and controlled by an operator. For instance, generator 20 may operate on gasoline for a first period of operation and then switch to LPG for a second period of operation. However, it is contemplated that dual fuel generator 20 is configured to operate on fuels other than gasoline and LPG (e.g., natural gas, biodiesel, etc.), and thus the scope of the invention is not meant to be limited strictly to a dual fuel arrangement where first fuel source 28 provides gasoline and second fuel source 30 provides LPG.

In one embodiment of the invention, dual fuel generator 20 includes a gasoline tank 32 or, generally, a liquid fuel tank, located inside cover 21 onboard generator 20 to

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provide gasoline to the engine as first fuel source 28. Gasoline tank 32 connects to a first fuel line to provide gasoline to the carburetor to run the engine, as will later be described with reference to FIGS. 4A and 4B. Generator 20 is also coupled to a pressurized fuel container 34, or a pressurized fuel source, located off board generator 20 to provide LPG to the engine as second fuel source 30. Pressurized fuel container 34 is coupled to generator 20 with an LPG supply hose 36. LPG supply hose 36 is coupled to a second fuel line within generator 20 to provide LPG to the carburetor to run the engine. Dual fuel generator 20 includes a mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 for selecting a desired fuel to be provided to the engine. The mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 is actuated to select first fuel source 28 when in a first position, as shown in FIG. 2, and alternately to select second fuel source 30 when in a second position, as shown in FIG. 3.

Referring back to FIG. 1, in an exemplary embodiment, fuel 30 from pressurized fuel container 34 is regulated using a fuel regulator system 39 for delivery to the engine. Fuel regulator system 39 includes one or more pressure regulators that reduce and control the pressure of the fuel from pressurized fuel container 34 and delivers fuel at a desired pressure for operation of the engine. Fuel regulator system 39 has an inlet 41 operatively coupled to a service valve 40 of pressurized fuel container 34 and an outlet 43 coupled to LPG supply hose 36. Fuel regulator system 39 includes a primary pressure regulator 42 coupled to pressurized fuel container 34 and a secondary pressure regulator 44. Primary pressure regulator 42 protects downstream components from high pressure of pressurized fuel container 34. Primary pressure regulator 42 receives LPG through service valve 40 of pressurized fuel container 34 and reduces the pressure of the LPG to a first stage. In one embodiment of the invention, the first stage may be delivered directly to generator 20 at a pressure required for operation of the engine.

In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, fuel regulator system 39 includes secondary pressure regulator 44 coupled to the outlet of primary pressure regulator 42 in order to use standard "off-the-shelf" components. Typically, the primary pressure regulator is mounted on the LPG tank, while the secondary pressure regulator is mounted on the component using the fuel, such as an engine or grill. Here, since generator 20 can be used as a gasoline only generator, secondary pressure regulator 44 is mounted off-board the generator to reduce size and cost of the generator. Secondary pressure regulator 44 receives LPG from primary pressure regulator 42 and further reduces the pressure of LPG to a second stage to be delivered to generator 20. In a system with two regulators, primary pressure regulator 42 regulates fuel received from pressurized fuel container 34 and reduces the pressure of the fuel to a level required for operation of secondary pressure regulator 44. Secondary pressure regulator 44 regulates fuel received from primary pressure regulator 42 and further reduces the pressure of the fuel to a level required for operation of generator 20. In addition, primary pressure regulator 42 may compensate for varying tank pressure as fuel is depleted while secondary pressure regulator 44 may compensate for varying demand from generator 20.

In accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the invention, fuel regulator system 39 includes both the primary and secondary regulators, or a custom single regulator, but in any case is located remotely, or off-board, from dual fuel generator 20. Fuel regulator system 39 may be directly mounted to pressurized fuel container 34 using a regulator mounting bracket 46. Regulator mounting bracket 46 has

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mounting locations for primary pressure regulator 42 and secondary pressure regulator 44. Regulator mounting bracket 46 also has a securing mechanism 48 to secure regulator mounting bracket 46 to pressurized fuel container 34.

In another embodiment of the invention, primary pressure regulator 42 is mounted on regulator mounting bracket 46 while secondary pressure regulator 44 could be mounted on or near generator 20. In yet another embodiment of the invention, a dual stage regulator may regulate the fuel received from pressurized fuel container 34 and deliver fuel at a pressure required for operation of generator 20. Such a dual stage regulator may regulate the fuel to the second stage within a single structure. The dual stage regulator may be mounted directly on fuel container 34.

Referring to FIG. 2, a detail view of a portion of generator 20 of FIG. 1 depicts mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 in a first position 38(a), in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. In this position, mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 provides gasoline flow from gasoline tank 32 to the engine while preventing connection of an LPG supply line to fuel inlet 59 of the second fuel line, as will later be discussed in detail with reference to FIGS. 4A and 4B. Still referring to FIG. 2, mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 provides a combination liquid fuel shutoff valve and a gaseous fuel supply lockout that prevents simultaneous delivery of fuel to the engine from gasoline tank 32 and pressurized fuel container 34, FIG. 1. As such, mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 provides a fuel selector to ensure only the selected fuel is provided to dual fuel generator 20.

Mechanical fuel lockout switch 38, FIG. 2, includes mechanical fuel valve 54 actuatable between first position 38(a) as shown in FIG. 2 and second position 38(b) as shown in FIG. 3 to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel engine from first fuel source 28 through a first fuel line and second fuel source 30 through a second fuel line 36. Mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 may also include fuel lockout apparatus 58 coupled to mechanical fuel valve 54 to communicate fuel sources individually to generator 20. In one embodiment of the invention, fuel lockout apparatus 58 communicates first fuel source 28 to the engine by actuating mechanical fuel valve 54 to first position 38(a) to open the first fuel line as shown in FIG. 2, and communicates second fuel source 30 to the engine by actuating mechanical fuel valve 54 to second position 38(b) to open communication of the second fuel source 30 to the engine as shown in FIG. 3. Referring back to FIG. 2, when mechanical fuel valve 54 is in first position 38(a), fuel lockout apparatus 58 communicates first fuel source 28 to the dual fuel engine and prevents communication between the second fuel source and the dual fuel engine.

In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, mechanical fuel valve 54 controls the flow of LPG to the engine by actuating fuel lockout apparatus 58 to block or unblock fuel inlet 59 for the second fuel source. Mechanical fuel valve 54 is coupled to the first fuel line, as shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B, and therefore can control the flow of gasoline to the engine by opening and closing the first fuel line. When the mechanical fuel valve 54, FIG. 2, is in the first position 38(a), gasoline flows from the gasoline tank to the engine and the fuel lockout apparatus 58 blocks the fuel inlet 59. Accordingly, fuel lockout apparatus 58 prevents LPG flow to generator 20 when the mechanical fuel valve 54 is in first position 38(a) wherein the engine is operated on gasoline.

Mechanical fuel valve 54 includes a fuel valve handle 56 to control the opening and closing of the valve. Fuel valve handle 56 is movable between first position 38(a) as shown

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in FIG. 2 and second position 38(b) as shown in FIG. 3. Mechanical fuel valve 54 opens the first fuel line (to enable liquid fuel flow to the engine) when fuel valve handle 56 is in the first position, and mechanical fuel valve 54 closes the first fuel line (to prevent liquid fuel flow to the engine) when fuel valve handle 56 is in the second position. Thus, when fuel valve handle 56 is in first position 38(a) as shown in FIG. 2, mechanical fuel valve 54 opens the first fuel line and allows gasoline from gasoline tank 32 to flow to the engine.

Fuel valve handle 56 is coupled to fuel lockout apparatus 58. Fuel valve handle 56 actuates with fuel lockout apparatus 58 to prevent LPG flow to generator 20 when gasoline flow to the generator is enabled. Fuel lockout apparatus 58 is controlled by fuel valve handle 56 so that moving fuel valve handle 56 to the first position causes fuel lockout apparatus 58 to block fuel inlet 59 for LPG, and moving fuel valve handle 56 to the second position causes fuel lockout apparatus 58 to unblock fuel inlet 59 for LPG.

In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, fuel valve handle 56 rotates between the first position and the second position and fuel lockout apparatus 58 is rigidly coupled to the rotating handle. Fuel lockout apparatus 58 may include a fuel inlet cover 61, which may be a flange, coupled to fuel valve handle 56 so that fuel inlet cover 61 rotates with the handle. Fuel inlet cover 61 extends radially outward from fuel valve handle 56 and sweeps over fuel inlet 59 for LPG as fuel valve handle 56 rotates. That is, fuel inlet cover 61 rotates transversely across fuel inlet 59 and blocks access thereto. Accordingly, fuel inlet cover 61 prevents LPG flow to generator 20 when fuel valve handle 56 is in first position 38(a) to allow gasoline to run the engine.

Referring to FIG. 3, a detail view of a portion of generator 20 of FIG. 1 depicts mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 in a second position 38(b), in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. In this position, the mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 provides a disconnect to stop gasoline flow from gasoline tank 32 to the engine while allowing connection of LPG supply hose 36 to fuel inlet 59 of the second fuel line. FIG. 3 further shows LPG supply hose 36 coupling second fuel source 30 to generator 20 to deliver LPG to run the generator.

Mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 includes mechanical fuel valve 54 coupled to fuel lockout apparatus 58 to prevent gasoline flow to generator 20 when LPG from the LPG service hose 36 is supplied to the engine. In one embodiment of the invention, actuation of mechanical fuel valve 54 to second position 38(b) causes fuel lockout apparatus 58 to allow communication of second fuel source 30 to the dual fuel engine, and interrupts the first fuel source 28 communication with the dual fuel engine. The position of fuel lockout apparatus 58 prevents the fuel valve handle 56 from moving to first position 38(a) (FIG. 2) while LPG supply hose 36 is connected to generator 20.

A quick-disconnect hose coupling 50, also referred to as a quick-connect hose coupling, connects LPG supply hose 36 to generator 20 so that LPG supply hose 36 may be quickly attached and detached from generator 20. Hose coupling 50 has a first end 50a mounted on the external surface of generator 20 and coupled to supply the second fuel to the engine. Hose coupling 50 has a second end 50b coupled to the outlet of LPG supply hose 36. Hose coupling 50 has a valve that opens when the couplings are engaged and closes when the couplings are disengaged. As such, quick-disconnect hose coupling 50 automatically opens when connected to enable fuel flow from LPG supply hose 36 to the engine. Hose coupling 50 automatically disconnects fluid communication when disconnected accordingly.

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when the supply hose is detached from generator 20, the coupling 50 is automatically closed so that fuel does not escape and unwanted air does not enter the fuel system.

In one embodiment, fuel inlet cover 61 is coupled to fuel valve handle 56 so that it is spaced apart from the surface of generator 20 to provide clearance for first end 50a of the quick-disconnect hose coupling 50 that protrudes from the surface of generator 20. As shown in FIG. 2, fuel inlet cover 61 blocks off first end 50a of the quick-disconnect hose coupling when fuel valve handle 56 is rotated to first position 38(a) to enable gasoline flow so that fuel inlet cover 61 prevents connection of LPG supply hose 36 (FIG. 3) to generator 20. As shown in FIG. 3, fuel inlet cover 61 uncovers first end 50a of the quick-disconnect hose coupling 50 when fuel valve handle 56 is rotated to second position 38(b) to disable gasoline flow so that fuel inlet cover 61 permits connection of LPG supply hose 36 to generator 20.

To operate generator 20 on LPG, fuel valve handle 56 is turned to second position 38(b) to disable the flow of gasoline to the engine and to expose first end 50a of hose coupling 50 on generator 20. LPG supply hose 36 is then connected to generator 20 via hose coupling 50 to enable the flow of LPG to the engine. To operate generator 20 on gasoline, LPG supply hose 36 is disconnected from generator 20 via hose coupling 50 to disable the flow of LPG to the engine and to unblock fuel valve handle 56 from rotating to the first position. As shown in FIG. 2, fuel valve handle 56 is then turned to first position 38(a) to enable the flow of gasoline to generator 20.

Referring to FIG. 4A, a schematic diagram of a fuel system for a dual fuel engine shows mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 in first position 38(a) to provide communication between the first fuel source 28 and dual fuel carburetor 62, according to an embodiment of the invention. Mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 prevents communication between second fuel source 30 and dual fuel carburetor 62 when the switch is in first position 38(a). In one embodiment of the invention, first fuel source 28 includes a gasoline tank 32 to provide gasoline to carburetor 62 through a first fuel line 66, and second fuel source 30 includes a propane or LPG tank 68 to provide propane or LPG to carburetor 62 through a second fuel line 70. Accordingly, first fuel line 66 may be a liquid fuel line and second fuel line 70 may be a gaseous fuel line.

Mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 includes a mechanical fuel valve 54 actuatable between first position 38(a) as shown in FIG. 4A and second position 38(b) as shown in FIG. 4B to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel engine from first fuel source 28 through first fuel line 66 and second fuel source 30 through second fuel line 70. Referring back to FIG. 4A, mechanical fuel valve 54 selectively controls fuel flow through first fuel line 66 by opening the line when the mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 actuates to first position 38(a). Mechanical fuel valve 54 may be coupled to fuel lockout apparatus 58 that actuates with mechanical fuel valve 54 to block and unblock fuel inlet 59 of second fuel line 70. First end 50a of the quick-disconnect hose coupling is located at fuel inlet 59 and a mating end 50b of the quick-disconnect hose coupling is coupled to the propane or LPG tank 68. Actuation of mechanical fuel valve 54 to first position 38(a) causes fuel lockout apparatus 58 to block fuel inlet 59 to prevent coupling the first end 50a and second end 50b of the quick-disconnect hose coupling together, and actuation of mechanical fuel valve 54 to another position causes fuel lockout apparatus 58 to unblock fuel inlet 59 to permit attaching first end 50a and second end 50b together.

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In one embodiment of the invention, a fuel cut solenoid 63 couples to carburetor 62 to regulate liquid fuel flow into a main nozzle within the carburetor. Fuel cut solenoid 63 is advantageous to control liquid fuel flow downstream of a float bowl in the carburetor and can stop fuel flow to the engine immediately after ignition shutdown. As such, fuel cut solenoid 63 prevents the engine from drawing in fuel from the float bowl while the engine shuts off. Fuel cut solenoid 63 also traps fuel in the float bowl to eliminate delay in filling the bowl when starting the engine on liquid fuel, and prevents liquid fuel flow from the float bowl to the engine when starting on gaseous fuel.

Fuel cut solenoid 63 may regulate fuel flow through multiple fuel lines in carburetor 62 that provide fuel from the float bowl to the engine. For instance, carburetor 62 may have a main fuel line and an idle fuel line that receive fuel from the float bowl. Fuel cut solenoid 63 may control fuel flow through all of the fuel lines that receive fuel from the float bowl or may regulate only some of the fuel lines. As such, fuel cut solenoid 63 may block fuel flow through the main fuel line while small amounts of fuel can flow through the idle fuel line.

Fuel cut solenoid 63 preferably operates as a normally closed valve that opens when powered by a 12 volt battery 65, although fuel cut solenoid 63 may also be operated as a normally open valve. The normally closed valve is opened for gasoline mode to allow gasoline flow to the engine and closed for LPG mode to prevent gasoline flow to the engine. Fuel cut solenoid 63 is operated by an electrical switch 67 which may be mechanically actuated and controlled by mechanical fuel lockout switch 38. As such, actuation of mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 to first position 38(a) closes electrical switch 67 to power and open fuel cut solenoid 63 as represented in FIG. 4A, and actuation of mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 to second position 38(b) opens electrical switch 67 to interrupt power and close fuel cut solenoid 63 as represented in FIG. 4B.

Referring to FIG. 4B, a schematic diagram of a fuel system for a dual fuel engine shows mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 in second position 38(b) to provide communication between second fuel source 30 and dual fuel carburetor 62, according to an embodiment of the invention. Mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 prevents communication between first fuel source 28 and dual fuel carburetor 62 when the switch is in second position 38(b). The dual fuel engine has a first fuel line 66 to provide fuel from first fuel source 28 to carburetor 62 and a second fuel line 70 to provide fuel from second fuel source 30 to carburetor 62.

Mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 includes mechanical fuel valve 54 that selectively controls fuel flow through first fuel line 66 by closing the line when mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 actuates to second position 38(b). Mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 may also include a mechanical lockout apparatus 58 to block and unblock fuel inlet 59 of the second fuel line 70. Fuel inlet 59 may include first end 50a of the quick-connect hose coupling mounted on the generator and coupled to second fuel line 70. Second end 50b of the quick-connect hose coupling is coupled to the outlet of second fuel source 30, and the first end 50a mates with second end 50b to quickly attach propane or LPG tank 68 to second fuel line 70. Fuel lockout apparatus 58 may also hold mechanical fuel lockout switch 38 in second position 38(b) when the propane or LPG tank 68 is coupled to the engine via the ends 50a, 50b of the quick-connect hose coupling.

Fuel cut solenoid 63 couples to carburetor 62 to regulate liquid fuel flow through the carburetor as described with respect to FIG. 4A. FIG. 4B shows electrical switch 67

opened to interrupt power and close fuel cut solenoid **63** for LPG mode when mechanical fuel lockout switch **38** is in second position **38(b)**.

FIGS. 4A and 4B depict an embodiment where mechanical fuel valve **54** operates along first fuel line **66** to provide a flow path for first fuel source **28** to carburetor **62** when the valve is in first position **38(a)**. That is, mechanical fuel valve **54** may control a single fuel line that runs through the valve while operating fuel lockout apparatus **58** to control fuel flow through second fuel line **70**. Embodiments of the invention also contemplate mechanical fuel valve **54** configured to operate along second fuel line **70** to provide a flow path for second fuel source **30** to carburetor **62** when the valve is in second position **38(b)**. Mechanical fuel valve **54** may be configured to control multiple fuel lines that run through the valve according to embodiments of the invention.

Referring now to FIG. 5, a perspective view of fuel delivery system **22** for dual fuel generator **20** of FIG. 1 is shown, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. Fuel delivery system **22** includes a mounting arrangement for fuel regulator system **39**. The mounting arrangement includes regulator mounting bracket **46** for mounting fuel regulator system **39**. Regulator mounting bracket **46** extends around the outer periphery of collar **136** on pressurized fuel container **34**. Regulator mounting bracket **46** has securing mechanism **48** to secure to collar **136**. In one embodiment, securing mechanism **48** is a rigid component that extends inward from regulator mounting bracket **46** with a slot for receiving collar **136** to hold regulator mounting bracket **46** to collar **136**.

Regulator mounting bracket **46** provides mounting locations for pressure regulators. In one embodiment, regulator mounting bracket **46** is made of sheet metal bent in two locations to provide a central panel **138**, a first outer panel **140**, and a second outer panel **142** for mounting the regulators. The panels may be angled from each other such that regulator mounting bracket **46** fits around collar **136**. Primary pressure regulator **42** mounts on first outer panel **140** and secondary pressure regulator **44** mounts on second outer panel **142**. The panels are sized according to their respective regulators. Accordingly, second outer panel **142** is larger than first outer panel **140** if secondary pressure regulator **44** is larger than primary pressure regulator **42**. Panels **140**, **142** have fasteners or openings to receive fasteners to couple respective regulators **42**, **44** to the panels. Regulator mounting bracket **46** rests on top of pressurized fuel container **34** and engages the periphery of collar **136** to support fuel regulator system **39** on the container.

In one embodiment of the invention, primary pressure regulator **42** couples to two ninety degree elbows **144**, **145** to reach around collar **136** in order to couple to service valve **40**. The two elbows **144**, **145** are joined by a hose or pipe **146** that leads from elbow **144** at service valve **40** to elbow **145** at the outer periphery of collar **136**. The outlet of primary pressure regulator **42** couples to a hose **148** that extends to another ninety degree elbow **150** coupled to the inlet of secondary pressure regulator **44**. Secondary pressure regulator **44** couples to LPG supply hose **36**. Pressurized fuel container **34** may be strapped to a dolly **152**.

Referring now to FIG. 6, a side view of another fuel delivery system **22** for dual fuel generator **20** of FIG. 1 is shown, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. Fuel delivery system **22** includes a mounting arrangement for fuel regulator system **39**. The mounting arrangement includes a regulator mounting structure **154** for mounting fuel regulator system **39** to pressurized fuel container **34**.

Regulator mounting structure **154** includes a cylinder **156** that surrounds the circumference of pressurized fuel container **34** to secure regulator mounting structure **154** radially along the circumference of pressurized fuel container **34**. Cylinder **156** couples to a dome **158** to support cylinder **156** relative to the top of pressurized fuel container **34**. Dome **158** has a central opening **160** through which collar **136** of pressurized fuel container **34** extends. Collar **136** of pressurized fuel container **34** extends through dome **158** so that service valve **40** is easily accessible from above regulator mounting structure **154** and so that dome **158** sits on pressurized fuel container **34** around collar **136**.

Regulator mounting structure **154** supports pressure regulators around the outer circumference of cylinder **156**. In some embodiments of the invention, a dual stage pressure regulator **162** functions as both a primary pressure regulator and a secondary pressure regulator in a single integral component, and dual stage pressure regulator **162** may be mounted on regulator mounting structure **154**. In other embodiments in of the invention, primary pressure regulator **42** (FIG. 5) is mounted to service valve **40** while secondary pressure regulator **44** (FIG. 5) is mounted on regulator mounting structure **154**. Alternatively, both primary pressure regulator **42** (FIG. 5) and secondary pressure regulator **44** (FIG. 5) may be mounted on regulator mounting structure **154**.

Fuel regulator system **39** may be coupled to service valve **40** by a flexible connector called a pigtail **164**. Pigtail **164** absorbs shock in the system from pressure surges and from movement of downstream components. Pigtail **164** can be looped to conserve space and therefore pressurized fuel container **34** is referred to as an LPG pig. Accordingly, regulator mounting structure **154** is referred to as a pig hat because it fits on the LPG pig. Pressurized fuel container **34** may be secured to a platform or mobile cart **64** for stability or transportation. In another embodiment, a regulator mounting device, including regulator mounting structure **154** or regulator mounting bracket **46** (FIG. 5), is secured directly to a platform or a mobile cart.

Beneficially, embodiments of the invention provide for a mechanical fuel lockout switch to ensure that two fuels are not simultaneously delivered to a dual fuel internal combustion engine. Embodiments of the invention also provide for a dual fuel generator with a remotely mounted gaseous fuel regulator system.

Therefore, according to one embodiment of the invention, a mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine includes a mechanical fuel valve actuatable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel engine from a first fuel source through a first fuel line and a second fuel source through a second fuel line. The mechanical fuel lockout switch also includes a fuel lockout apparatus coupled to the mechanical fuel valve. The mechanical fuel lockout switch communicates the first fuel source to the dual fuel engine and prevents communication between the second fuel source and the dual fuel engine when the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position, and communicates the second fuel source to the dual fuel engine and interrupts the first fuel source communication with the dual fuel engine when in the second position.

According to another embodiment of the invention, a dual fuel generator and fuel delivery system includes a dual fuel generator configured to operate on a liquid fuel supplied from a liquid fuel source through a liquid fuel line and a gaseous fuel supplied from a pressurized fuel source through a gaseous fuel line. The dual fuel generator and fuel delivery

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system also includes a fuel regulator system located off board the dual fuel generator. The fuel regulator system includes a primary pressure regulator coupled to a service valve of the pressurized fuel source and configured to regulate the fuel supplied from the pressurized fuel source to a reduced pressure. The fuel regulator system also includes a secondary pressure regulator coupled to the primary pressure regulator and configured to regulate the gaseous fuel supplied from the primary pressure regulator to a desired pressure for delivery through the gaseous fuel line to operate the dual fuel generator. The dual fuel generator and fuel delivery system further includes a mechanical fuel valve actuateable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel generator from the liquid fuel source through the liquid fuel line and the pressurized fuel source through the gaseous fuel line.

According to yet another embodiment of the invention, a method of assembling a mechanical fuel lockout switch for an internal combustion engine includes providing an internal combustion engine configured to operate on a fuel from a first fuel source and a different fuel from a second fuel source. The method also includes coupling a mechanical fuel valve to the internal combustion engine actuateable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the internal combustion engine from the first fuel source through a first fuel line and the second fuel source through a second fuel line. The method further includes coupling a fuel lockout apparatus to the mechanical fuel valve. When the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position, the fuel lockout apparatus communicates the first fuel source to the internal combustion engine and prevents the second fuel source from coupling to the internal combustion engine, and actuation of the mechanical fuel valve to the second position causes the fuel lockout apparatus to permit the second fuel source to couple to the internal combustion engine, and interrupts the first fuel source communication with the internal combustion engine.

This written description uses examples to disclose the invention, including the best mode, and also to enable any person skilled in the art to practice the invention, including making and using any devices or systems and performing any incorporated methods. The patentable scope of the invention is defined by the claims, and may include other examples that occur to those skilled in the art. Such other examples are intended to be within the scope of the claims if they have structural elements that do not differ from the literal language of the claims, or if they include equivalent structural elements with insubstantial differences from the literal languages of the claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine comprising:

a mechanical fuel valve actuateable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel engine from a first fuel source through a first fuel line and a second fuel source through a second fuel line; and

a fuel lockout apparatus coupled to the mechanical fuel valve;

wherein the mechanical fuel lockout switch:

communicates the first fuel source to the dual fuel engine and prevents communication between the second fuel source and the dual fuel engine when the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position, and

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communicates the second fuel source to the dual fuel engine and interrupts the first fuel source communication with the dual fuel engine when in the second position; and

wherein the fuel lockout apparatus is configured to:

prevent the second fuel source from coupling to the second fuel line while the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position; and

permit the second fuel source to couple to the second fuel line while the mechanical fuel valve is in the second position.

2. The mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine of claim 1, wherein the fuel lockout apparatus prevents actuation of the mechanical fuel valve to the first position when the second fuel source communicates with the dual fuel engine.

3. The mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine of claim 1, wherein the fuel lockout apparatus comprises a flange rigidly coupled to the mechanical fuel valve that covers an inlet of the second fuel line while the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position and uncovers the inlet of the second fuel line while the mechanical fuel valve is in the second position.

4. The mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine of claim 3, wherein the mechanical fuel valve rotates between the first position and the second position and the flange rotates transversely across the inlet of the second fuel line.

5. The mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine of claim 3, further comprising:

a first end of a quick-disconnect hose coupling attached to the inlet of the second fuel line; and

a second end of the quick-disconnect hose coupling attached to the second fuel source to mate with the first end of the quick-disconnect hose coupling to couple the second fuel source to the second fuel line.

6. The mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine of claim 1, wherein the mechanical fuel valve and the fuel lockout apparatus operate together to ensure that fuel from the first fuel source and fuel from the second fuel source are not simultaneously delivered to the dual fuel engine.

7. The mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine of claim 6, wherein the first fuel source provides liquid fuel from a liquid fuel tank to the dual fuel engine and the second fuel source provides gaseous fuel from a pressurized fuel container to the dual fuel engine.

8. A method of assembling a mechanical fuel lockout switch for an internal combustion engine comprising:

providing an internal combustion engine configured to operate on a fuel from a first fuel source and a different fuel from a second fuel source;

coupling a mechanical fuel valve to the internal combustion engine actuateable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the internal combustion engine from the first fuel source through a first fuel line and the second fuel source through a second fuel line; and

coupling a fuel lockout apparatus to the mechanical fuel valve;

wherein when the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position, the fuel lockout apparatus communicates the first fuel source to the internal combustion engine and prevents the second fuel source from coupling to the internal combustion engine, and actuation of the mechanical fuel valve to the second position causes the fuel lockout apparatus to permit the second fuel source

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to couple to the internal combustion engine, and interrupts the first fuel source communication with the internal combustion engine; and

wherein the fuel lockout apparatus prevents actuation of the mechanical fuel valve to the first position when the second fuel source is coupled to the internal combustion engine.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the fuel lockout apparatus is further configured to:

prevent coupling of the second fuel source to the second fuel line while the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position; and

permit coupling of the second fuel source to the second fuel line while the mechanical fuel valve is in the second position.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the fuel lockout apparatus comprises a fuel inlet cover configured to actuate in unison with the mechanical fuel valve to cover a fuel inlet on the internal combustion engine for the second fuel source when the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position and uncover the fuel inlet when the mechanical fuel valve is in the second position.

11. The method of claim 8, further comprising coupling a fuel regulator system to the second fuel source to reduce fuel pressure therefrom and deliver fuel to the second fuel line at a pressure required for operation of the internal combustion engine.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising mounting the fuel regulator system to the second fuel source located off-board the internal combustion engine.

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13. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

coupling one end of a quick-disconnect hose coupling to an inlet on the internal combustion engine for the second fuel source; and

coupling a mating end of the quick-disconnect hose coupling to an outlet of the fuel regulator system.

14. The method of claim 8, further comprising providing gasoline in a liquid fuel tank as the first fuel source and LPG in a pressurized fuel container as the second fuel source.

15. A mechanical fuel lockout switch for a dual fuel engine comprising:

a mechanical fuel valve actuatable between a first position and a second position to selectively control fuel flow to the dual fuel engine from a first fuel source through a first fuel line and a second fuel source through a second fuel line; and

a fuel lockout apparatus coupled to the mechanical fuel valve;

wherein the mechanical fuel lockout switch:

communicates the first fuel source to the dual fuel engine and prevents communication between the second fuel source and the dual fuel engine when the mechanical fuel valve is in the first position, and communicates the second fuel source to the dual fuel engine and interrupts the first fuel source communication with the dual fuel engine when in the second position; and

wherein the fuel lockout apparatus prevents actuation of the mechanical fuel valve to the first position when the second fuel source communicates with the dual fuel engine.

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