

(12) **United States Patent**  
**Patel et al.**

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(54) **DETECTING ACTUATION OF ELECTRICAL DEVICES USING ELECTRICAL NOISE OVER A POWER LINE**

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**G08B 21/00** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **340/657**; 340/310.11; 340/644

(58) **Field of Classification Search** ..... 340/538, 340/657, 310.11, 310.12, 644; 375/219, 375/220, 240.18, 240.19

See application file for complete search history.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

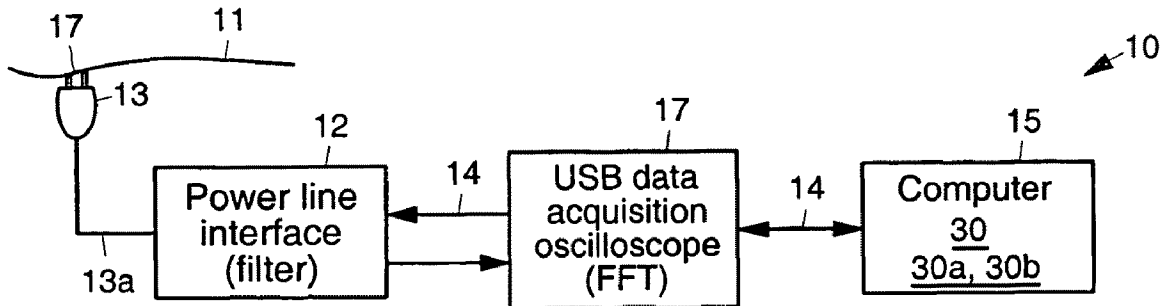
Activity sensing in the home has a variety of important applications, including healthcare, entertainment, home automation, energy monitoring and post-occupancy research studies. Many existing systems for detecting occupant activity require large numbers of sensors, invasive vision systems, or extensive installation procedures. Disclosed is an approach that uses a single plug-in sensor to detect a variety of electrical events throughout the home. This sensor detects the electrical noise on residential power lines created by the abrupt switching of electrical devices and the noise created by certain devices while in operation. Machine learning techniques are used to recognize electrically noisy events such as turning on or off a particular light switch, a television set, or an electric stove. The system has been tested to evaluate system performance over time and in different types of houses. Results indicate that various electrical events can be learned and classified with accuracies ranging from 85-90%.

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**22 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets**



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Fig. 1

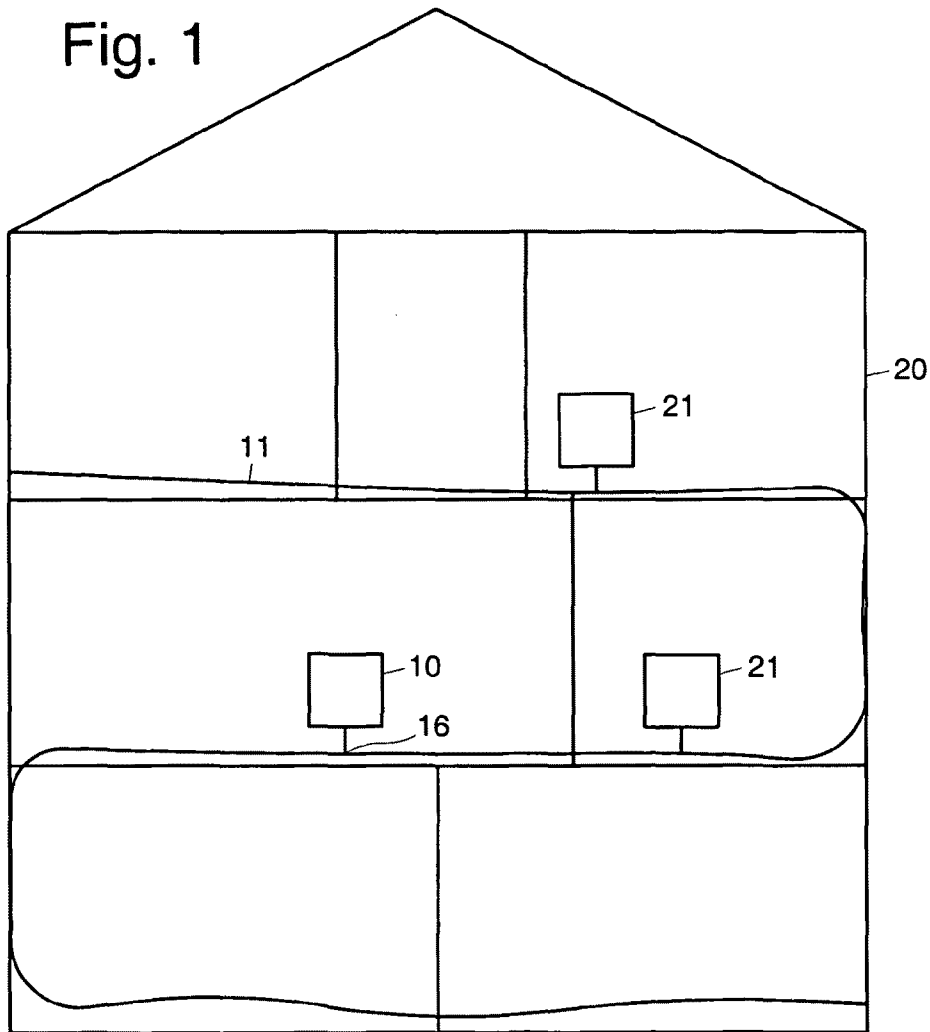


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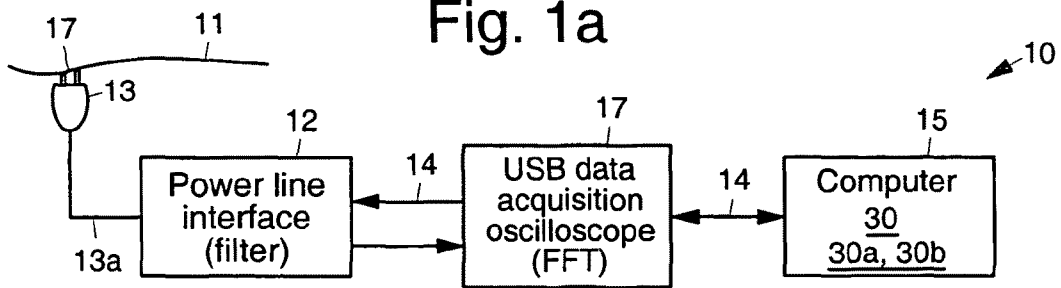


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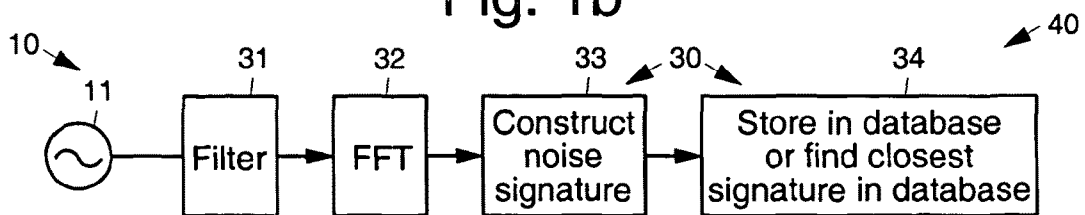


Fig. 2a

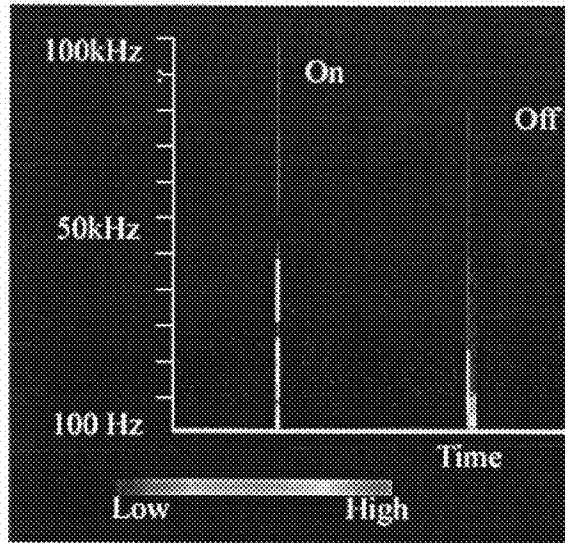


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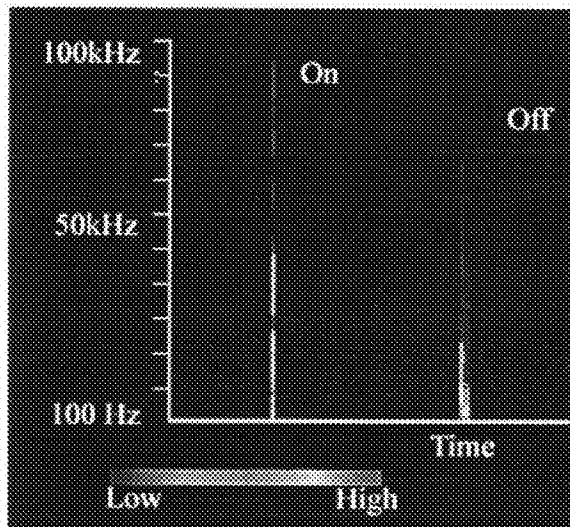


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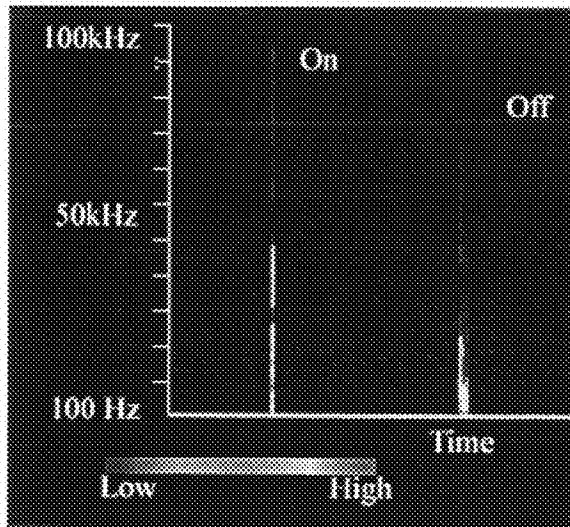


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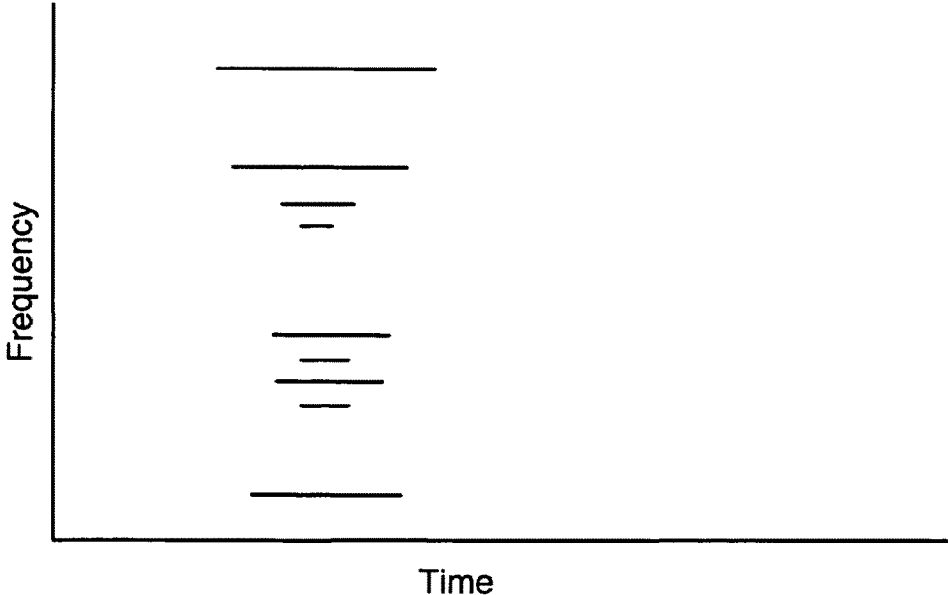


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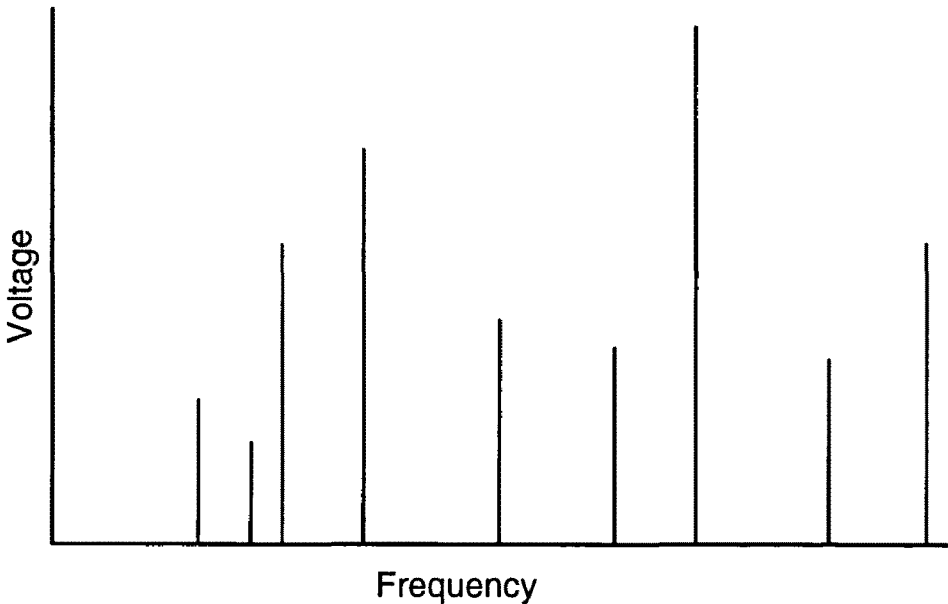


Fig. 3

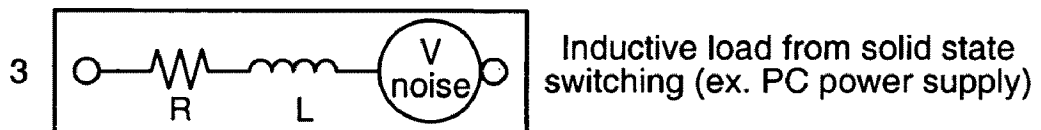
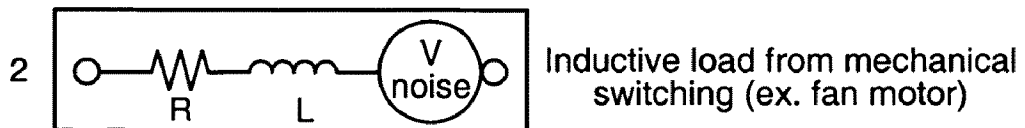
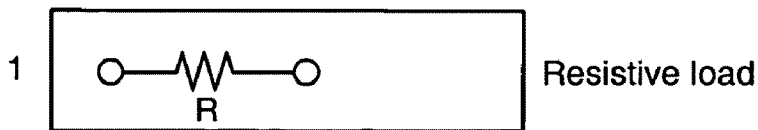
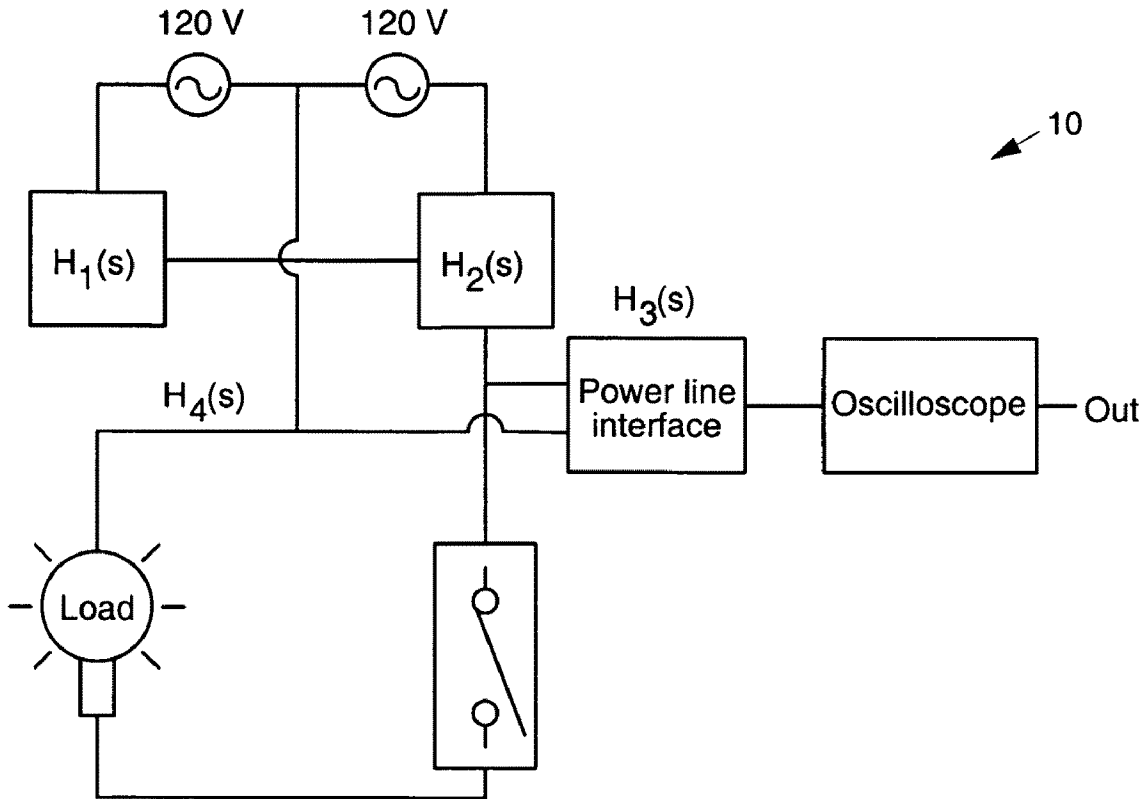




Fig. 4

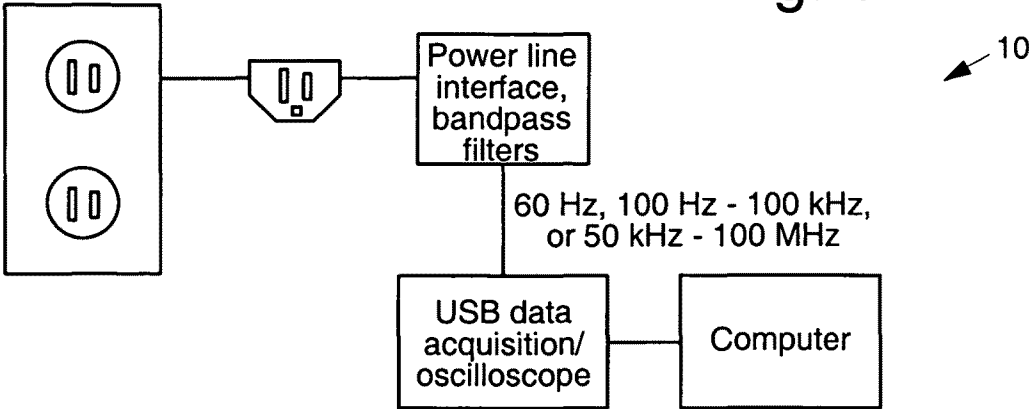


Fig. 6

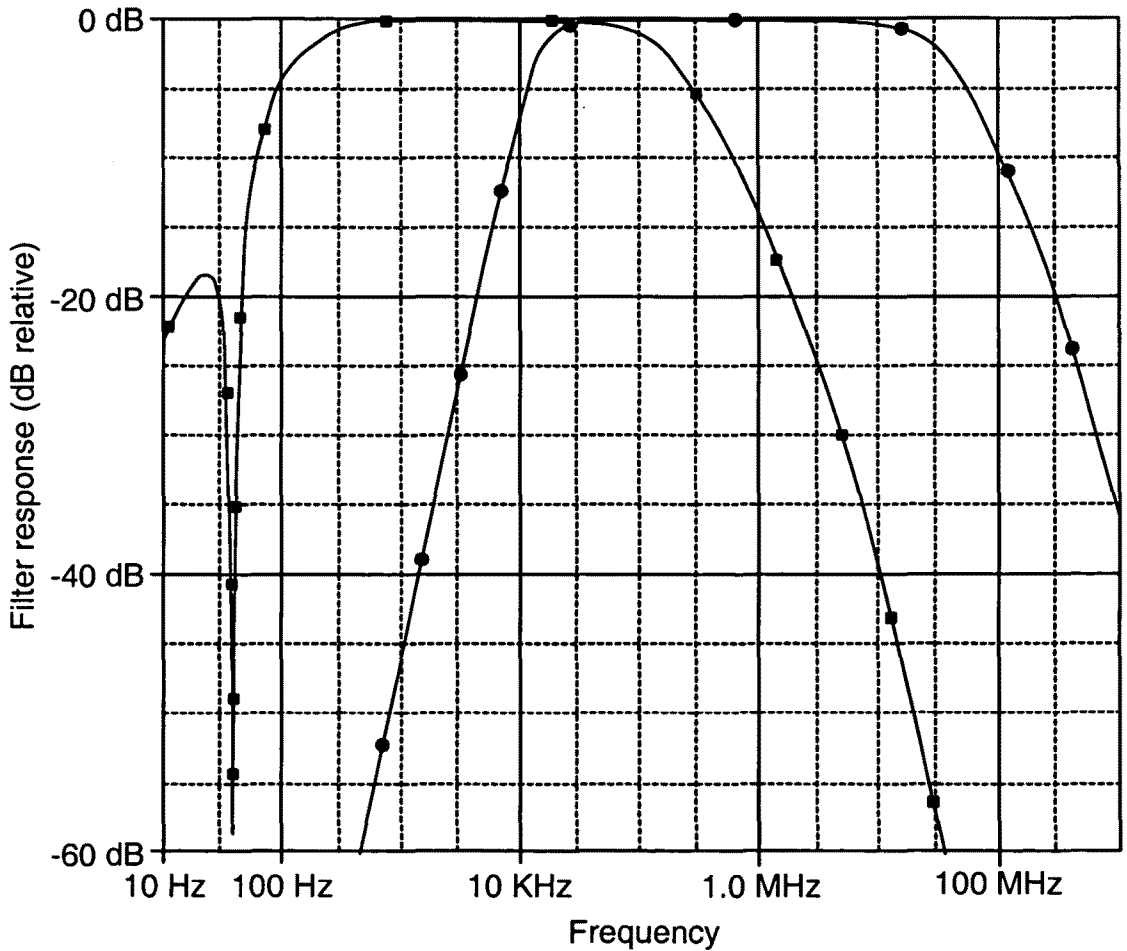


Fig. 5

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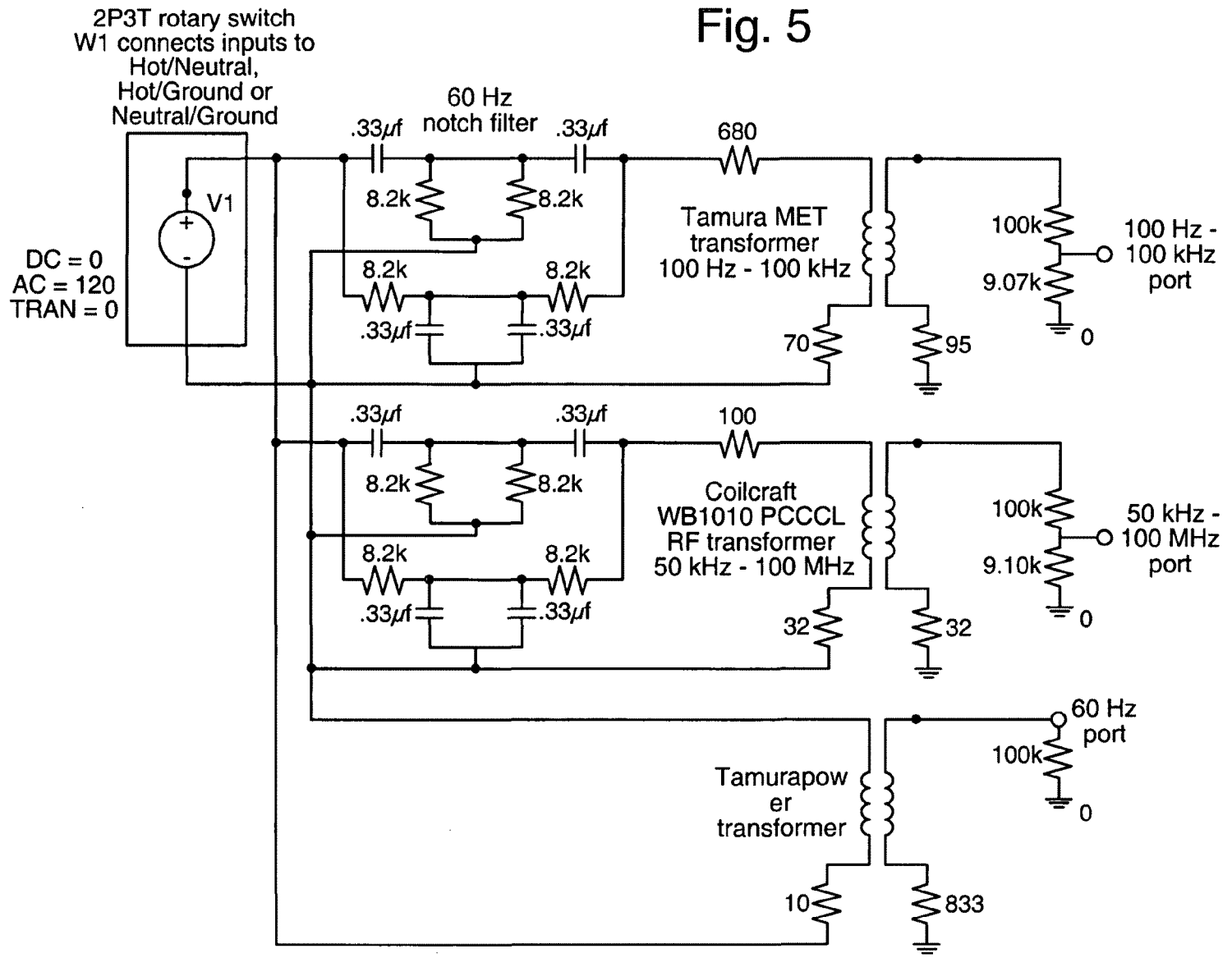
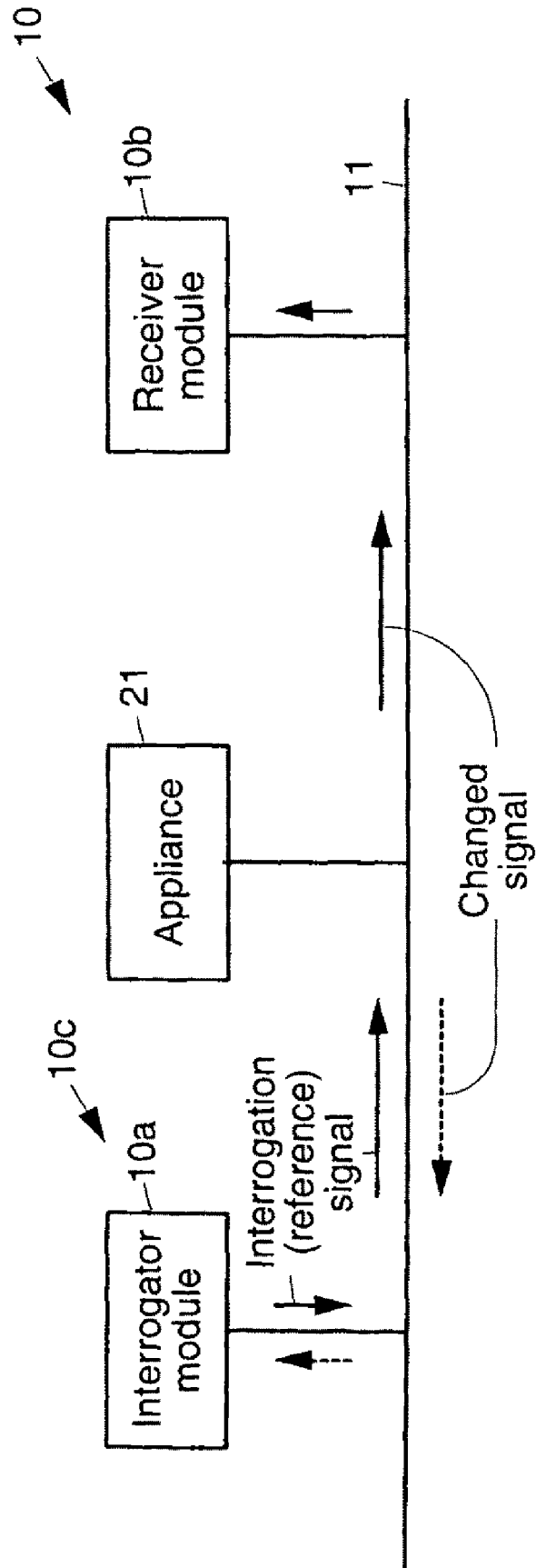


Fig. 7



## DETECTING ACTUATION OF ELECTRICAL DEVICES USING ELECTRICAL NOISE OVER A POWER LINE

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/973,188, filed Sep. 18, 2007.

### BACKGROUND

The present invention relates to apparatus and methods for detecting electrical device actuation using electrical noise over a power line.

A common research interest in ubiquitous computing has been the development of inexpensive and easy-to-deploy sensing systems that support activity detection and context-aware applications in the home. For example, several researchers have explored using arrays of low-cost sensors, such as motion detectors or simple contact switches. Such sensors are discussed by Tapia, E. M., et al. "Activity recognition in the home setting using simple and ubiquitous sensors," Proc of Pervasive 2004, pp. 158-175, Tapia, E. M., et al. "The design of a portable kit of wireless sensors for naturalistic data collection," Proc of Pervasive 2006, pp. 117-134, and Wilson, D. H., et al. "Simultaneous Tracking and Activity Recognition (STAR) Using Many Anonymous, Binary Sensors," Proc of Pervasive 2005, pp. 62-79, 2005, for example.

Although these solutions are cost-effective on an individual sensor basis, they are not without some drawbacks. For example, having to install and maintain many sensors may be a time-consuming task, and the appearance of many sensors may detract from the aesthetics of the home. This is discussed by Beckmann, C., et al. "Some Assembly Required: Supporting End-User Sensor Installation in Domestic Ubiquitous Computing Environments," Proc of UbiComp 2004, pp. 107-124, 2004, and Hirsch, T., et al. "The ELDer Project: Social, Emotional, and Environmental Factors in the Design of Eldercare Technologies," Proc of the ACM Conference on Universal Usability, pp. 72-79, 2000, for example.

In addition, the large number of sensors required for coverage of an entire home may increase the number of potential failure points. To address these concerns, recent work has focused on sensing through existing infrastructure in a home. For example, researchers have looked at monitoring the plumbing infrastructure in the home to infer basic activities or using the residential power line to provide indoor localization. See, for example, Fogarty, J., et al. "Sensing from the Basement: A Feasibility Study of Unobtrusive and Low-Cost Home Activity Recognition," Proc of ACM Symposium on User Interface Software and Technology (UIST 2006) 2006, and Patel, S. N., et al. "PowerLine Positioning: A Practical Sub-Room-Level Indoor Location System for Domestic Use," Proceedings of UbiComp 2006.

Research relating to activity and behavior recognition in a home setting may be classified by examining the origin of the sensing infrastructure disclosed herein. The first area of classification includes approaches that introduce new, independent sensors into the home that directly sense various activities of its residents. This classification includes infrastructures where a new set of sensors and an associated sensor network (wired or wireless) is deployed. A second area encompasses those approaches that take advantage of existing home infrastructure, such as the plumbing or electrical buses in a home, to sense various activities of residents. The goal of the second approach is to lower the adoption barrier by reducing the cost and/or complexity of deploying or maintaining the sensing infrastructure.

Some research approaches use high-fidelity sensing to determine activity, such as vision or audio systems that capture movement of people in spaces. See, for example, Bian, X., et al. "Using Sound Source Localization in a Home Environment," Proc of the International Conference on Pervasive Computing, 2005, and Koile, K., et al. "Activity Zones for Context-Aware Computing," Proc of UbiComp 2003: Ubiquitous Computing, 2003, Seattle, Wash., USA.

Chen et al. in "Bathroom Activity Monitoring Based on Sound," Proc of Pervasive 2005, pp. 47-61, 2005, installed microphones in a bathroom to sense activities such as showering, toileting, and hand washing. While these approaches may provide rich details about a wide variety of activities, they are often very arduous to install and maintain across an entire household.

Use of these high fidelity sensors in certain spaces raise concerns about the balance between value-added services and acceptable surveillance, particularly in home settings. This is discussed by Beckmann, C., et al. "Some Assembly Required: Supporting End-User Sensor Installation in Domestic Ubiquitous Computing Environments," Proc of UbiComp 2004, pp. 107-124, 2004, Hirsch, T., et al. "The ELDer Project: Social, Emotional, and Environmental Factors in the Design of Eldercare Technologies," Proc of the ACM Conference on Universal Usability, pp. 72-79, 2000, and Iachello, G., et al. "Privacy and Proportionality: Adapting Legal Evaluation Techniques to Inform Design In Ubiquitous Computing," Proc of CHI 2005, pp. 91-100, 2005.

Another class of approaches explores the use of a large collection of simple, low-cost sensors, such as motion detectors, pressure mats, break beam sensors, and contact switches, to determine activity and movement. See Tapia, E. M., et al. "Activity recognition in the home setting using simple and ubiquitous sensors," Proc of Pervasive 2004, pp. 158-175, 2006, Tapia, E. M., et al. "The design of a portable kit of wireless sensors for naturalistic data collection," Proc of Pervasive 2006, pp. 117-134, and Wilson, D. H., et al. "Simultaneous Tracking and Activity Recognition (STAR) Using Many Anonymous, Binary Sensors," Proc of Pervasive 2005, pp. 62-79, 2005. The Tapia et al. papers discuss home activity recognition using many state change sensors, which were primarily contact switches. These sensors were affixed to surfaces in the home and logged specific events for some period of time. The advantage of this approach is being able to sense physical activities in a large number of places without the privacy concerns often raised for high-fidelity sensing (e.g., bathroom activity). There are also some disadvantages to this add-on sensor approach, which include the requirements of powering the sensors, providing local storage of logged events on the sensor itself, or a wireless communication backbone for real-time applications. These requirements all complicate the design and maintenance of the sensors, and the effort to install many sensors and the potential impact on aesthetics in the living space may also negatively impact mass adoption of this solution.

As an example of the often difficult balance of the value of in home sensing and the complexity of the sensing infrastructure, the Digital Family Portrait is a peace of mind application for communicating well-being information from an elderly person's home to a remote caregiver. See, for example, Rowan, J. et al. "Digital Family Portrait Field Trial: Support for Aging in Place," Proc of the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2005), pp. 521-530, 2005. In this deployment study, movement data was gathered from a collection of strain sensors attached to the underside of the first floor of a home. Installation of these sensors was difficult, time-consuming, and required access under the

floor. Although the value of the application was proven, complexity of the sensing limited the number of homes in which the system could be easily deployed.

Other approaches, which are similar to ours, are those that use existing home infrastructure to detect events. Fogarty et al. "Sensing from the Basement: A Feasibility Study of Unobtrusive and Low-Cost Home Activity Recognition," Proc of ACM Symposium on User Interface Software and Technology (UIST 2006), 2006, explored attaching simple microphones to a home's plumbing system, thereby leveraging an available home infrastructure. The appeal of this solution is that it is low-cost, consists of only a few sensors, and is sufficient for applications, such as the Digital Family Portrait, for which the monitoring of water usage is a good proxy for activity in the house. This approach requires relatively long timescales over which events must be detected, sometimes up to ten seconds. This longer time increases the likelihood of overlapping events, which are harder to distinguish.

In contrast, power line event detection operates over timescales of approximately half a second and thus overlapping is less likely. Some water heaters constantly pump hot water through the house, complicating the detection of some on-demand activities. Detecting noise on water pipes introduced by other household infrastructure requires careful placement of the microphone sensors. Some homes may not have plumbing infrastructure that is easily accessible, particularly those with a finished basement or no basement at all. Despite these limitations, this solution is very complementary to our approach, as some events revealed by water usage, such as turning on a faucet in a sink or flushing a toilet, do not have direct electrical events that could serve as predictive antecedents. The converse also holds, as a light being turned on often does not correlate with any water-based activity.

Another "piggybacking" approach is to reuse sensing infrastructure or devices in the home that may be present for other purposes. For example, ADT Security System's Quiet-Care offers a peace of mind service that gathers activity data from the security system's motion detectors. This is discussed on the ADT QuietCare website at <http://www.adt.com/quiet-care/>.

There are other techniques that employ electrical power use to sense activity. For example, some researchers have monitored electrical current flow to infer the appliances or electrical equipment being used in the house as a proxy for detecting activity. See, for example, Paradiso, J. A. "Some Novel Applications for Wireless Inertial Sensors," Proc of NSTI Nanotech 2006, Vol. 3, Boston, Mass., May 7-11, 2006, pp. 431-434, and Tapia, E. M., et al. "The design of a portable kit of wireless sensors for naturalistic data collection," Proc of Pervasive 2006, pp. 117-134.

The Paradiso platform monitors current consumption of various appliances of interest. Changes in current flow indicate some change in state for the instrumented appliance, such as a change from on to off. This solution requires a current sensor to be installed inline with each appliance or around its power cord and thus only works well if it is sufficient to study the usage of a small subset of appliances and those appliances' power feeds are easy accessible. An extension to the Paradiso work is to install current sensors on major branch circuits of the power lines, but this may require professional installation to provide an acceptable level of safety. However, it would be desirable to detect a larger number of appliances with less instrumentation and with a much easier deployment phase.

There is therefore a need for apparatus and methods for detecting electrical device actuation using electrical noise over a power line.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The features and advantages of the present invention may be more readily understood with reference to the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals designate like structural elements, and in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates exemplary electrical device actuation detection apparatus installed in a structure, such as a residence;

FIG. 1a illustrates prototype electrical device actuation detection apparatus;

FIG. 1b illustrates the architecture of an exemplary electrical device actuation detection apparatus along with exemplary processing methods;

FIG. 2a-2c show sample frequency domain graphs of a light switch that is toggled at different times;

FIGS. 2d and 2e illustrate graphs of frequency versus time and voltage versus frequency associated with an exemplary light switch;

FIG. 3 shows a high-level overview of a simplified model of a home's electrical infrastructure and where particular noise transfer functions occur;

FIG. 4 shows a block diagram of an exemplary power line interface device;

FIG. 5 shows a detailed schematic of an exemplary power line interface device;

FIG. 6 shows a model of a frequency response curve of the power line data collection module for exemplary 100 Hz-100 kHz and 50 kHz-100 MHz outputs; and

FIG. 7 illustrates an active embodiment of the exemplary electrical device actuation detection apparatus.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In order to leverage existing infrastructure to support activity detection, discussed below is an approach that uses a home's electrical system as an information source to observe various electrical events. Detection and classification of these events may be used in a variety of applications, such as healthcare, entertainment, home automation, energy monitoring, and post-occupancy research studies. The approach described herein improves upon previous work of the present inventors relating to power line positioning systems, such as is discussed by Patel, S. N., et al., "PowerLine Positioning: A Practical Sub-Room-Level Indoor Location System for Domestic Use," Proceedings of Ubicomp 2006, and described in U.S. provisional application Ser. No. 60/817,225, filed Jun. 28, 2006, and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/824,204, filed Jun. 8, 2007. The disclosed approach uses existing power line infrastructure to provide practical localization within a home. The techniques disclosed herein passively sense simple electrical events, whereas the previous work senses the location of actively tagged objects.

An advantage of the approach is that it requires installation of only a single, plug-in module (plugged into the existing power line infrastructure) that connects to an embedded or personal computer. The computer records and analyzes electrical noise on the power line caused by switching of significant electrical loads. Machine learning techniques applied to these patterns identify when unique events occur. Examples include human-initiated events, such as turning on or off a specific light switch or plugging in a CD player, as well as automatic events, such as a compressor or fan of an HVAC system turning on or off under control of a thermostat.

By observing actuation of certain electrical devices, the location and activity of people in the space can be inferred and

used for applications that rely on this contextual information. For example, detecting that a light switch was turned on can be an indication that someone entered a room, and thus an application could adjust the thermostat to make that room more comfortable. Other human-initiated kitchen events can also be detected, such as a light turning on inside a refrigerator or microwave when its door is opened. These events may indicate meal preparation.

The disclosed approach also has implications for providing a low-cost solution for monitoring energy usage. An application can log when particular electrical loads are active, revealing how and when electrical energy is consumed in the household, leading to suggestions on how to maintain a more energy-efficient household. In addition, because the disclosed approach is capable of differentiating between the on and off events of a particular device in real time, those events can be “linked” to other actuators for a variety of home automation scenarios. The disclosed approach can thus provide for a home automation system that maps actuation of a stereo system to an existing light switch without having to install additional wiring.

Discussed below is the underlying theory and initial implementation details of the disclosed approach to power line event detection. Results of a series of tests are discussed that illustrate the stability of the disclosed approach over time and its ability to sense electrical events in different homes. These tests involve installing a device in a single location of a house and collecting data on a variety of electrical events within that house. Results show that a support vector machine system can learn and later classify various unique electrical events with accuracies ranging from 85-90%.

Referring to the drawing figures, FIG. 1 illustrates exemplary electrical device actuation detection apparatus 10 installed in a residence 20, for example. The residence 20 has an electrical power line 11 (electrical system wiring 11 or power line infrastructure 11) that is monitored to identify electrical events that occur throughout the home 20. It is to be understood that the electrical device actuation detection apparatus 10 and methods 40 may be used in any structure 20, including homes 20 and businesses 20, for example.

FIG. 1a illustrates an exemplary reduced-to-practice electrical device actuation detection apparatus 10 used for testing purposes. The exemplary electrical device actuation detection apparatus 10 comprises a single power line interface module 12, that is plugged via an electrical cord 13a and plug 13 into an electrical outlet 17 of the existing power line infrastructure 11 of the home 20. Although not necessarily required, the module 11 may be installed in a convenient, central location in the home 20. The module 12 is connected via a USB interface 14, for example, to a computer 15 that includes a software application 30 that collects and performs analysis on incoming (detected) electrical noise present in the power line infrastructure 11. Although not required for normal operation of the electrical device actuation detection apparatus 10, a USB data acquisition oscilloscope 17 is used in the apparatus 10 to extract a fast Fourier transform (FFT). In operational apparatus 10, the USB data acquisition oscilloscope 17 is replaced by a fast Fourier transform (FFT) circuit, which is preferably embedded in the power line interface module 12. The software application 30 is configured to process the FFT data and learn certain characteristics relating to electrical noise produced by switching electrical devices 21 (FIG. 1) on or off and is able to predict when those devices 21 are actuated based on the learned phenomena.

The electrical device actuation detection apparatus 10 was developed for countries that use 60 Hz electrical systems.

However, it is to be understood that it can easily be extended to frequencies used in other countries, such as those that use 50 Hz power, for example.

FIG. 1b illustrates an exemplary architecture of the electrical device actuation detection apparatus 10 and exemplary processing methods 40. The exemplary architecture of the electrical device actuation detection apparatus 10 and the method 40 processes noise present in the power line infrastructure 11 resulting from, and associated with, actuation of electrical devices 21. The electrical output of the power line infrastructure 11 is filtered 31 using the power line interface module 12. The filtered electrical output of the power line infrastructure 11 is fast Fourier transformed 32 to produce voltage versus frequency versus time data associated with noise produced when an electrical device 21 coupled to the power line infrastructure 11 is toggled (switched) on or off. The fast Fourier transformed noise data is then processed 33 (in the computer 15, for example) to construct a noise signature associated with the toggling event. The noise signature corresponding to the toggling event (toggled electrical switch 21 or load 21) is processed 34 to store it in a database to calibrate the apparatus 10, or find a stored signature in the database that is closest to it to identify which electrical switch 21 or load 21 has been toggled. The data comprising the noise signature may be remotely transferred to a central database where it may be processed to provide power consumption analysis.

#### Theory of Operation

The disclosed approach relies on the fact that abruptly switched (mechanical or solid-state) electrical loads produce broadband electrical noise either in the form of a transient or continuous noise. This electrical noise is generated between hot and neutral (known as normal mode noise), or between neutral and ground (known as common mode noise). Transient and continuous noise on the residential power line 12 is typically high in energy and may often be observed with a nearby AM radio. The types of electrical noise that are of interest are produced within the home 20 and are created by the fast switching of relatively high currents. For example, a motor-type load, such as a fan, creates a transient noise pulse when it is first turned on and then produces a continuous noise signal until it is turned off.

In addition, the mechanical switching characteristics of a light switch generates transient electrical noise. This is discussed by Howell, E. K., “How Switches Produce Electrical Noise,” IEEE Transactions on Electromagnetic Compatibility, Volume 21:3, pp. 162-170, August 1979. Other examples of noisy events include using a garage door opener, plugging in a power adaptor for an electric device, or turning on a television. Marubayashi provides a more complete description of this electrical noise phenomenon in “Noise Measurements of the Residential Power Line,” Proceedings of International Symposium on Power Line Communications and Its Applications 1997, pp 104-108.

In the case of transient noise, impulses typically last only a few microseconds and include a rich spectrum of frequency components, that can range from 10 Hz to 100 kHz. Thus, it is desirable to consider both the temporal nature (duration) of the transient noise and its frequency components. Depending on the switching mechanism, the load characteristics, and length of transmission line, these impulses can be very different. For example, FIG. 2a shows a sample frequency domain graph of a light switch 21 that is toggled in a home 20 (light on followed by light off). The graphs indicate amplitudes at each frequency level. Each sample is rich in a broad range of frequencies. On and off events are each different enough to be distinguished. In addition, the individual on and

off events are similar enough over time to be recognized later. Notice the rich number of high amplitude frequency components for each pulse and their relative strengths. Also, notice that the signature of a device **21** that is turned on is different from the same device when it is turned off. FIG. **2b** shows the same switch **21** actuated in the same order as FIG. **2a**, but taken 2 hours later, and FIG. **2c** shows it taken one week later.

The amplitudes of individual frequency components and the duration of the impulse produced by each switch **21** are similar between the three graphs, although there are a few high frequency regions that are different across the samples. Even similar light switches **21** produce different signatures, which is likely due to the mechanical construction of each switch **21** and the influence of the power line length connected to each switch **21**. For example, it was observed that different three-way wall switches **21** connected to the same light each produced discernable signatures. The main difference was in the relative amplitudes of the frequencies that are observed. Devices **21** that produce continuous noise are bounded by transient phenomena, but also exhibit electrical noise during their powered operation. For this class of noise, it is possible to not only identify it based on its transient response but also its continuous noise signature.

It is assumed that the noise signature of a particular device **21** depends both on the device **21** and the transmission line behavior of the interconnecting power line **11**, so both contributions have been captured in a single model. FIG. **3** depicts a high-level overview of a simplified model of a home's electrical infrastructure **11** and where particular noise transfer functions occur, denoted as  $H(s)$ . The bottom portion of FIG. **3** shows three general types of loads found in a home **20**, a purely resistive load, an inductive load where voltage noise is generated from a continuous mechanical switching (motors), and an inductive load where voltage noise is generated by an internal oscillator of a solid state switch. The transfer functions reflect the fact that both the electrical transmission line **11** and the data collection module **12** connected to that line **11** contribute to some transformation of the noise from the source **21** to the collection module **12**. The observed noise results from the imposition of all the transfer functions against the generated noise. The influence of the transfer function of the transmission line **11** is an important contributor to the different electrical noise signatures that were observed, which indicates why similar device types (e.g., light switches **21**) can be distinguished and why the location of the data collection module **12** in the home **20** impacts the observed noise.

In the simplified model, three general classes of electrical noise sources **21** may be found in a home **20**, which include resistive loads, inductive loads such as motors, and loads with solid state switching. Purely resistive loads, such as a lamp or an electric stove, do not create detectable amounts of electrical noise while in operation, although as a resistor, they produce trace amounts of thermal noise (Johnson noise) at a generally undetectable level. In this particular case, only transient noise is produced by minute arcing in the mechanical switch **21** itself (wall switch **21**) when the switch **21** is turned on or off. A motor **21**, such as in a fan or a blender, is modeled as both a resistive and inductive load. The continuous breaking and connecting by the motor brushes creates a voltage noise synchronous to the AC power of 60 Hz (and at 120 Hz). Solid state switching devices **21**, such as MOSFF's found in computer power supplies or TRIACs in dimmer switches **21** or microwave ovens **21**, emit noise that is different between devices **21** and is synchronous to an internal oscillator. Thus, the latter two classes contribute noise from both the external

power switching mechanism (transient) and the noise generated by the internal switching mechanism (continuous).

In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) sets guidelines on how much electrical noise AC-powered electronic devices can conduct back onto the power line **11** (Part 15 section of the FCC regulations). Device-generated noise at frequencies between 150 kHz-30 MHz cannot exceed certain limits. Regulatory agencies in other countries set similar guidelines on electronic devices. Although this mainly applies to electronic devices, such as those that have solid state switching power supplies, this gives us some assurance about the type and amount of noise we might expect on the power line **11**.

It is often extremely difficult to analytically predict the transient noise from the general description of a load and its switching mechanism, because ordinary switches are usually not well characterized during their make-and-break times. However, it is possible to take a mapping approach by learning these observed signatures using supervised machine learning techniques. The challenge then becomes finding the important features of these transient pulses and determining how to detect the relevant ones of interest.

#### Hardware Details

To better understand the concept of detecting and learning various electrical events in the home **20**, a prototype apparatus **10** was built that comprises a power line interface module **12** (data collection module **12**) having three outputs, as illustrated in FIGS. **4** and **5**. One output was a standard 60 Hz AC power signal, which was used during an initial testing and exploratory phase. The second output was an attenuated power line output that was bandpass-filtered with a passband of 100 Hz to 100 kHz. The third output was similarly attenuated and was bandpass-filtered with a 50 kHz to 100 MHz passband. These different filtered outputs were chosen to have the flexibility to experiment with different frequency ranges (FIG. **6**). Note that the passbands are not limited to those illustrated and discussed herein, and any suitable passbands may be used. FIG. **6** shows a model of the frequency response curve of our power line data collection apparatus at the 100 Hz-100 kHz and the 50 kHz-100 MHz outputs. The 60 Hz dip is from the notch filter.

Both filtered outputs shown in FIG. **6** have a 60 Hz notch filter in front of their bandpass filters to remove the AC power frequency and enhance the dynamic range of the sampled data. The interface module **12** was built so that we could monitor the power line **11** between hot and neutral, neutral and ground, or hot and ground. The noise between hot and neutral (normal mode) was observed because many loads that are desirable to observe (such as table lamps and small appliances) do not have a ground connection.

The interface module **12** was connected to one 120V leg or branch of the electrical system. Most residential homes **20** and apartments in North America and many parts of Asia have a single-phase or a split single-phase electrical system. This means there are two 120V electrical branches coming into the home **20** to supply 240V appliances, but the two branches are in phase. It was found that the noise generated by devices of interest connected to the other electrical branch were already coupled to the electrical branch that was interfaced to, and so were detectable by our system. While this approach was practical and sufficient for a prototype investigation, a coupler may be plugged into a 240V outlet to ensure direct access to both electrical branches.

Finally, outputs of the power line interface module **12** were connected to a dual-input USB oscilloscope interface **17** (EBest 2000) that has built-in gain control. Each input has 10-bit resolution with a full scale voltage of 1V, so the least

significant bit represents a voltage of 4 mV. The oscilloscope interface **17** had a real-time sampling rate of 100 million samples/sec. A C++ API is provided, resulting in a simple software interface to the sampled signal.

tative sample of commonly used devices are shown. Table 1 lists electrical devices **21** that were tested and events that were detectable. These devices **21** also consistently produced detectable event signatures.

TABLE 1

Device class/type	Devices observed	On to Off transition noise?	Off to On transition noise?	Continuously on noise?
Resistive	Incandescent lights via wall switch	Y	Y	N
	Microwave door light	Y	Y	N
	Oven light/door	Y	Y	N
	Electric stove	Y	Y	N
	Refrigerator door	Y	Y	N
	Electric oven	Y	Y	N
Inductive (Mechanically Switched)	Bathroom exhaust fan	Y	Y	N
	Ceiling fan	Y	Y	N
	Garage door opener	Y	Y	N
	Dryer	Y	Y	N
	Dishwasher	Y	Y	N
	Refrigerator compressor	Y	Y	N
	HVAC/Heat pump	Y	Y	N
	Garbage disposal	Y	Y	N
	Lights via a dimmer wall switch	Y	Y	Y
	Fluorescent lights via wall switch	Y	Y	N
Inductive (Solid State Switched)	Laptop power adapter	Y	N	N
	Microwave oven	Y	Y	Y
	Television (CRT, plasma, LCD)	Y	Y	N

#### Software Details

The software application **30** used in the prototype apparatus **10** included a C++ application **30a** that was written to sample the USB oscilloscope interface **17** and perform a fast Fourier transform (FFT) on the incoming signal to separate the component frequencies for analysis. The application **30a** produces a waterfall plot, a commonly used frequency domain visualization in real-time used for visual inspection (such as is shown in FIG. 2). The application **30a** performs this analysis almost in real-time, and it has the ability to record the data stream for post processing. A second application **30b**, written in Java, performs machine learning and provides a user interface for the apparatus **10**. The Java application **30b** connects via a TCP connection to the FFT application **30a** and reads the data values. The Java application **30b** provides the user interface for surveying the home **20** and remotely accessing the data from the power line interface module **12**. A Weka toolkit was used as the machine learning implementation. The Weka toolkit is discussed on the Weka website in an article entitled "Weka 3: Data Mining Software in Java," at <http://www.cs.waikato.ac.nz/ml/weka/>.

#### Electrical Events That Can Be Recognized

Testing was performed to identify electrical devices that could be detected with the apparatus **10** and see which electrical devices **21** would produce recognizable signatures that can be processed by the machine learning software **30b**. The apparatus **10** was installed in a single fixed location during the data collection process. Data was collected with low frequency (100 Hz-100 KHz) and high frequency (50 kHz-100 MHz) ports. No major electrical devices **21** were activated (such as a HVAC, refrigerator, water pumps, etc.) by turning them off for the duration of the testing so it was known which devices **21** were causing which response. For each electrical device **21**, noise signatures were visually observed and collected while turning a device **21** on, turning it off, and its stable-on state. Table 1 shows the various devices **21** that were tested detected and the events that were observed for each device **21** (on, off, continuously on state). Although many more devices, could have been observed we only a represen-

After initial experimentation, it was found that most loads drawing less than 0.25 amps were practically undetectable loads relative to prominent electrical noise (transient and/or continuous). This is relates to the dynamic range of the data collection module **12**; a collection module **12** with more than 10 bits of resolution would be able to detect lower current devices. The devices **21** listed in Table 1 exhibited strong and consistently reproducible signatures. However, a limitation was observed relating to how quickly a given device **21** could be switched (i.e., delay between toggles). Depending on the device **21**, it was observed that approximately 500 ms delay between subsequent toggles was required for the data collection module **12** to detect a noise impulse successfully. This is largely attributed to the sampling and processing latency from the device **21** (e.g., USB latency plus processing delays on the computer **15**).

While most devices **21** produce a transient pulse only a few microseconds in duration in their energized state, certain devices **21** continuously produce electrical noise while they are powered, as expected. For example, lamp dimmers or wall-mounted dimmer switches produce noise that was very rich in harmonics while they were activated. Similarly, microwave ovens couple broadband noise back on the power line during its use. These devices **21** tended to produce strong continuous noise above 5 kHz and reaching up to 1 MHz. It was also found that switching power supplies, such as those used in a laptop or personal computer, produce considerably higher noise in the 100 kHz-1 MHz range than at the lower 100 Hz-5 kHz range.

To understand devices **21** that produce continuous noise, various switching power supplies were tested in isolation from other electrical line noise. Using the higher 50 kHz-100 MHz output on the data collection module **12**, it was found that many of these devices **21** produced more detectable continuous noise at the higher frequencies. At the lower 100 Hz-5 kHz range, fairly low amplitude, continuous noise, and a higher transient noise effect (from the flipping of the switch) was observed.



In the 100 Hz-100 kHz range, motor-based devices **21**, such as a ceiling or bathroom exhaust fan, exhibited slightly longer duration transient pluses when activated with a switch, but did not show continuous normal mode noise which would have been expected from repeated electromechanical switching from motor brushes. This difference was attributed to the 60 Hz notch filter, which blocked the 60 Hz power frequency. To confirm this, an experiment was conducted in which various mechanically-switched devices (e.g., fans) were isolated and their noise output was observed. In the case of the fan, the data collection module **12** showed the transient pulse, but not the continuous electrical noise.

From these observations, the noise characteristics produced by different devices was characterized. It was observed that transient noise produced from a single abrupt switching event (e.g., a wall switch) tended to produce signals rich in high amplitude components in the lower frequency range (100 Hz-5 KHz). Inductive loads featuring a solid state switching mechanism generally produced continuous noise in the 5 kHz-1 MHz range. Inductive loads with mechanically switched voltages produce noise near 60 Hz, but the data collection module **12** filtered out much of that noise. Thus, analysis of the frequency spectrum may be broken up into two parts. The lower frequency space (100 Hz-5 kHz) is effective for analysis of transient noise events, such as those produced by wall switches. The higher frequency is better for continuous noise events, such as those produced by TRIACs and switching power supplies. It was observed that dim levels can also be gathered from the continuous noise frequency generated by TRIACs.

#### Detecting and Learning the Signals

The detection approach requires detection of the transient pulse of electrical noise followed by extraction of relevant features for learning classification.

#### Detecting Transient Pulses

The filtering hardware in the power line interface module **12** removes most of the high frequency noise. Some broadband noise is always present, but typically at low amplitudes. To detect the transient pulses, a simple sliding window algorithm was employed to look for drastic changes in the input line noise (both beginning and end). These drastic changes, lasting only a few microseconds, are labeled as candidate signals and are processed further. The sliding window algorithm acquires a 1-microsecond sample, which is averaged from data acquired after performing the FFF on data from the power line interface module **12**. Each sample includes frequency components and associated amplitude values in vector form. Each vector includes amplitude values for frequency intervals ranging between 0 and 50 kHz. The Euclidean distance between the previous vector and the current window's vector is then computed. When the distance exceeds a predetermined threshold value, the start of a transient is marked. The window continues to slide until there is another drastic change in the Euclidean distance (the end of the transient). Although the threshold value was determined through experimentation, the thresholds can be readily learned and adapted over time.

After having isolated the transient, there are N vectors of length L, where N is the pulse width in 1 microsecond increments and L is the number of frequency components (2048 for example). A new vector of length L+1 is then constructed by averaging the corresponding N values for each frequency components. The (L+1)th value is N, the width of the transient. This value then serves as a feature vector for that particular transient.

#### Learning the Transients

For the learning algorithm, a support vector machine (SVM) was employed, such as is discussed by Burges, C. J. C., "A Tutorial on Support Vector Machines for Pattern Recognition," *Journal of Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Springer Press, June 1998.

SVMs perform classification by constructing an N-dimensional hyperplane that optimally separates the data into multiple categories. The separation is chosen to have the largest distance from the hyperplane to the nearest positive and negative examples. Thus, the classification is appropriate for testing data that is near, but not identical, to the training data as is the case of the feature vectors for the transients. SVMs are appealing because the feature space is fairly large compared to the potential training set. Because SVMs employ overfitting protection, which does not necessarily depend upon the number of features, they have the ability to better handle large feature spaces. The feature vectors are used as the support vectors in the SVM. The Weka toolkit was used to construct an SVM, using labeled training data to later classify the query points.

#### Feasibility and Performance Evaluation

To evaluate the feasibility and performance of the disclosed approach, it was tested in six different homes **20** of varying styles, age, sizes, and locations. The transient isolation approach was first tested in a single home. Next, a feasibility study was conducted in that home **20** for a six-week period to determine the classification accuracy of various electrical events over an extended period of time. Finally, for five other homes **20**, a one-week study was conducted to reproduce the results from the first home **20**.

#### Transient Isolation Evaluation

To evaluate the feasibility of our automatic transient detection approach, data was collected from one home **20** for a four-hour period and had the software **30** continuously isolate transient signals. During that period, various electrical components were actuated and their timestamps were noted. A total of 100 distinct events were generated during this period. For each event, it was then determined if a transient was isolated successfully at the noted times. Table 2 shows results of five different four-hour sessions. The percentage of successfully identified transients out of the number of event triggers are shown in Table 2. We believe the reason for the missed events was because of our static threshold algorithm. An adaptive threshold approach would mitigate this problem.

TABLE 2

Test 1 (% found)	Test 2 (% found)	Test 3 (% found)	Test 4 (% found)	Test 5 (% found)
98	93	91	88	96

#### Classifying Transient Events in Various Homes

The aim of the six-week evaluation was to determine the classification accuracy of various types of electrical devices **21** and how often the apparatus **10** needed to be retrained (i.e., signal stability over time). The other five deployments were used to show that events similar to those of the initial home **20** could be detected and to show that the transient noise signatures were temporally stable in other homes **20**. Despite the small number of homes **20**, a variety of homes and sizes were tested, including older homes with and without recently updated electrical systems (see Table). An apartment home **20** in a six-story building was also included, and its electrical infrastructure **11** was somewhat different from that of a single family home **20**. The types of electrical devices listed in Table

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1 were tested, so it was ensured that the homes **20** in which the apparatus **10** was deployed had most of these devices **21**.

For the entire testing period, the data collection module **12** was installed in the same electrical outlet. For Home 1, data was collected and labeled at least three times per week during the six-week period. The data collection process involved running the apparatus **10** and toggling various predetermined electrical devices **21** (see Table 1 for examples). For each device **21** that was toggled, each on-to-off and off-to-on event was manually labeled. In addition, at least two instances of each event was captured during each session. For Home 1, 41 different devices **21** were selected for testing (82 distinct events) and collected approximately 500 instances during each week. Thus, approximately 3000 labeled samples were collected during the six-week period.

Data was collected and labeled in a similar manner for the shorter one-week deployments. Training data was collected at the beginning of the week and additional test data was collected at the end of the week. At least 4 instances of each event were gathered for the training set. Because control of the events was possible, the number of distinct events were fairly equally distributed among the data and not biased towards a single device **21** or switch for all the 6 homes **21**.

Table 3 presents descriptions of homes **20** in which the apparatus **10** was deployed. Home 1 was used to conduct the long-term six-week deployment.

TABLE 3

Home	Year Built	Year Remodel	Electrical Floors/ Remodel Total Size (Sq Ft)/(Sq M)	Style	Bedrooms/ Bathrooms/ Total Rms.	Deployment Time (weeks)
1	2003	2003	3/4000/371	1 Family	4/4/13	6
2	2001	2001	3/5000/464	1 Family	5/5/17	1
3	1999	1999	1/700/58	1 Bed Apt	1/1/4	1
4	2002	2002	3/2600/241	1 Family	3/3/12	1
5	1935	1991	1/1100/102	1 Family	2/1/7	1
6	1967	1981	1/1500/140	1 Family	2/1/7	1

Tables 4 and 5 show classification accuracies for the different homes we tested. For Home 1, the classification accuracy of test data gathered at various times during the six weeks is shown using the training set gathered during the first week. The average overall classification accuracy in Home 1 was approximately 85% (Table 4). The accuracy of the classification for varying training set sizes is also shown. Because there can potentially be many events of interest in the home, making the training process an arduous task, it was desirable to find the minimum number of samples that would provide reasonable performance. The results suggest that there is only a slight decrease in classification over the six-week period. The results also suggest that a small number of training instances result in lower classification accuracies.

Table 4 shows performance results of Homes 1. Accuracies are based on the percentage of correctly identified toggled light switches or other events in the test data set. Training happened during week 1, and we reported the accuracies of the classifier for test data from subsequent weeks using that initial training set from week 1. Overall classification accuracy of a simple majority classifier was 4%.

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TABLE 4

Training set Size/Instances per event	Week 1 (%)	Week 2 (%)	Week 3 (%)	Week 4 (%)	Week 5 (%)	Week 6 (%)
164/2	83	82	81	79	80	79
246/3	86	84	83	84	82	83
328/4	88	91	87	85	86	86
410/5	90	92	91	87	86	87

Increasing the number of training instances did increase the classification accuracy. A small number of training samples makes it very important to have accurate training data. Mislabeling of a single training sample can have major impacts on a learned model. For example, the on and off event labels were sometimes flipped for a particular electrical device **21**. This highlights the importance of designing a training or calibration scheme that mitigates human error during the training and labeling process.

The results from the one-week deployment in the five other homes **20** are shown in Table 5, and the test data from the end of the week showed promising results. No significant differences in accuracy between old and new homes was observed. The lower classification accuracy for Home 5 was the result of low frequency noise that interfered with transient events.

Table 5 shows performance results of various homes **20**. Accuracies are based on the percentage of correctly identified toggled light switches or other events in the test data set. The

results of a majority classifier are also shown. For each home **20**, the training of the data occurred at the beginning of the week and the test data set was gathered at the end of that week.

TABLE 5

Home	Distinct Events	Training set (events)	Test set (events)	Accuracy (%)	Majority classif. (%)
2	32	328	100	87	4
3	48	192	96	88	6
4	76	304	103	92	3
5	64	256	94	84	3
4	38	152	80	90	8

In the current implementation, the lower frequency spectrum was analyzed where solid-state switching devices would produce the lowest interference from potential continuous noise. Looking at a larger frequency spectrum provides better classification for certain transient events. In addition, the apparatus **10** should detect and to adapt to random noise events when looking for transient pulses. The reduced-to-practice apparatus **10** monitored amplitudes of the compo-

nent frequencies. Phase difference between component frequencies, however, may also be considered as part of a feature extraction scheme.

Another consideration relates to scaling of the approach. Although unlikely in domestic settings, compound events, such as two lights toggled simultaneously, can produce errors in classification because their combined transient noises produce different feature vectors. This type of event is more of a concern in a very large home with many residents, or in an apartment building that does not have individually metered units. If users regularly flip light switches nearly simultaneously, this may be trained as a separate event that is distinct from those of individual switches.

The reduced-to-practice implementation of the apparatus **10** focuses on domestic environments, but the apparatus **10** can also be used in commercial settings. Compound events and electrical noise in these settings may become a more significant issue. Another issue is that the electrical lines may be so long that the noise does not reach the analyzer. Commercial buildings typically have multiple electrical legs, and to mitigate problems with compound events and line distance, multiple line noise analyzers may be installed throughout an office building to isolate the analysis to certain sections of the building. In order to scale to the commercial environments, the entire frequency band may be used.

The apparatus **10** is more appropriate for detecting and learning fixed electrical devices as compared to mobile or portable devices. Portable devices require training the apparatus **10** using any possible outlet that the portable device may be plugged into. In addition, plugging the portable device into an extension cord or power strip might produce a fingerprint different from one obtained by plugging it directly into an electrical outlet. With a well-defined set of events that should be detected, a suitable training plan can readily be devised, although it may be time-consuming as the set grows larger.

The apparatus **10** does not require deployment of a large number of data collection modules **12** throughout a home **20**. A single data collection module **12** is easier to physically deploy and maintain than a large array of distributed sensors. This simplicity of physical installation and maintenance has its cost in terms of training the machine learning algorithm **30** to recognize a significant number of electrical loads.

Thus, an approach that provides for a low-cost and easy-to-install power line event detection apparatus **10** that is capable of identifying certain electrical events, such as switches that are toggled has been disclosed. This apparatus **10** has implications for applications requiring simple activity detection, home automation systems, and energy usage information. The apparatus **10** learns and classifies unique electrical events with high accuracy using standard machine learning techniques. Additionally, deployment of the apparatus **10** in several homes **20** showed long-term stability and the ability to detect events in a variety of different types of homes **20**. The apparatus **10** has the potential to be integrated easily into existing applications that aim to provide services based on detection of various levels of activity.

FIG. 7 illustrates an active embodiment of the electrical device actuation detection apparatus **10**. This embodiment of the apparatus **10** may comprise an interrogator module **10a** and a receiver module **10b** that are coupled to the power line infrastructure **11**. Although illustrated as separate components, it is to be understood that the interrogator and receiver modules **10a**, **10b** may be implemented as a single interrogator-receiver module **10c** containing transmitter and receiver sections. The interrogator and receiver modules **10a**, **10b**, or the interrogator-receiver module **10c**, are plugged into an electrical receptacle of the power line infrastructure **11**. An

electrical device **21**, such as an appliance **21**, for example, is also coupled to the power line infrastructure **11**.

In operation, the interrogator module **10a**, or the transmitter portion of the interrogator-receiver module **10c**, sends a known broadband reference signal, or interrogation signal, over the power line infrastructure **11** (up to 9 vpp, for example). The receiver section of the interrogator-receiver module **10c**, or the receiver module **10b**, connected to the power line infrastructure **11**, listens for the signal and determines if it has changed relative to the reference signal (i.e., changed signal). Any change in the interrogation or reference signal is the result of the on-off status of the electrical device **21**, or appliance **21**, connected to the power line infrastructure **11**. The signal values corresponding to the on-off status of the electrical device **21** are recorded in a database during a calibration process. The interrogator module **10a**, or the interrogator-receiver module **10c**, then looks for the closest match in the database to identify the associated electrical device **21** and its state.

In summary, disclosed are apparatus **10** and methods **40** that identify actuated electrical devices **21** coupled to an electrical power line infrastructure **11** using electrical noise signals generated by the devices **21**. The apparatus **10** is embodied in computer apparatus **12**, **15**, **17** coupled to the electrical power line infrastructure **11** that identifies noise signatures associated with electrical switching devices **21** and loads **21** that are transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure **11** to determine the on-off status of the one or more switching devices **21** and loads **21**. The computer apparatus **12**, **15**, **17** comprises software **30** that records noise signatures identifying each of the switching devices **21** and loads **21** as they are turned on and off, and identifies switching devices **21** and loads **21** that are actuated by comparing a noise signature transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure **11** with the recorded noise signatures.

The electrical noise signals are filtered **31** by a power line interface **12** and the filtered electrical noise signals are fast Fourier transformed **32** to generate voltage versus frequency data associated with an actuated device **21**. Thus, electrical noise transmitted over the power line infrastructure is monitored to detect electrical noise patterns that correspond to the actuated electrical devices **21**. The electrical noise patterns are processed **33** to construct unique electrical noise signatures associated with the actuated electrical devices **21**. The unique electrical noise signature may be processed **34** to store it in a database, or an electrical noise signature that is stored in the database that corresponds to the generated electrical noise signature may be processed **34** to retrieve it from the database, and the signatures and related data may be displayed. The noise signature data may be remotely transferred to a central database for power consumption analysis. The data stored in the database may also be presents in a graphical user interface indicating when and how often an electrical device **21** is switched on and off.

In exemplary methods, one or more electrical devices are to an electrical power line infrastructure by way of one or more switching devices. Electrical noise transmitted over the power line infrastructure is monitored. Electrical noise patterns in the monitored electrical noise are detected that corresponds to actuation of each of the one or more electrical devices. The detected electrical noise patterns are processed to generate a unique electrical signature that identifies which of the electrical devices is actuated.

Thus, electrical device actuation detection apparatus and methods have been disclosed. It is to be understood that the above-described embodiments are merely illustrative of some of the many specific embodiments that represent applications

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of the principles discussed above. Clearly, numerous and other arrangements can be readily devised by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. Apparatus for use with one or more electrical loads coupled by way of one or more switching devices to an electrical power line infrastructure, wherein the one or more electrical loads generate one or more transient electrical noise patterns when the one or more electrical loads are switched on or off, the apparatus comprising:

a computer apparatus configured to couple the electrical power line infrastructure and further configured to identify one or more first transient electrical noise signatures associated with the one or more electrical loads,

wherein:

the computer apparatus comprises:

a power line interface configured to filter one or more transient electrical noise signals transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure caused by switching the one or more electrical loads on or off;

a fast Fourier transform module configured to process the one or more transient electrical noise signals from the power line interface to generate voltage versus frequency data, the voltage versus frequency data corresponding to a first transient electrical noise pattern of the one or more transient electrical noise patterns corresponding to a first electrical load of the one or more electrical loads that has been switched on or off; and

computer software configured to run on a computer and further configured to process the voltage versus frequency data to generate a unique second transient electrical noise signature, the computer software is further configured to identify the first electrical load of the one or more electrical loads based upon the unique second transient electrical noise signature and the one or more first transient electrical noise signatures associated with the one or more electrical loads; the computer software is in communication with the fast Fourier transform module; and

the power line interface is further configured to couple to an electrical outlet of the electrical power line infrastructure.

2. The apparatus recited in claim 1 wherein

the computer apparatus is further configured to record the one or more first transient electrical noise signatures, the one or more first transient electrical noise signatures identify the one or more electrical loads as the one or more electrical loads are switched on and off; and the computer apparatus is further configured to identify the first electrical load of the one more electrical loads by comparing the one or more first transient electrical noise signatures to the unique second transient electrical noise signature.

3. The apparatus recited in claim 1 wherein the computer apparatus further comprises: a transmitter configured to transmit an interrogation signal over the electrical power line infrastructure that interacts with a first switching device of the one or more switching devices; and a receiver configured to receive a return noise signature from the first switching device of the one or more switching devices in response to the interrogation signal; and wherein the computer apparatus is further configured to process the return noise signature to determine whether the one or more electrical loads have been switched on or off.

4. The apparatus recited in claim 1 wherein the fast Fourier transform module is configured to perform a fast Fourier

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transform on the one or more transient electrical noise signals to separate component frequencies contained in the one or more transient electrical noise signals, and wherein the computer software running on the computer is further configured to process the voltage versus frequency data to generate the unique second transient electrical noise signature, and the computer software is further configured to store the unique second transient noise signature in a database or retrieve at least one of the one or more first transient noise signatures from the database that corresponds to the unique second transient electrical noise signature.

5. The apparatus recited in claim 4 wherein the computer software is configured to store the one or more first transient electrical noise signatures in the database.

6. The apparatus recited in claim 5 wherein the computer software is further configured to process the unique second transient electrical noise signature and present information regarding the first electrical load of the one or more electrical loads in a graphical user interface in a format indicating when and how often the first electrical load of the one or more electrical loads is switched on and off.

7. The apparatus recited in claim 1 wherein the computer software is further configured to remotely transfer the unique second transient electrical noise signature to a central database for power consumption analysis.

8. The apparatus recited in claim 1 wherein the computer software is further configured to process the voltage versus frequency data using machine learning techniques.

9. The apparatus recited in claim 1 wherein the fast Fourier transform module comprises fast Fourier transform circuitry or fast Fourier transform software; and

the fast Fourier transform software is configured to run on the computer.

10. Apparatus for use with one or more electrical loads coupled by way of one or more switching devices to an electrical power line infrastructure, wherein one or more electrical noise patterns are generated when the one or more electrical loads are switched on or off, the apparatus comprising:

a power line interface configured to filter one or more electrical noise signals transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure caused by switching the one or more electrical loads on or off;

a fast Fourier transform module configured to process the one or more electrical noise signals from the power line interface to generate voltage versus frequency data, the voltage versus frequency data corresponding to a first electrical noise pattern of the one or more electrical noise patterns corresponding to a first electrical load of the one or more electrical loads that has been switched on or off;

computer software configured to run on a computer in communication with the Fourier transform module and further configured to process the voltage versus frequency data to generate a unique first electrical noise signature, the computer software is further configured to identify the first electrical load of the one or more electrical loads based upon one or more second electrical noise signatures and the unique first electrical noise signature,

wherein:

each signature of the one or more second electrical noise signatures is associated with switching on or off one of the one or more electrical loads.

11. The apparatus recited in claim 10 wherein the fast Fourier transform module is configured to perform a fast Fourier transform on the electrical noise signals to separate

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two or more component frequencies contained in the one or more electrical noise signals, and wherein the computer software is further configured to process the voltage versus frequency data to generate the unique first electrical noise signature, and is further configured to store the unique first electrical noise signature in a database or retrieve one of the one or more second electrical noise signatures from the database that corresponds to the unique first electrical noise signature.

12. The apparatus recited in claim 11 wherein the computer software is further configured to store the one or more second electrical noise signatures in the database.

13. The apparatus recited in claim 12 wherein the computer software is further configured to process the unique first electrical noise signature and presents information regarding the first electrical load of the one or more electrical loads in a graphical user interface indicating when and how often the first electrical load of the one or more electrical loads is switched on and off.

14. The apparatus recited in claim 10 wherein the computer software is further configured to remotely transfer the unique first electrical noise signature to a central database for power consumption analysis.

15. The apparatus recited in claim 10 wherein the computer software is further configured to processes the voltage versus frequency data using machine learning techniques.

16. The apparatus recited in claim 10 wherein the power line interface is further configured to couple to an electrical outlet of the electrical power line infrastructure.

17. A method comprising:  
 monitoring electrical noise transmitted over an electrical power line infrastructure;  
 using a processor in a data analysis apparatus to detect one or more electrical noise patterns in the electrical noise transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure that corresponds to actuation of the one or more electrical devices; and  
 using the processor in the data analysis apparatus to process the one or more electrical noise patterns to generate a unique first electrical noise signature that identifies a first electrical device of the one or more electrical devices that was actuated,

wherein:

using the processor in the data analysis apparatus to detect the one or more electrical noise patterns comprises:  
 using the processor in the data analysis apparatus to fast Fourier transform the electrical noise transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure to generate voltage versus frequency data corresponding to the first electrical device of the one or more electrical devices that was actuated; and

using the processor in the data analysis apparatus to process the one or more electrical noise patterns comprises:  
 using the processor in the data analysis apparatus to process the voltage versus frequency data to generate the unique first electrical noise signature associated with the first electrical device of the one or more electrical devices that was actuated.

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18. The method recited in claim 17 further comprising: storing the unique first electrical noise signature in a database or retrieving a second electrical noise signature from the database that corresponds to the unique first electrical noise signature.

19. The method recited in claim 17 further comprising: using the processor in the data analysis apparatus to correlate the unique first electrical noise signature to the first electrical device of the one or more electrical devices that was actuated.

20. The method recited in claim 17 wherein: using the processor in the data analysis apparatus to detect the one or more electrical noise patterns comprises: using a computer to detect the one or more electrical noise patterns in the electrical noise transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure that corresponds to actuation of the one or more electrical devices; using the processor in the data analysis apparatus to process the electrical noise patterns comprises: using the computer to process the one or more electrical noise patterns to generate the unique first electrical noise signature that identifies the first electrical device of the one or more electrical devices that was actuated; and the data analysis apparatus comprises the computer.

21. A method comprising:  
 coupling one or more electrical devices to an electrical power line infrastructure by way of one or more switching devices;  
 monitoring electrical noise transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure;  
 detecting one or more electrical noise patterns in the electrical noise transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure that corresponds to actuation of the one or more electrical devices; and  
 processing the one or more electrical noise patterns to generate a unique first electrical noise signature that identifies a first electrical device of the one or more electrical devices that was actuated,

wherein:

monitoring the electrical noise transmitted over the electrical power line infrastructure comprises actuating the first electrical device of the one or more electrical devices to generate the electrical noise on the electrical power line infrastructure, and filtering the electrical noise generated on the electrical power line infrastructure by the first electrical device of the one or more electrical devices; and

processing the one or more electrical noise patterns further comprises storing the unique first electrical noise signature in a database or retrieving a second electrical noise signature from the database that corresponds to the unique first electrical noise.

22. The method recited in claim 21 further comprising: displaying the unique electrical noise signature in a graphical user interface of a computer.

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