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(54) **CO2 REFRIGERATION SYSTEM**

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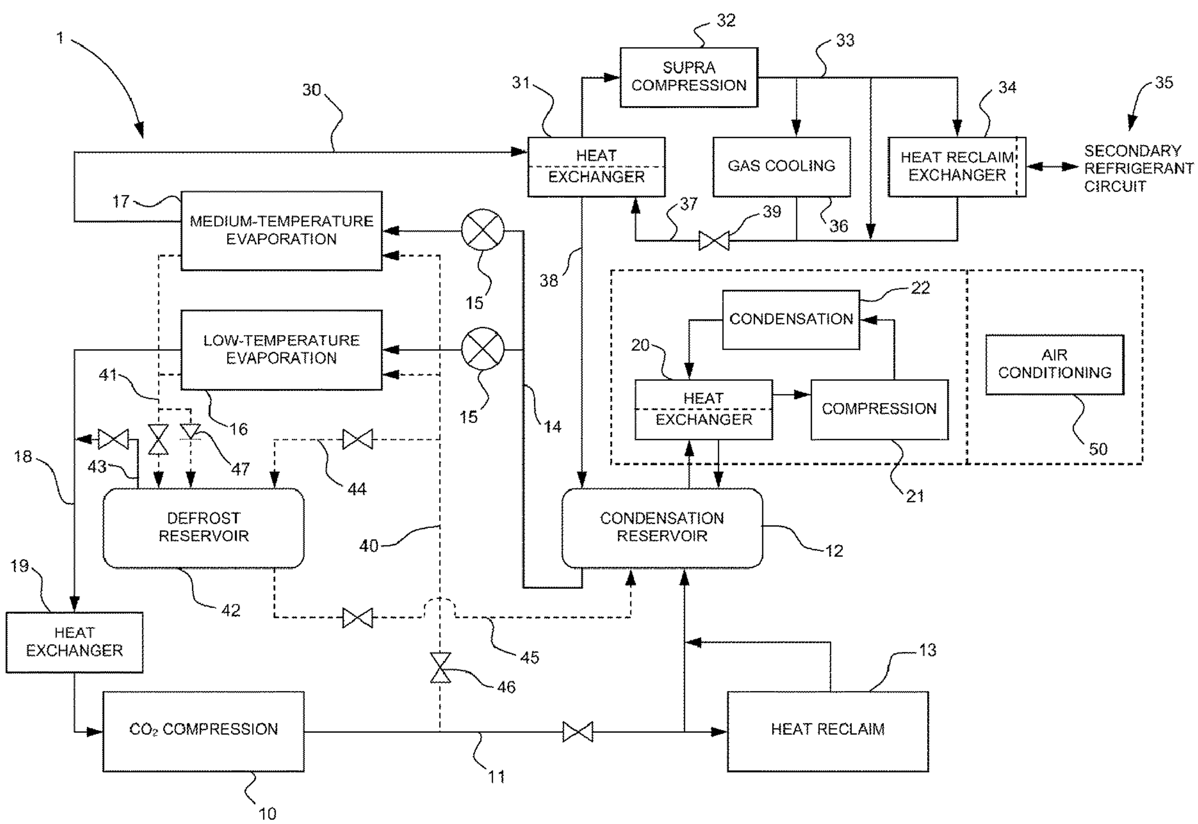
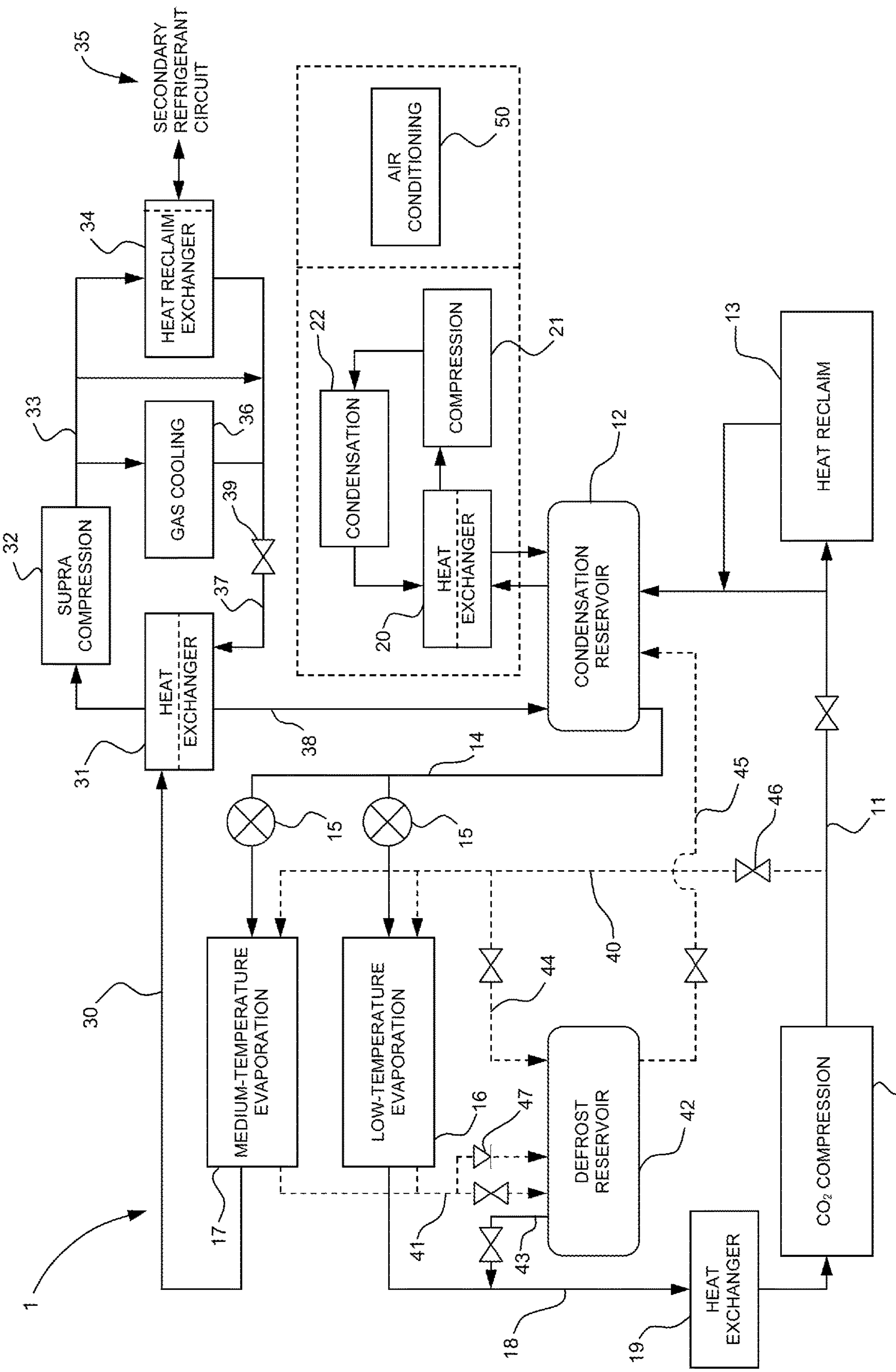
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A CO_2 refrigeration system for an ice-playing surface comprises an evaporation stage in which heat is absorbed from an ice-playing surface. CO_2 compressors in a compression stage compress CO_2 refrigerant subcritically and transcritically. A gas cooling stage has a plurality of heat-reclaim units reclaiming heat from the CO_2 refrigerant. A pressure-regulating device is downstream of the gas cooling stage, to control a pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant in the gas cooling stage. A reservoir is downstream of the pressure-regulating device for receiving CO_2 refrigerant in a liquid state. A controller operates the pressure-regulating device to control the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant in the gas cooling stage as a function of the heat demand of the plurality of heat-reclaim units, the controller causing the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to reach a transcritical level as a function of a heat demand of the plurality of heat-reclaim units.

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AIR CONDITIONING
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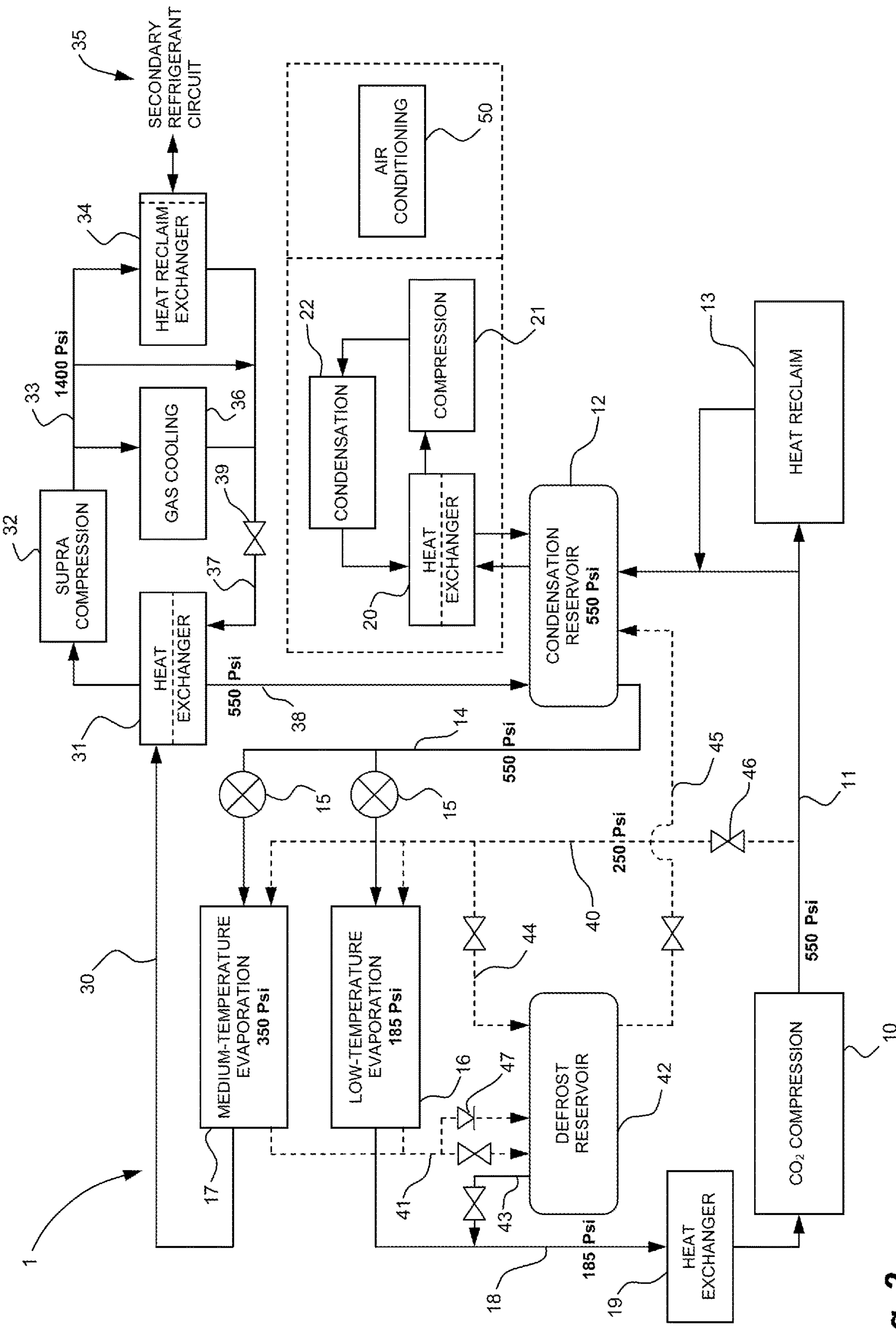
CONDENSATION
COMPRESSION
21
HEAT EXCHANGER
20
13
HEAT RECLAIM
12
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR
31
HEAT EXCHANGER
38
14
45
46
15
15
11
40
30
MEDIUM-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
44
16
47
DEFROST RESERVOIR
42
10
CO_2 COMPRESSION
17
41
43
1
18
19
HEAT EXCHANGER

Fig. 1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HEAT EXCHANGER
20
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550 Psi
12
HEAT RECLAIM
13
14
550 Psi
15
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45
46
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250 Psi
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LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
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30
550 Psi
DEFROST RESERVOIR
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CO2 COMPRESSION
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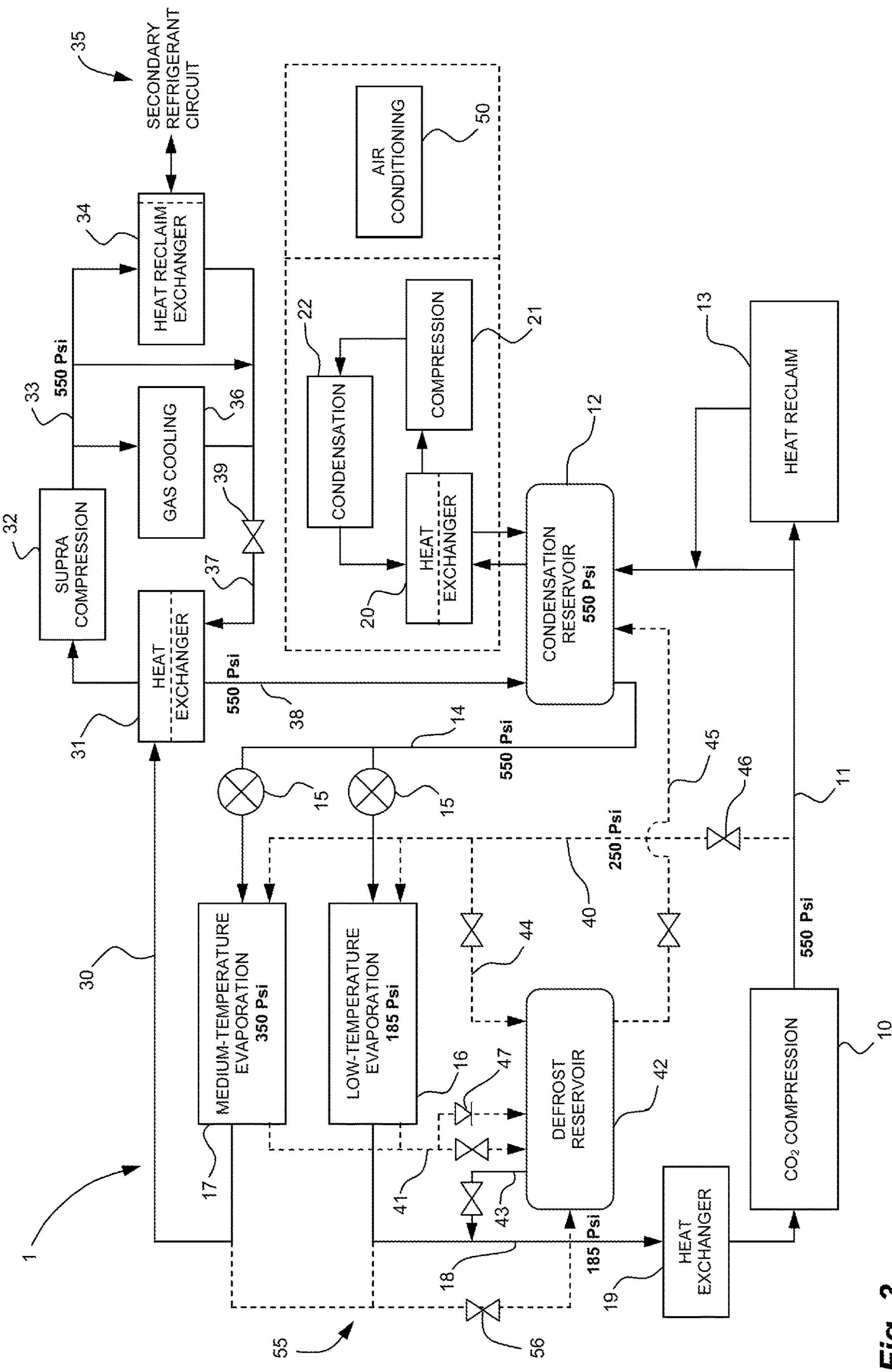
185 Psi
18
HEAT EXCHANGER
19
1

Fig. 2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CONDENSATION
COMPRESSION
HEAT EXCHANGER
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR 550 Psi
HEAT RECLAIM
550 Psi
550 Psi
250 Psi
MEDIUM-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION 350 Psi
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION 185 Psi
DEFROST RESERVOIR
185 Psi
HEAT EXCHANGER
CO2 COMPRESSION
550 Psi
1
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11
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Fig. 3

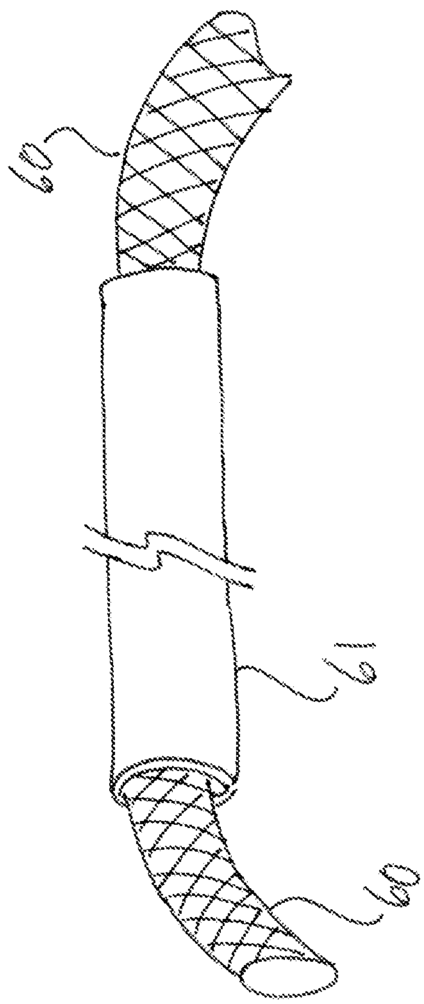
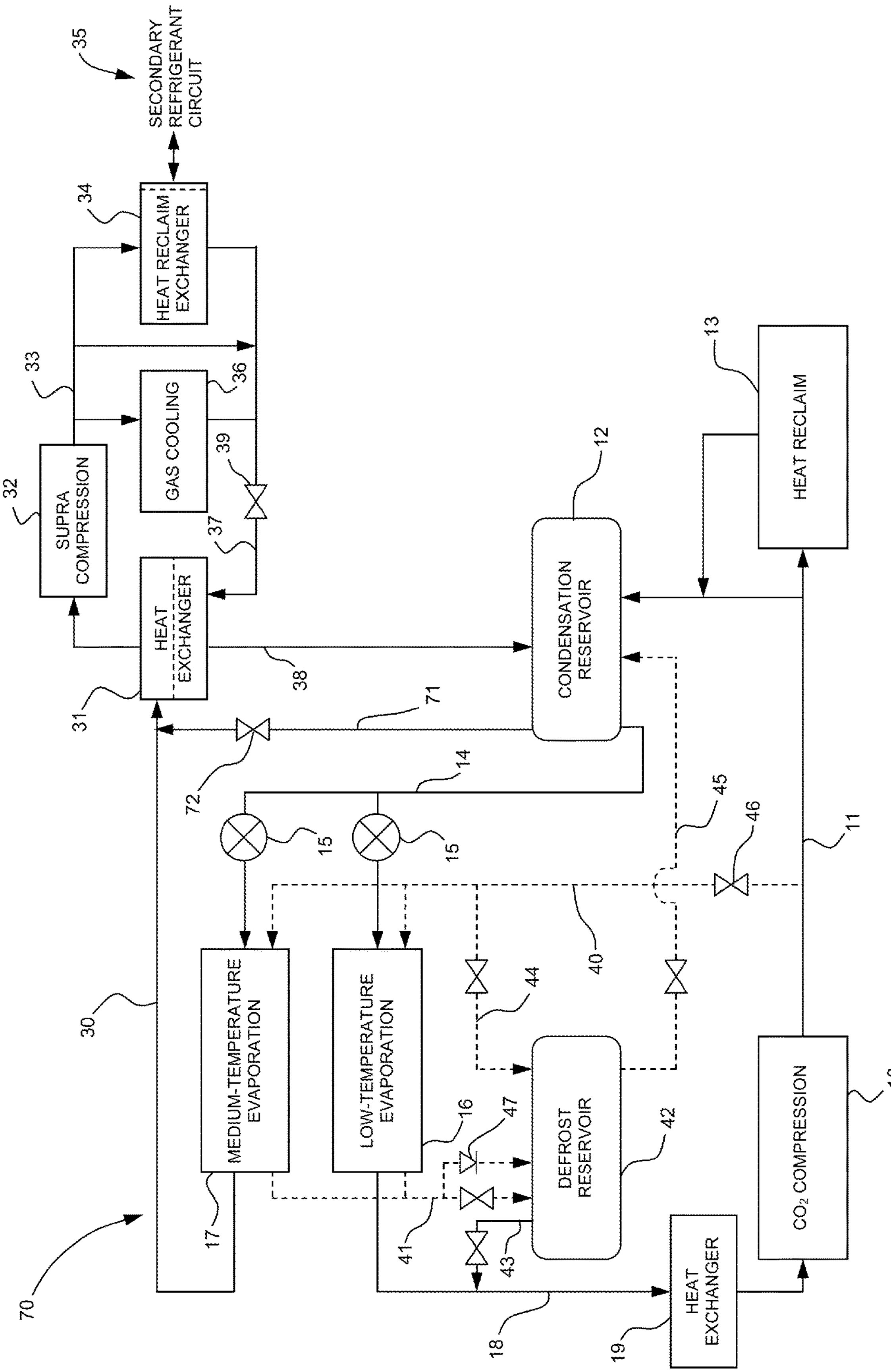


Fig. 4



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GAS COOLING
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HEAT EXCHANGER
31
38
71
72
14
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15
12
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR
13
HEAT RECLAIM
30
MEDIUM-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
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46
11
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44
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DEFROST RESERVOIR
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CO_2 COMPRESSION
17
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70
18
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HEAT EXCHANGER

Fig. 5

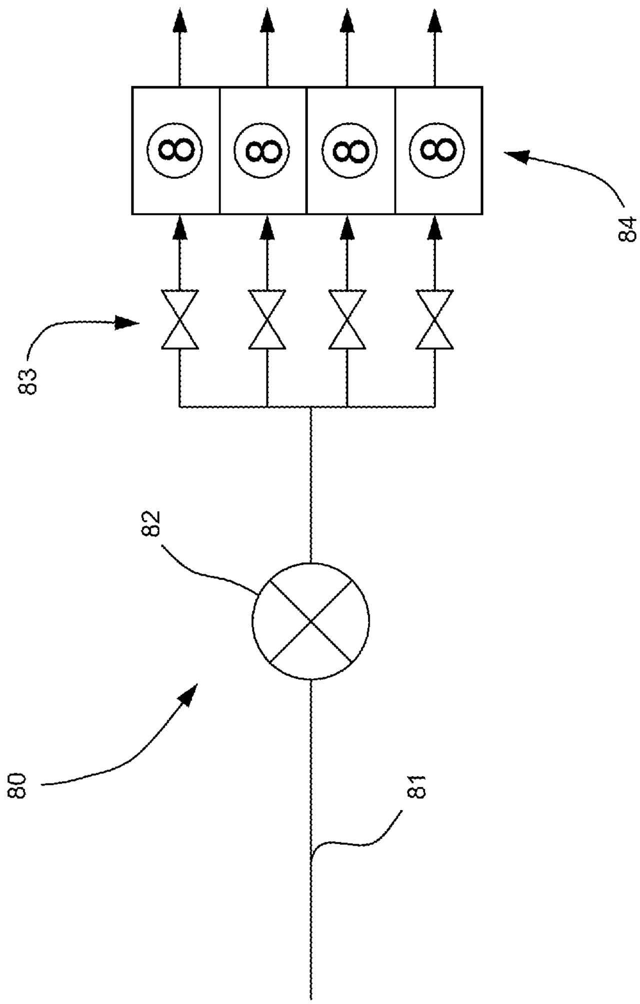
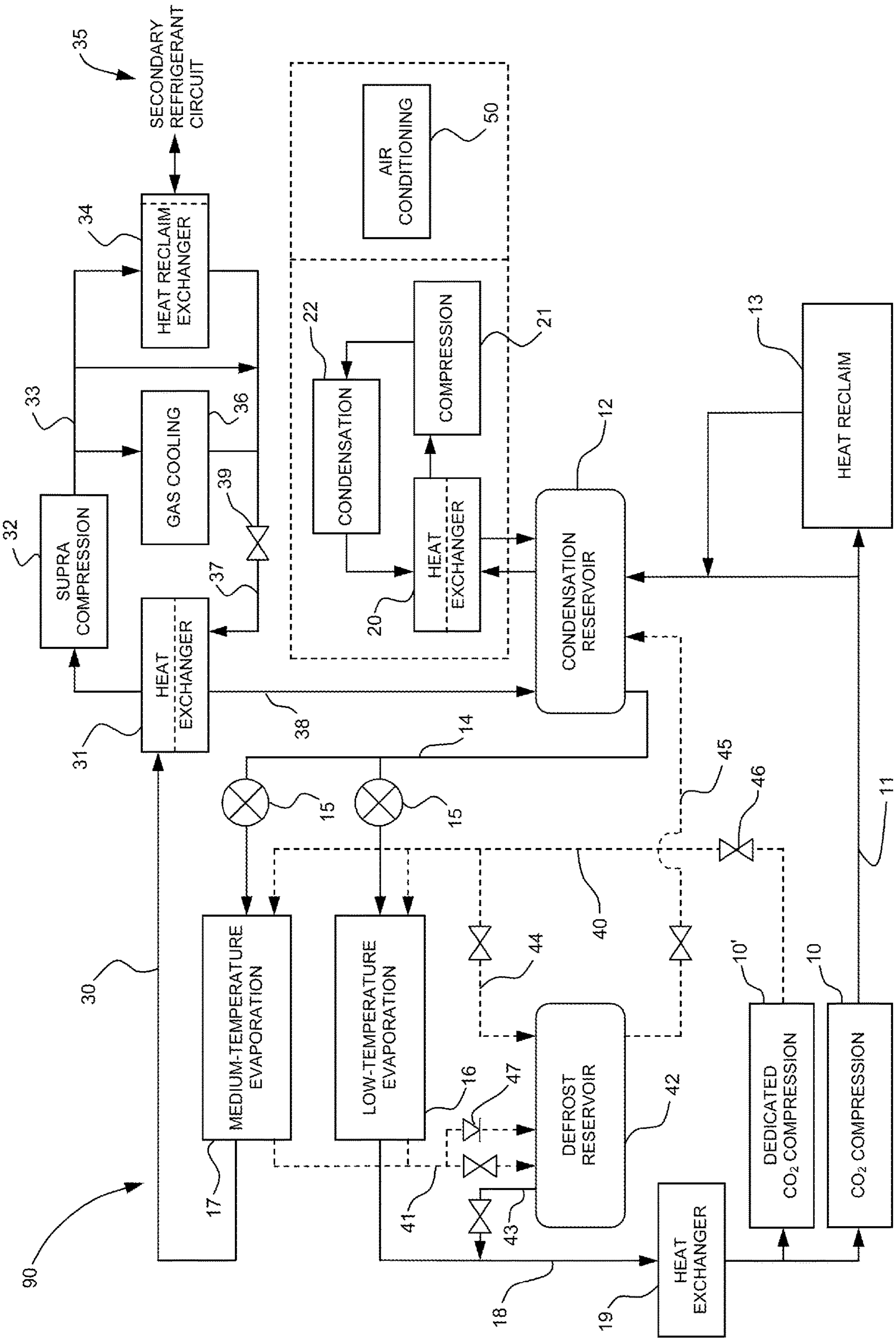


Fig. 6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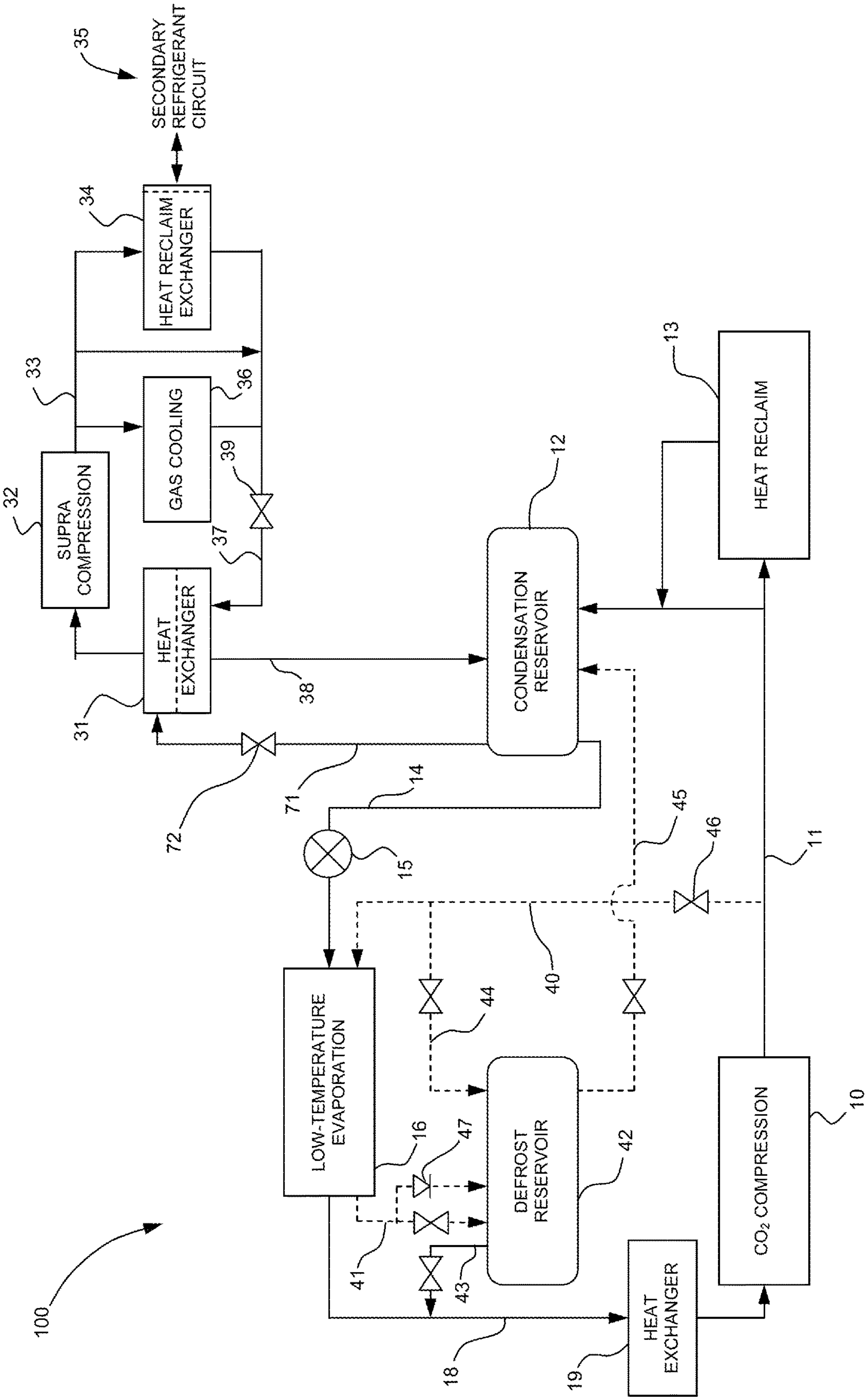
CONDENSATION
HEAT EXCHANGER
37
20
13
HEAT RECLAIM
12
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR
HEAT EXCHANGER
31
38
14
45
46
15
15
11
40
44
MEDIUM-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
30
10'
10
DEDICATED CO_2 COMPRESSION
CO_2 COMPRESSION
DEFROST RESERVOIR
16
47
42
17
41
43
90
HEAT EXCHANGER
18
19

Fig. 7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GAS COOLING
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SUPRA COMPRESSION
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HEAT EXCHANGER
31
38
12
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR
13
HEAT RECLAIM
72
71
14
15
45
46
11
40
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
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16
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DEFROST RESERVOIR
42
41
43
CO$_2$ COMPRESSION
10
HEAT EXCHANGER
19
18
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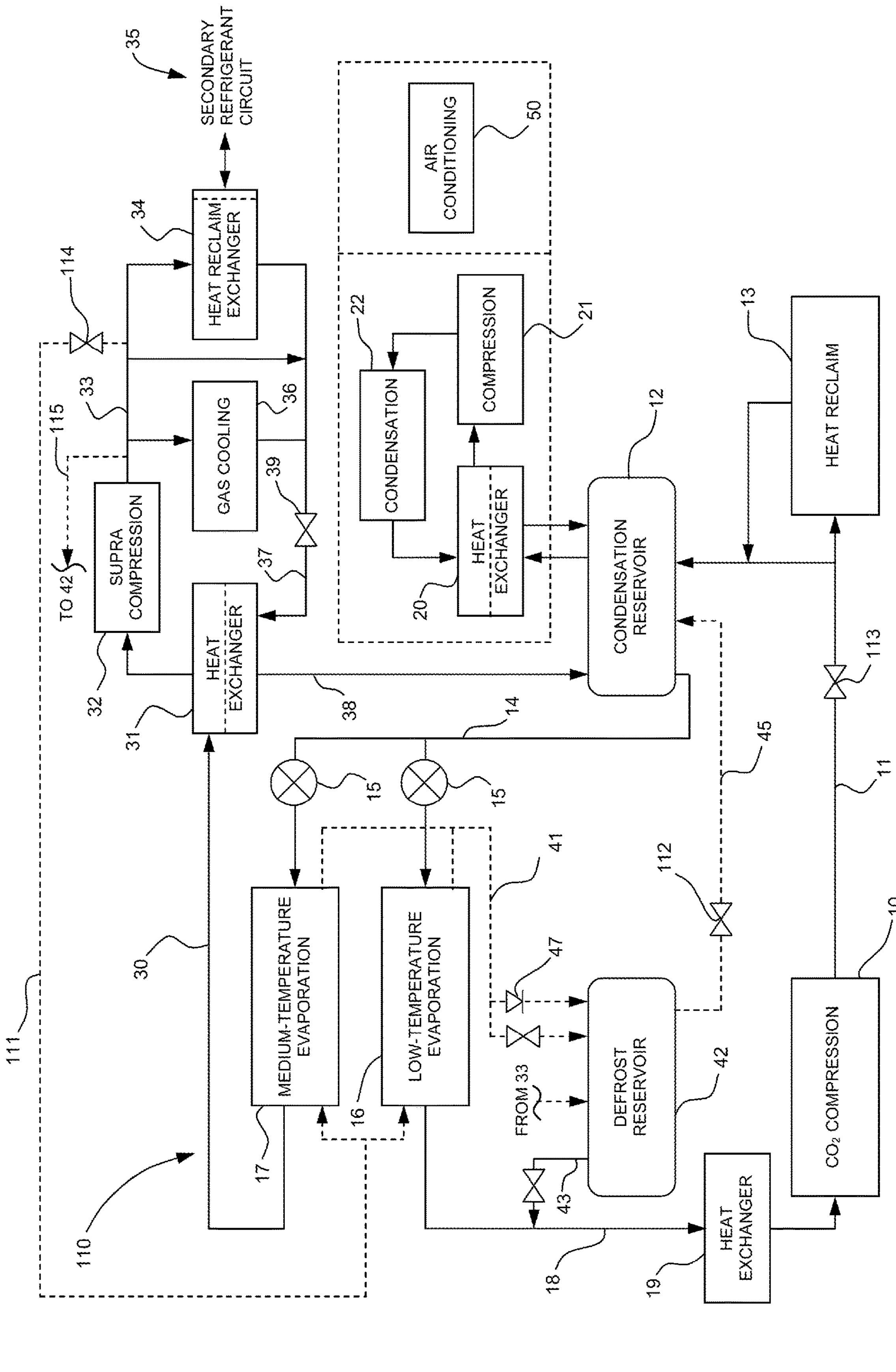
Fig. 8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COMPRESSION
CONDENSATION
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115
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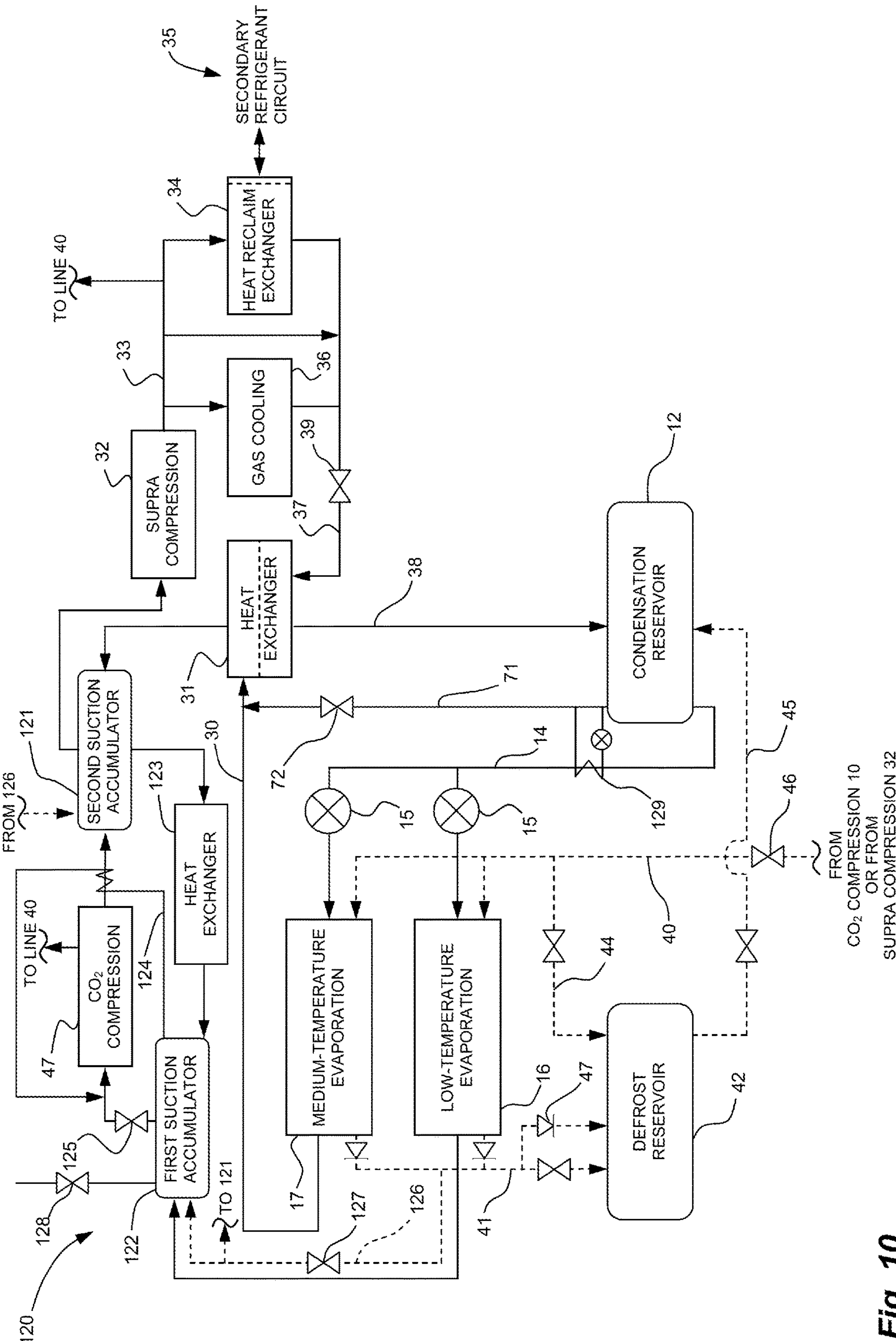
36
GAS COOLING
TO 42
SUPRA COMPRESSION
39
37
HEAT EXCHANGER
20
12
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR
32
31
38
113
14
15
15
45
11
30
41
112
MEDIUM-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
47
10
111
DEFROST RESERVOIR
42
CO₂ COMPRESSION
FROM 33
17
16
43
110
18
19

Fig. 9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TO LINE 40
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GAS COOLING
36
39
SUPRA COMPRESSION
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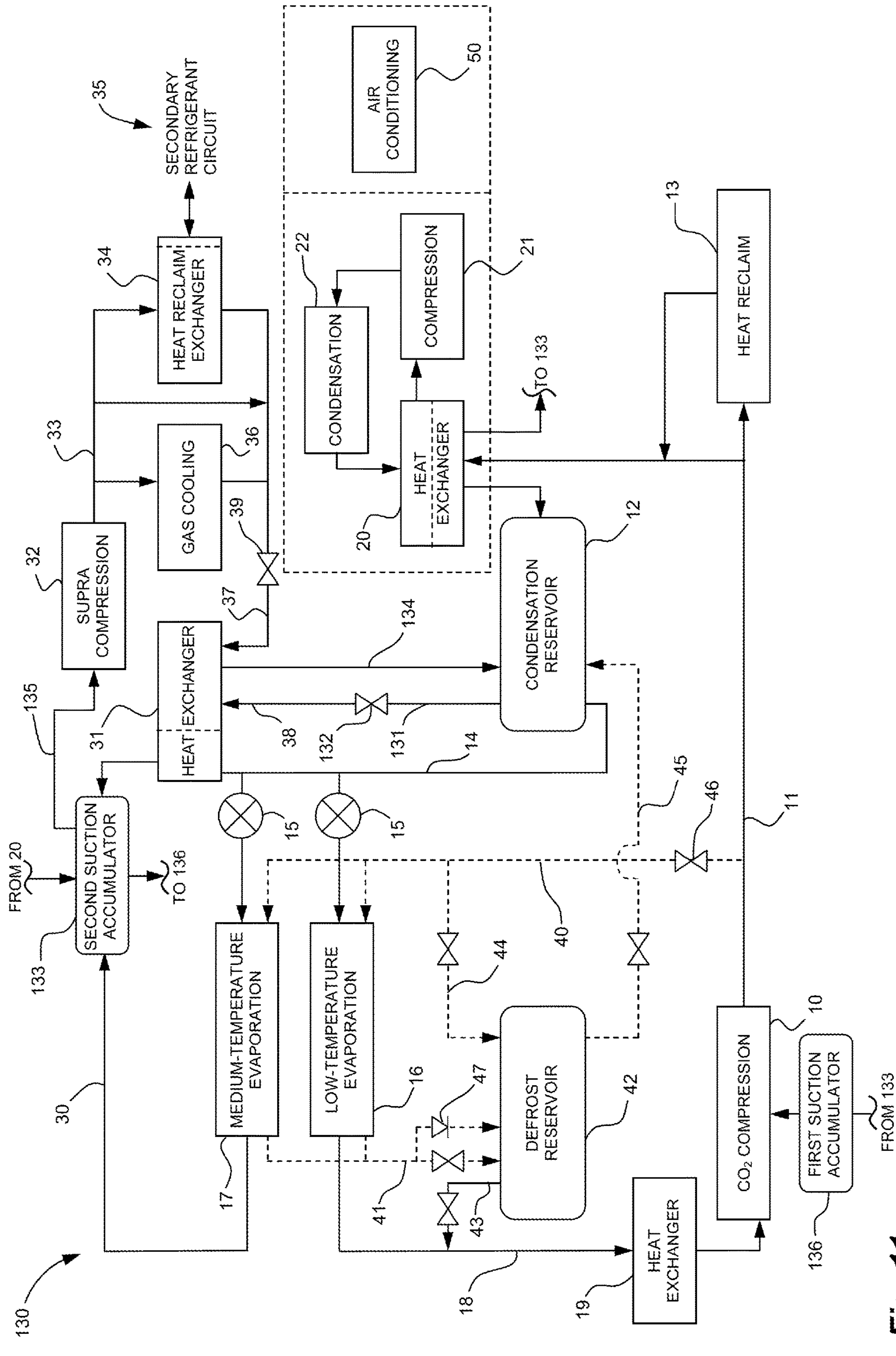
37
HEAT EXCHANGER
31
38
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR
12
71
72
14
129
30
SECOND SUCTION ACCUMULATOR
121
FROM 126
123
HEAT EXCHANGER
15
CO2 COMPRESSION
TO LINE 40
124
47
MEDIUM-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
40
44
45
46
FROM CO2 COMPRESSION 10 OR FROM SUPRA COMPRESSION 32
DEFROST RESERVOIR
42
16
47
41
FIRST SUCTION ACCUMULATOR
125
128
122
TO 121
17
127
126
120

Fig. 10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HEAT RECLAIM EXCHANGER
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COMPRESSION
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CONDENSATION
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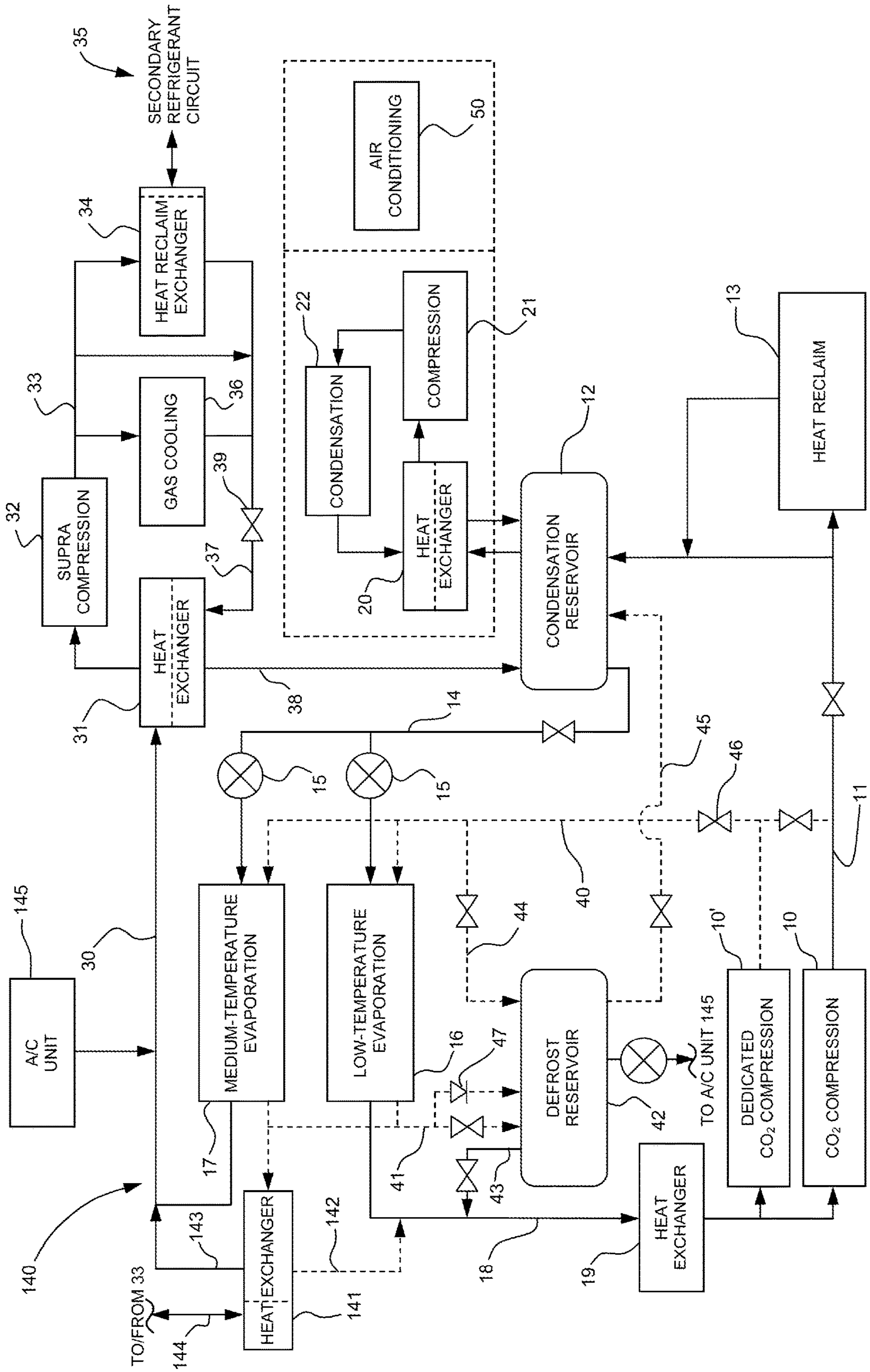
36
HEAT EXCHANGER
20
TO 133
13
HEAT RECLAIM
32
SUPRA COMPRESSION
39
37
12
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR
134
HEAT EXCHANGER
31
135
38
132
131
14
45
46
15
15
SECOND SUCTION ACCUMULATOR
FROM 20
TO 136
133
11
40
MEDIUM-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
44
10
DEFROST RESERVOIR
42
CO2 COMPRESSION
FIRST SUCTION ACCUMULATOR
FROM 133
30
16
47
17
41
43
HEAT EXCHANGER
19
18
136

Fig. 11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AIR CONDITIONING
50
CONDENSATION
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COMPRESSION
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HEAT EXCHANGER
20
CONDENSATION RESERVOIR
12
HEAT RECLAIM
13
14
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15
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A/C UNIT
145
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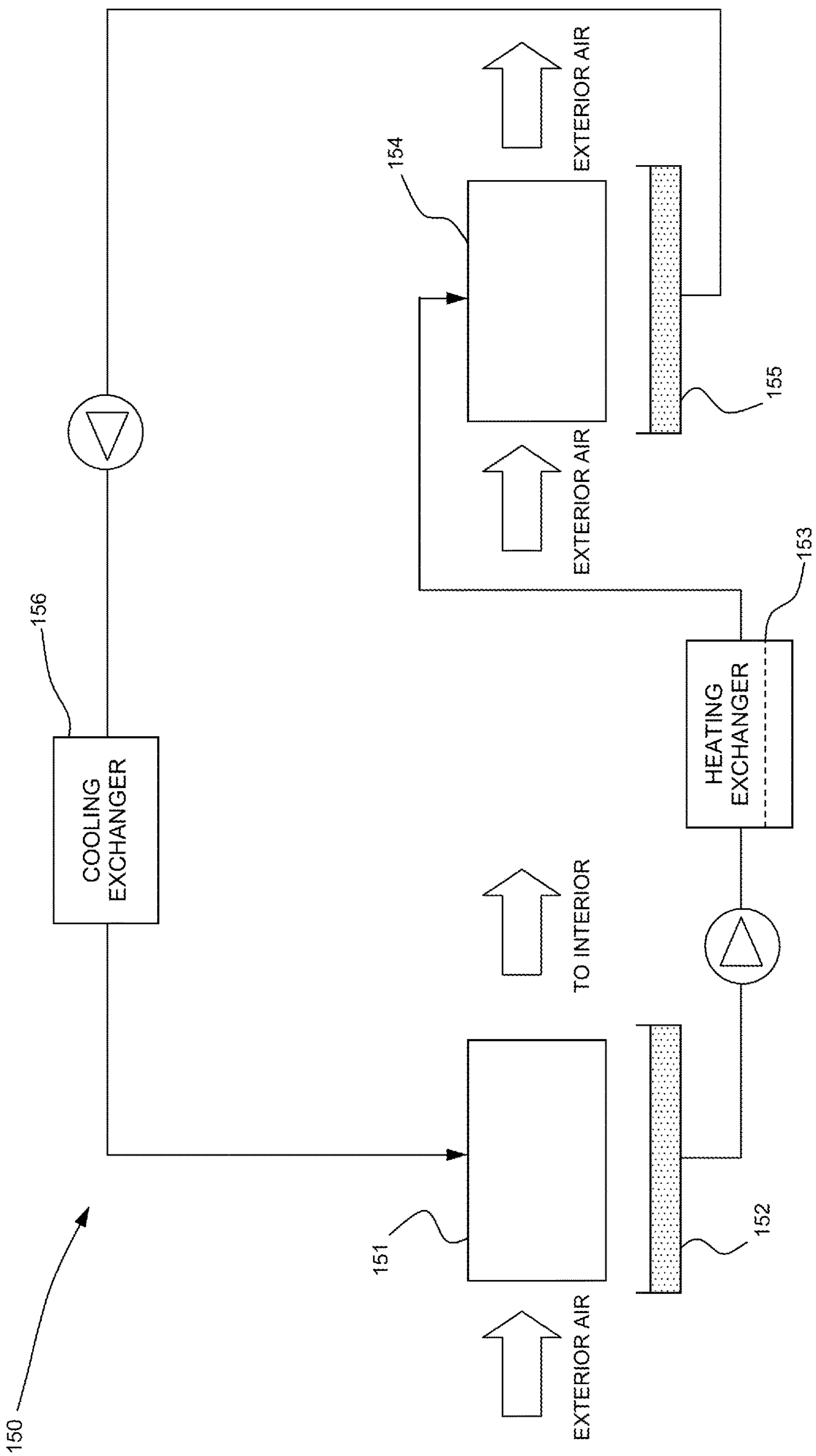
MEDIUM-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
LOW-TEMPERATURE EVAPORATION
44
DEFROST RESERVOIR
TO A/C UNIT 145
DEDICATED CO_2 COMPRESSION
10'
CO_2 COMPRESSION
10
16
47
42
41
43
17
140
HEAT EXCHANGER
143
142
141
TO/FROM 33
144
18
HEAT EXCHANGER
19

Fig. 12


150
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COOLING EXCHANGER
HEATING EXCHANGER
EXTERIOR AIR
TO INTERIOR
EXTERIOR AIR
EXTERIOR AIR

Fig. 13

CO2 REFRIGERATION SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a continuation of Ser. No. 14/831,170 filed on Aug. 20, 2015, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/124,894, which is a national phase entry of PCT/CA09/01536, filed on Oct. 23, 2009, which claims priority on U.S. Patent Application No. 61/107,689, filed on Oct. 23, 2008, No. 61/166,884, filed on Apr. 6, 2009, and No. 61/184,021, filed on Jun. 4, 2009, the entire contents of each of which is incorporated by reference herein.

FIELD OF THE APPLICATION

[0002] The present application relates to refrigeration systems, and more particularly to refrigeration systems using CO_2 refrigerant.

BACKGROUND OF THE ART

[0003] Wth the growing concern for global warming, the use of chlorofluoro-carbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) as refrigerant has been identified as having a negative impact on the environment. These chemicals have non-negligible ozone-depletion potential and/or global-warming potential.

[0004] As alternatives to CFCs and HCFCs, ammonia, hydrocarbons and CO_2 are used as refrigerants. Although ammonia and hydrocarbons have negligible ozone-depletion potential and global-warming potential as does CO_2, these refrigerants are highly flammable and therefore represent a risk to local safety. On the other hand, CO_2 is environmentally benign and locally safe.

SUMMARY OF THE APPLICATION

[0005] It is therefore an aim of the present disclosure to provide a CO_2 refrigeration system that addresses issues associated with the prior art.

[0006] Therefore, in accordance with a first embodiment of the present application, there is provided a CO_2 refrigeration system for an ice-playing surface, comprising: a supra-compression portion comprising a supra-compression stage in which CO_2 refrigerant is supra-compressed and a cooling stage in which the supra-compressed CO_2 refrigerant releases heat; a condensation reservoir accumulating a portion of the CO_2 refrigerant in a liquid state; pressure-regulating means between the supra-compression portion and the condensation reservoir to control a pressure of the supra-compressed CO_2 refrigerant being directed to the condensation reservoir; and an evaporation stage receiving the CO_2 refrigerant from the condensation reservoir, the evaporation stage having a circuit of pipes arranged under the ice-playing surface, whereby the CO_2 refrigerant circulating in the circuit of pipes of the evaporation stage absorbs heat from the ice-playing surface.

[0007] Further in accordance with the first embodiment, the system further comprises a secondary refrigerant circuit in which circulates a secondary refrigerant, and wherein the supra-compression portion comprises at least one heat reclaim exchanger related to the secondary refrigerant circuit, the at least one heat reclaim exchanger causing the supra-compressed CO_2 refrigerant to release heat to the secondary refrigerant.

[0008] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the heat reclaim exchanger and the gas cooling stage are in at least one of a parallel arrangement, and a series arrangement.

[0009] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the system further comprises at least one water tank in the secondary refrigerant circuit, with the at least one water tank comprising a heat exchanger in which circulates the secondary refrigerant to heat water in the water tank.

[0010] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the secondary refrigerant circuit further comprises at least one water tank, with the at least one water tank comprising a heat exchanger in which circulates the CO_2 refrigerant to heat water in the water tank.

[0011] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the secondary refrigerant circuit comprises at least one melting heat exchanger in an ice dump, the melting heat exchanger receiving secondary refrigerant to release heat to zamboni residue in the ice dump.

[0012] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the system further comprises a suction line extending from a top of the condensation reservoir to an inlet of the supra-compression stage, with a valve in said suction line, such that gaseous CO_2 refrigerant in the condensation reservoir is directed to the supra-compression stage.

[0013] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the system further comprises a heat exchanger in said suction line for heat exchange between the gaseous CO_2 refrigerant and CO_2 refrigerant exiting the cooling stage.

[0014] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the system comprises a pressure-controlling unit in said suction line to control a pressure differential between the condensation reservoir and the supra-compression stage.

[0015] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the system further comprises an expansion stage between the condensation reservoir and the evaporation stage to vaporize the CO_2 refrigerant fed to the circuit of pipes.

[0016] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the system further comprises at least one pump between the condensation reservoir and the evaporation stage to induce a flow of CO_2 refrigerant to the evaporation stage.

[0017] Still further in accordance with the first embodiment, the supra-compression stage compresses the CO_2 refrigerant to a transcritical state.

[0018] In accordance with a second embodiment of the present application, there is provided a CO_2 refrigeration system for an ice-playing surface, comprising: a CO_2 refrigerant circuit comprising a condensation reservoir accumulating a portion of the CO_2 refrigerant in a liquid state, and an evaporation stage receiving the CO_2 refrigerant from the condensation reservoir, the evaporation stage having a circuit of pipes arranged under the ice-playing surface, whereby the CO_2 refrigerant circulating in the circuit of pipes of the evaporation stage absorbs heat from the ice-playing surface; an independent refrigerant circuit in heat-exchange relation with the CO_2 refrigerant of the CO_2 refrigerant circuit, the independent refrigerant circuit comprising a compression stage with at least one magnetically-operated compressor to compress a secondary refrigerant, a condensation stage in which the secondary refrigerant releases heat, and an evaporation stage in which the secondary refrigerant is in heat exchange relation with the CO_2 refrigerant circuit by a heat exchanger to absorb heat therefrom.

[0019] Further in accordance with the second embodiment, the system further comprises a line extending from a top of the condensation reservoir to the heat exchanger, such that gaseous CO_2 refrigerant in the condensation reservoir is directed to the independent refrigerant circuit.

[0020] Still further in accordance with the present disclosure, there is provided a CO_2 refrigeration system for an ice-playing surface, comprising: a compression portion comprising: a compression stage comprising at least one compressor in which CO_2 refrigerant is compressed to a transcritical state; a gas cooling stage in which the CO_2 refrigerant compressed to the transcritical state releases heat by heat exchange with a gas; pressure-regulating means downstream of the gas cooling stage to control a pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant in the compression portion of the CO_2 refrigeration system; and an oil circuit in the CO_2 refrigeration system, the oil circuit collecting oil downstream of the at least one compressor in the compression stage, the oil circuit directing the oil upstream of the at least one compressor for the CO_2 refrigerant fed to the compressor to have an oil content.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0021] FIG. **1** is a block diagram of a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with an embodiment of the present application;

[0022] FIG. **2** is a block diagram of the CO_2 refrigeration system of FIG. **1**, with an example of operating pressures for a cold climate application;

[0023] FIG. **3** is a block diagram of the CO_2 refrigeration system of FIG. **1**, with an example of operating pressures for a warm climate application; and

[0024] FIG. **4** is a schematic view of a line used with the CO_2 refrigeration system, in accordance with another embodiment of the present application.

[0025] FIG. **5** is a block diagram of a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with another embodiment,

[0026] FIG. **6** is a schematic view of a line configuration for a refrigeration unit, in accordance with yet another embodiment of the present application;

[0027] FIG. **7** is a block diagram of a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with another embodiment, with dedicated compression for defrost;

[0028] FIG. **8** is a block diagram of a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with another embodiment, e.g., for a skating rink application;

[0029] FIG. **9** is a block diagram of a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with another embodiment, with a supra-compression providing defrost;

[0030] FIG. **10** is a block diagram of a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with another embodiment, with cascaded compression;

[0031] FIG. **11** is a block diagram of a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with another embodiment, with suction accumulation upstream of a supra-compression stage;

[0032] FIG. **12** is a block diagram of a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with another embodiment, with a heat-exchanger for defrost refrigerant; and

[0033] FIG. **13** is a schematic view of a desiccant system in accordance with another embodiment of the present application.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0034] Referring to FIG. **1**, a CO_2 refrigeration system in accordance with an embodiment is illustrated at **1**. The CO_2 refrigeration system **1** has a CO_2 refrigeration circuit comprising a CO_2 compression stage **10**. CO_2 refrigerant is compressed in the compression stage **10**, and is subsequently directed via line **11** to a condensation reservoir **12**, or to a heat-reclaim stage **13**.

[0035] The condensation reservoir **12** accumulates CO_2 refrigerant in a liquid and gaseous state, and is in a heat-exchange relation with a condensation circuit that absorbs heat from the CO_2 refrigerant. The condensation circuit is described in further detail hereinafter. Moreover, a transcritical circuit and a defrost circuit may supply CO_2 refrigerant to the condensation reservoir **12**, as is described in further detail hereinafter.

[0036] The heat-reclaim stage **13** is provided to absorb heat from the CO_2 refrigerant exiting from the compression stage **10**. The heat-reclaim stage **13** may take various forms, such as that of a heat exchanger by which the CO_2 refrigerant is in heat exchange with an alcohol-based refrigerant circulating in a closed loop. As another example, the heat-reclaim stage **13** features coils by which the CO_2 refrigerant releases heat to a water tank.

[0037] Line **14** directs CO_2 refrigerant from the condensation reservoir **12** to an evaporation stage via expansion valves **15**. As is shown in FIG. **1**, the CO_2 refrigerant is supplied in a liquid state by the condensation reservoir **12** into line **14**. The expansion valves **15** control the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant, which is then fed to either low-temperature evaporation stage **16** or medium-temperature evaporation stage **17**. Both the evaporation stages **16** and **17** feature evaporators associated with refrigerated enclosures, such as closed or opened refrigerators, freezers or the like. It is pointed out that the expansion valves **15** may be part of a refrigeration pack in the mechanical room, as opposed to being at the refrigeration cabinets. As a result, flexible lines (e.g., plastic non-rigid lines) could extend from the expansion valves **15** to diffuser upstream of the coils of the evaporation stages **16** and **17**. The valves **15** may be at the refrigeration cabinets, at the refrigeration pack in a mechanical room, or any other suitable location.

[0038] CO_2 refrigerant exiting the low-temperature evaporation stage **16** is directed to the CO_2 compression stage **10** via line **18** to complete a refrigeration cycle. A heat exchanger **19** is provided in the line **18**, and ensures that the CO_2 refrigerant is fed to the compression stage **10** in a gaseous state. Other components, such as a liquid accumulator, may be used as an alternative to the heat exchanger **19**. As described hereinafter, the heat exchanger **19** may be associated with a condensation circuit.

[0039] CO_2 refrigerant exiting the medium-temperature evaporation stage **17** is directed to the transcritical circuit as is described hereinafter.

[0040] A condensation circuit has a heat exchanger **20**. The heat exchanger **20** is in fluid communication with the condensation reservoir **12**, so as to receive CO_2 refrigerant in a gaseous state. The condensation circuit is closed and comprises a condensation refrigerant that also circulates in the heat exchanger **20** so as to absorb heat from the CO_2 refrigerant.

[0041] In the condensation circuit, the condensation refrigerant circulates between the heat exchanger **20** in which the condensation refrigerant absorbs heat, a compression stage **21** in which the condensation refrigerant is compressed, and a condensation stage **22** in which the condensation refrigerant releases heat. The compression stage **21** may use Turbocor™ compressors. In an example, the condensation stage **22** features heat reclaiming (e.g., using a heat exchanger with a heat-transfer fluid) in parallel or in series with other components of the condensation stage **22**, so as to reclaim heat from the CO_2 refrigerant. Although not shown, the condensation circuit may be used in conjunction with the heat exchanger **19**, so as to absorb heat from the CO_2 refrigerant being directed to the compression stage **10**. In this case, the condensation refrigerant is in a heat-exchange relation with the CO_2 refrigerant.

[0042] It is pointed out that the condensation circuit may be used with more than one CO_2 refrigeration circuit. In such a case, the condensation circuit features a plurality of heat exchangers **20**, for instance with one for each of the CO_2 refrigeration circuits.

[0043] Examples of the condensation refrigerant are refrigerants such as R-404 and R-507, amongst numerous examples. It is observed that the condensation circuit may be confined to its own casing as illustrated in FIG. **1**. Moreover, considering that the condensation circuit is preferably limited to absorbing heat from stages on a refrigeration pack (e.g., condensation reservoir **12**, suction header in line **18**), the condensation circuit does not contain a large volume of refrigerant when compared to the CO_2 refrigeration circuit, of a secondary refrigerant circuit defined hereinafter.

[0044] The transcritical circuit (i.e., supra-compression circuit) is provided to compress the CO_2 refrigerant exiting from the medium-temperature evaporation stage **17** to a transcritical state, for heating purposes, or supra-compressed state. In both compression states, the CO_2 refrigerant is pressurized in view of maintaining the condensation reservoir **12** at a high enough pressure to allow vaporized CO_2 refrigerant to be circulated in the evaporation stages **16** and **17**, as opposed to liquid CO_2 refrigerant.

[0045] A line **30** relates the medium-temperature evaporation stage **17** to a heat exchanger **31** and subsequently to a supra-compression stage **32**. The heat exchanger **31** is provided to vaporize the CO_2 refrigerant fed to the transcritical compression stage **32**. The supra-compression stage **32** features one or more compressors (e.g., Bock™, Dorin™), that compress the CO_2 refrigerant to a supra-compressed or transcritical state.

[0046] In the transcritical state, the CO_2 refrigerant is used to heat a secondary refrigerant via heat-reclaim exchanger **34**. In the heat-reclaim exchanger **34**, the CO_2 refrigerant is in a heat-exchange relation with the secondary refrigerant circulating in the secondary refrigerant circuit **35**. The secondary refrigerant is preferably an environmentally-sound refrigerant, such as water or glycol, that is used as a heat-transfer fluid. Because of the transcritical state of the CO_2 refrigerant, the secondary refrigerant circulating in the circuit **35** reaches a high temperature. Accordingly, due to the high temperature of the secondary refrigerant, lines of smaller diameter may be used for the secondary refrigerant circuit **35**. It is pointed out that the secondary refrigerant circuit **35** is the largest of the circuits of the refrigeration system **1** in terms of quantity of refrigerant. Therefore, the compression of the CO_2 refrigerant into a transcritical state by the transcritical circuit allows the lines of the secondary refrigerant circuit **35** to be reduced in terms of diameter.

[0047] A gas cooling stage **36** is provided in the transcritical circuit. The gas cooling stage **36** absorbs excess heat from the CO_2 refrigerant in the transcritical state, in view of re-injecting the CO_2 refrigerant in the condensation reservoir **12**. Although it is illustrated in a parallel relation with the heat-reclaim exchanger **34**, the gas cooling stage **36** may be in series therewith, or in any other suitable arrangement. Although not shown, appropriate valves are provided so as to control the amount of CO_2 refrigerant directed to the gas cooling stage **36**, in view of the heat demand from the heat-reclaim exchanger **34**.

[0048] In warmer climates in which the demand for heat is smaller, the CO_2 refrigerant is compressed to a supra-compressed state, namely at a high enough pressure to allow the expansion of the CO_2 refrigerant at the exit of the condensation reservoir **12**, so as to reduce the amount of CO_2 refrigerant circulating in the refrigeration circuit. A by-pass line is provided to illustrate that the heat-reclaim exchanger **24** and the gas cooling stage **36** are optional for warmer climates.

[0049] The gas cooling stage **36** may feature a fan blowing a gas refrigerant on coils. The speed of the fan may be controlled as a function of the heat demand of the heat reclaim exchanger **34**. For an increased speed of the fan, there results an increase in the temperature differential at opposite ends of the gas cooling stage **36**.

[0050] Lines **37** and **38** return the CO_2 refrigerant to the condensation reservoir **12**, and thus to the refrigeration circuit. The line **37** feeds the heat exchanger **31** such that the CO_2 refrigerant exiting the stages **34** and **36** release heat to the CO_2 refrigerant fed to the supra-compression stage **32**. Accordingly, the CO_2 refrigerant fed to the supra-compression stage **32** is in a gaseous state.

[0051] In the case of transcritical compression, a CO_2 transcritical pressure-regulating valve **39** is provided to maintain appropriate pressures at the stages **34** and **36**, and in the condensation reservoir **12**. The CO_2 transcritical pressure-regulating valve **39** is for instance a Danfoss™ valve. Any other suitable pressure-control device may be used as an alternative to the valve **39**, such as any type of valve or loop.

[0052] The condensation circuit and the supra-compression circuit allow the condensation reservoir **12** to store refrigerant at a relatively medium pressure. Accordingly, no pump may be required to induce the flow of refrigerant from the condensation reservoir **12** to the evaporation stages **16** and **17**. As CO_2 refrigerant is vaporized downstream of the expansion valves **15**, the amount of CO_2 refrigerant in the refrigeration circuit is reduced, especially if the expansion valves **15** are in the refrigeration pack.

[0053] It is considered to operate the supra-compression circuit (i.e., supra compression **32**) with higher operating pressure. CO_2 refrigerant has a suitable efficiency at a higher pressure. More specifically, more heat can be extracted when the pressure is higher.

[0054] The refrigeration system **1** may be provided with a refrigerant defrost system. In FIG. **1**, a portion of the CO_2 refrigerant exiting from the compression stage **10** is directed to the evaporation stages **16** and **17**. Although not shown, appropriate valves and pressure-reducing devices are provided to stop the flow of cooling CO_2 refrigerant in the evaporators in view of the defrost. The defrost CO_2 refrigerant releases heat to defrost any frost build-up on the evaporators of the evaporation stages **16** and/or **17**.

[0055] Although not shown, other compression configurations may be used to supply defrost refrigerant to the evaporators, such as dedicated compressors, cascaded compressors of the like.

[0056] Line **41** directs the defrost CO_2 refrigerant having released heat to the defrost reservoir **42**. The defrost reservoir **42** accumulates the defrost CO_2 refrigerant, and features a line **43** with a control valve (e.g., exhaust valve, check valve), so as to allow gaseous CO_2 refrigerant to be sucked back into the CO_2 refrigeration circuit by the CO_2 compression stage **10**. The defrost reservoir **42** is an option, as the evaporation stages **16** and **17** may direct the refrigerant to other reservoirs or accumulators of any other refrigeration system presenter herein.

[0057] A flush of the defrost reservoir **42** may be performed periodically, so as to empty the defrost reservoir **42**. Accordingly, lines **44** and **45**, with appropriate valves, allow the flush of the liquid CO_2 refrigerant from the defrost reservoir **42** to the condensation reservoir **12**.

[0058] A pressure-reducing valve **46** may be provided in the line **40** or line **11** to regulate a pressure of the defrost CO_2 refrigerant fed to the evaporation stage **16** and/or **17** for defrost. Valves, such as check valve **47**, are as relief valves for the evaporation stages **16** and **17**. For instance, in case of a power shortage, the CO_2 refrigerant in the evaporators may increase in pressure. Accordingly, the check valves **47** open at a threshold pressure to allow the CO_2 refrigerant to reach the defrost reservoir **42**.

[0059] Considering that the compressors of the CO_2 compression stage **10** or of the compression stage **21** are low-consumption compressors, these compressors may be operated during a power outage to maintain suitable refrigerating conditions in the evaporation stages **16** and **17**. The compressors of the compression stage **21** may also be Turbocor™ compressors.

[0060] As an alternative to the defrost circuit, the evaporators of the evaporation stages **16** and **17** may be equipped with electric coils for the electric defrost of the evaporators.

[0061] In an embodiment, the casing enclosing the condensation circuit may also comprise an air-conditioning unit **50**. Accordingly, the roof-top equipment associated with the refrigeration system **1** is provided in a single casing, thereby facilitating the installation thereof. Moreover, it is considered to unite as many components of the refrigeration system **1** in a single refrigeration pack. For instance, the compressors of the CO_2 compression stage **10**, the condensation reservoir **12**, the expansion valves **15**, and optionally the compressors from the supra-compression stage **32**, as well as the defrost reservoir **42** may all be provided in a same pack, with most of the lines joining these components. The installation is therefore simplified by such a configuration.

[0062] In order to illustrate the operating pressures of the CO_2 refrigeration system **1** in cold and warm climates, FIGS. **2** and **3** are respectively provided with pressure values. It is pointed out that all values are just an illustration, whereby pressure values could be higher or lower. FIG. **2** shows operating pressures for the CO_2 refrigeration system **1** as used in cold climates (e.g., winter conditions in colder regions), with a demand for heat by the secondary refrigerant circuit **35**. FIG. **3** shows operating pressures for the CO_2 refrigeration system as used in warm climates (e.g., summer conditions, warmer regions).

[0063] Although not fully illustrated, numerous valves are provided to control the operation of the CO_2 refrigeration system **1** as described above. Moreover, a controller A ensures that the various stages of the refrigeration system **1** operate as described, for instance by having a plurality of sensors places throughout the refrigeration system **1**.

[0064] Referring to FIG. **3**, there is illustrated a safety valve circuit **55** so as to ensure that the refrigerant pressure in the coils of the evaporation stages **16** and **17** does not exceed a given maximum value (e.g., 410 Psi), which may result in damages to the coils. The safety valve circuits **55** extends from the evaporation stages **16** and **17** (e.g., lines at the exit of the coils) to the defrost reservoir **42**. A safety valve **56** is provided in the circuit, and operates by monitoring the pressure in the coils and opening as a result of the pressure reaching the maximum value. The defrost reservoir **42** then absorbs the excess pressure by receiving the refrigerant. The defrost reservoir **42** subsequently discharges the refrigerant using the lines described previously.

[0065] Referring to FIG. **4**, a line that may be used in the CO_2 refrigeration system **1** is illustrated at **60**. The line **60** is a flexible hose adapted to support the relatively high pressures associated with CO_2 refrigerant. One suitable example of flexible hose is the "Transfer Oil" hydraulic hose by Gomax™. The hose **60** is rodded into a conduit of sleeves **61** of an insulating material, such as urethane, positioned end to end to cover the length of hose **60**. A plurality of hoses **60** may be used with a single sleeve **61**, provided the inner diameter of the sleeve **61** is large enough to receive the hoses **60**. Therefore, by the use of flexible hoses, the installation of the lines is simplified. Previous lines required welding operation to join tubes of metallic material.

[0066] Referring to FIG. **5**, an alternative embodiment of the CO_2 refrigeration system **1** of FIGS. **1-3** is illustrated at **70**. The CO_2 refrigeration systems **1** and **70** have numerous common stages and lines, whereby like elements will bear like reference numerals. One difference between the CO_2 refrigeration systems **1** and **70** is the absence of a condensation circuit such as the one having the heat exchanger **20** in FIGS. **1-3**. Rather, the CO_2 refrigerant in the condensation reservoir **12** is cooled by the transcritical circuit (i.e., supra-compression circuit) featuring the heat exchanger **31**.

[0067] Therefore, a line **71** extends from the condensation reservoir **12** and directs CO_2 refrigerant to the hot side of the heat exchanger **31**, which heat exchanger **31** is optional and is used to vaporize the CO_2 refrigerant if necessary. The line **71** may be collecting gas CO_2 refrigerant at a top of the condensation reservoir **12** to direct the CO_2 refrigerant to the heat exchanger **31**. A pressure-reducing valve **72** is provided in line **71** to ensure that the CO_2 refrigerant reaches the heat exchanger **31** at a suitable pressure. The CO_2 refrigerant goes through the supra-compression circuit in the manner described previously, so as to lose heat, and return to the condensation reservoir **12** primarily in a liquid state.

[0068] It is pointed out that the configuration of the CO_2 refrigeration system **70** of FIG. **5** is such that a single refrigerant, namely CO_2 refrigerant, is used therein.

[0069] Referring to FIG. **6**, an alternative line configuration is shown at **80**, which line configuration is typically used to supply refrigerant to large refrigeration units (e.g., in freezer rooms). Line **81**, typically a large diameter line, diverges into a plurality of smaller lines, from an expansion valve **82**. Each smaller line may have a valve **83**, and each feeds an own smaller refrigeration unit **84**. As a result, some of the units **84** may be turned off, so as to meet more precisely the cool demand of an enclosure.

[0070] Referring to FIG. **7**, yet another embodiment of a CO_2 refrigeration system is illustrated at **90**. The CO_2 refrigeration systems **1** and **90** have numerous common stages and lines, whereby like elements will bear like reference numerals. One difference between the CO_2 refrigeration systems **1** and **90** is the presence of at least one dedicated compressor **10'** to compress defrost refrigerant. The discharge of the dedicated compressor **10'** goes at least partially to the defrost circuit, whereas the discharge of the other compressors **10** is directed to the refrigeration circuit. A line and valve (not shown) may be used to direct some excess refrigerant from the dedicated compressor **10'** to the refrigeration circuit. The CO_2 dedicated compressor **10'** may also be used to flush the defrost reservoir **42**.

[0071] As an alternative, defrost could be made by directing refrigerant from the supra-compression circuit, into the defrost circuit, using an appropriate pressure-reducing valve.

[0072] Referring to FIG. **8**, yet another embodiment of a CO_2 refrigeration system is illustrated at **100**. The CO_2 refrigeration systems **70** (FIG. **5**) and **90** have numerous common stages and lines, whereby like elements will bear like reference numerals. The CO_2 refrigeration system **100** is well suited for applications requiring low-temperature cooling, such as ice-skating rinks and industrial freezer applications.

[0073] The CO_2 refrigeration system **100** may be configured to operate without the CO_2 compression stages, due to the heat removal capacity of the supra-compression circuit. In such a configuration, a pump may circulate the refrigerant in the refrigeration circuit, from the condensation reservoir **12** to the low-temperature evaporation **16**. In the ice-skating rink applications, the various heat absorbing components (e.g., the heat reclaim stage **13**, the heat reclaim exchanger **34**) may be used to melt zamboni residue in an ice dump. It is preferred not to use the supra-compression circuit when the CO_2 refrigeration system **100** is operated in warmer countries. The CO_2 refrigeration system **100** is more efficient with CO_2 compression in such climates.

[0074] Considering the nature of the refrigerant, plastic tubing or non-rigid lines may be used as an alternative to the rigid metallic lines previously used, between the mechanical room and the stages of the systems, such as the condensation stage **12** and the evaporation stages **16** and **17**. One known type of pipes that can be used is Halcor Cusmart pipes, and features a non-rigid copper core with a plastic insulation sleeve about the core. Such configurations are cost-efficient in that no weld joints are required to interconnect pipes, as is the case for rigid metallic lines. Gutters, for instance having a trapezoid cross-section, may be used as a guide for lines.

[0075] Referring to FIG. **9**, yet another embodiment of a CO_2 refrigeration system is illustrated at **110**. The CO_2 refrigeration systems **1** and **110** have numerous common stages and lines, whereby like elements will bear like reference numerals. One difference between the CO_2 refrigeration systems **1** and **110** is line **111** directing CO_2 refrigerant from the supra-compression stage **32** to the evaporator stages **16** and **17** for defrost. Accordingly, the CO_2 refrigerant fed to the evaporation stage **16/17** is at a relatively high pressure—valve **114** may be provided to lower the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to an appropriate level (e.g., 500 Psi). The defrost refrigerant is then directed to the defrost reservoir **42**. A valve **112** is provided to control the amount of defrost refrigerant from the reservoir **42** reintegrating the refrigeration cycle. Moreover, in order to maintain a suitable compression ratio in view of the operating pressure of the condensation reservoir **12**, a pressure-reducing valve **113** is provided in the line **11**, so as to reduce the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant feeding the condensation reservoir **12**.

[0076] Moreover, the refrigeration system **110** has a line **115** (with appropriate valves) selectively directing refrigerant from the supra-compression stage **32** to the defrost reservoir **42**, to flush the reservoir **42** when required. It is pointed out that the heat exchangers **19** and **31** are optional, as is the condensation circuit featuring the compression stage **21**.

[0077] Referring to FIG. **10**, yet another embodiment of a CO_2 refrigeration system is illustrated at **120**. The CO_2 refrigeration systems **70** and **120** have numerous common stages and lines, whereby like elements will bear like reference numerals. The CO_2 refrigeration system **120** has a cascaded arrangement for the two stages of CO_2 compression, namely compression stage **10** and supra-compression stage **32**. More specifically, the refrigerant discharge from the compression stage **10** is fed to a suction accumulator **121**, and CO_2 refrigerant in a gas state is sucked from a top of the accumulator **121** by the supra-compression stage **32**.

[0078] The suction accumulator **121** also receives CO_2 refrigerant from the evaporation stage **17**, optionally via heat exchanger **31**. Gas CO_2 refrigerant from the condensation reservoir **12** may also be directed to the suction accumulator **121**. The liquid CO_2 refrigerant from the suction accumulator **121** may be directed to the compression stage **10**.

[0079] In order to maintain suitable conditions for the refrigerant at the inlet of the compression stage, a first suction accumulator **122** is provided downstream of the compression stage **10**, which suction accumulator **122** receives CO_2 refrigerant from the suction accumulator **121** through a line (e.g., capillary) having a heat exchanger **123** for heat exchange with a discharge of the supracompression stage **32**, or with a discharge of the compression stage **10**. Moreover, liquid refrigerant from the suction accumulator **122** may be heated by line **124**, in heat exchange with the discharge of the compression stage **10** or with supracompression stage **32**, or simply by using an electric heater. The line **124** may then direct the vaporized refrigerant to the suction of the compression stage **10**. In an embodiment, the line **124** collects liquid CO_2 refrigerant and oil at a bottom of the suction accumulator **122**. Accordingly, the vaporized refrigerant has an oil content when fed to the compressors of the compression stage **10**. The oil is then recuperated for instance in the suction accumulator **121**. A similar loop may be performed to feed a mixture of CO_2 refrigerant and oil to the supra-compression stage **32**.

[0080] In the embodiment in which the line **124** directs vaporized refrigerant to the suction of the compression stage **10**, a valve **125** is provided in that case to maintain a pressure differential between the suction accumulator **122** and the suction of the compression stage **10**, to allow the flow of refrigerant from line **124** into CO_2 compression stage **10**. It is considered to use other components than suction accumulator **121**, suction accumulator **122**, line **124** and heat exchanger **123** to vaporize the refrigerant, such as a heating element, an air conditioning system, a heat exchanger and the like. It is also considered that CO_2 refrigerant leaving suction accumulator **121** and suction accumulator **122** be directed elsewhere in the CO_2 refrigeration system.

[0081] The cascaded compressor configuration of FIG. **10** is well suited to preserve the oil in the compression stage **10**. More specifically, oil accumulating in the suction accumulator **121** is returned to the suction accumulator **122** via the line of heat-exchanger **123**. The oil may then be sucked with refrigerant by the compression stage **10**. Accordingly, the oil cycles between stages **10**, **121** and **122**. A similar cycle may be used for feeding an oil and refrigerant mixture to the supra-compression stage **32**.

[0082] The defrost of the evaporation stages **16** and **17** may be performed at low pressure so as to avoid damaging the evaporator coils. Accordingly, the refrigeration cycle **120** may be retrofitted to existing evaporator coils, considering the relatively low defrost pressures. The defrost CO_2 refrigerant may be fed by the compression stage **10**, or by the supra compression stage **32**, with valve **46** controlling the pressure.

[0083] In order to protect the evaporator coils from high defrost pressures, a set of lines **126** extends from the evaporator coils to any reservoir or accumulator of the refrigeration system **120**. For instance, the lines **126** are connected to one of the accumulators **121** and **122** while being separated by a valve **127**. The valve **127** opens if the pressure in the evaporator coils is above a given threshold. Accordingly, if the defrost pressure in the evaporator coils is too high, the defrost CO_2 refrigerant is discharged to one of the accumulators **121** and **122**, whereby the CO_2 refrigerant stays in the refrigeration system **120**. As another safety measure, a pressure-relief valve system **128** is provided on the appropriate accumulators, such as **122** as shown but alternatively on the accumulator **121** or on the condensation reservoir **12**.

[0084] For instance, the method for relieving CO_2 refrigerant pressure from evaporators during a defrost cycle comprises providing a pressure-relief valve for each evaporator line, the pressure relief-valve opening at a pressure threshold. CO_2 refrigerant is then fed to evaporators in the evaporator line to defrost the evaporator. The evaporators are exhausted from the CO_2 refrigerant with the pressure-relief valve when the CO_2 refrigerant pressure is above the pressure threshold; and directing the exhausted CO_2 refrigerant to an accumulator in a refrigeration cycle.

[0085] In specific conditions, it may be required to cool the CO_2 refrigerant fed to the evaporation stages **16** and/or **17** during the refrigeration cycle. Accordingly, a heat-exchanger system **129**, for instance with an expansion valve, may direct refrigerant from the line **71** and feed same to the heat-exchanger system **129**, to cool the CO_2 refrigerant fed to the evaporation stages **16** and/or **17**.

[0086] The valve **39** is controlled (e.g., modulated) to maximize the heat reclaim via the heat reclaim exchanger **34**. When the heat demand is high (e.g., during Winter in colder climates), the valve **39** may maintain a high refrigerant pressure downstream of the compression stage **32**, to ensure the heat reclaim exchanger **34** extracts as much heat as possible from the CO_2 refrigerant. The amount of refrigerant sent to the gas cooling stage **36** is controlled simultaneously.

[0087] Referring to FIG. **11**, yet another embodiment of a CO_2 refrigeration system is illustrated at **130**. The CO_2 refrigeration systems **1** and **130** have numerous common stages and lines, whereby like elements will bear like reference numerals. The CO_2 refrigeration system **130** is particularly well suited for hot climate applications. In the CO_2 refrigeration system **130**, the discharge of the compression stage **10** is directed to the heat exchanger **20** prior to reaching the condensation reservoir **12**, for relatively low pressure condensation. Alternatively, the refrigerant exiting the heat exchanger **20** may be directed to the suction accumulator **133**, thereby bypassing the condensation reservoir **12**. A gaseous portion of the CO_2 refrigerant in the condensation reservoir **12** is directed via line **131** and pressure-reducing valve **132** into the heat exchanger **31** to reach the suction accumulator **133**. The CO_2 refrigerant passing through the heat exchanger **31** absorbs heat from the CO_2 refrigerant exiting the supra-compression circuit via line **134**. A line **135** relates a top of the suction accumulator **133** to the supra-compression stage **32**, to feed gaseous CO_2 refrigerant to the compressors. Liquid CO_2 refrigerant may be directed to another suction accumulator **136**, at the suction of the compression stage **10**, in similar fashion to the CO_2 refrigeration system **120** of FIG. **10** (with appropriate heat exchange with the discharge of stage **10** if necessary). The supra-compression circuit is typically used to reclaim heat, while the evaporation stages **16** and **17** are part of a HVAC unit, amongst other possibilities.

[0088] Referring to FIG. **12**, yet another embodiment of a CO_2 refrigeration system is illustrated at **140**. The CO_2 refrigeration systems **1** and **140** have numerous common stages and lines, whereby like elements will bear like reference numerals. The CO_2 refrigeration system **140** has a heat exchanger **141** collecting defrost CO_2 refrigerant at the outlet of the evaporators **16/17**, to vaporize the defrost CO_2 refrigerant and return same into the refrigeration cycle, namely to feed the suction of the compression stage **10** via line **142** or the supra-compression stage **32** via line **143**. The heat exchanger **141** allows heat exchange between the defrost CO_2 refrigerant and the CO_2 refrigerant exiting the supra-compression stage **32** via lines **144**, and may also be any other heat source (e.g. electric heater, heat reclaim, air-conditioning unit, or the like).

[0089] An air-conditioning unit **145** may be in fluid communication with the defrost reservoir **42** so as to use the defrost CO_2 refrigerant accumulated therein for air-conditioning purposes. The discharge of the air-conditioning unit **145** may be returned to the suction of the supra-compression stage **32**, amongst other possibilities. In the various refrigerant systems described above, it is pointed out that the defrost refrigerant may be fed to the evaporators of stages **16** and **17** from either direction (as opposed to being fed in a direction opposed to that of refrigerant in the refrigeration cycle). Moreover, it is considered to provide the valves controlling the flow of defrost refrigerant to the evaporators **16** and **17** in the refrigeration pack, and have a plurality of lines for each single valve.

[0090] Referring to FIG. **13**, a desiccant system is generally shown at **150**. The desiccant system **150** may be used with any of the refrigeration systems described above, or with other refrigeration systems, to dry air being entered into a building for ventilating or refrigerating purposes. The desiccant system **150** is a closed circuit in which circulates a desiccant fluid.

[0091] The system **150** has a dryer **151**, upon which exterior air flows when entering the building. The dryer **151** is a structural device upon which the desiccant fluid is sprayed. For instance, the dryer **151** may provide a honeycomb body. The desiccant fluid sprayed on the dryer **151** is in a suitable cooled state to absorb humidity from the warm exterior air entering the building. The desiccant fluid reaches a substantially liquid state after the absorption of humidity, and drips into pan **152** (or any oter collector).

[0092] By way of a line and pump, the desiccant fluid passes through a heating exchanger **153** to be heated. Although not shown, the heating exchanger **153** may be connected to one of the above-referred refrigeration circuits, so as to provide the necessary energy to heat the desiccant fluid. Alternatively, the heating exchanger **153** may have an electric coil or the like.

[0093] The desiccant fluid, in a heated state, is then sprayed onto a humidifier **154**. The humidifier **154** is similar to the dryer **151** in construction, but releases water to the exterior air. The desiccant fluid is heated as a function of the exterior temperature, for the desiccant fluid to release the previously-absorbed water to the air. The liquid desiccant is then collected in another pan **155** (or the like).

[0094] By way of a line and pump, the desiccant fluid passes through a cooling exchanger **156** to be cooled. Although not shown, the cooling exchanger **156** may be connected to one of the above-referred refrigeration circuits, so as to provide the necessary energy to cool the desiccant fluid. The desiccant fluid is cooled as a function of the exterior temperature, for the desiccant to absorb water from the outdoor air entering the building. Once it is cooled, the desiccant fluid is directed to the dryer **151**.

1. A method for operating a CO_2 refrigeration system for an ice-playing surface, comprising:

operating a refrigeration cycle by sequentially compressing CO_2 refrigerant,

releasing heat from the CO_2 refrigerant in a gas cooling stage after the compressing,

absorbing heat from at least one ice-playing surface after the releasing, and

directing the CO_2 refrigerant having absorbed heat to the compressing; and

for a heat demand of a plurality of heat-reclaim units, causing the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to reach a transcritical level as a function of said heat demand for the plurality of heat-reclaim units to absorb heat from the CO_2 refrigerant in the gas cooling stage.

2. The method according to claim **1**, further including causing the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to return to a subcritical level from said transcritical level as a function of said heat demand.

3. The method according to claim **1**, wherein causing the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to reach a transcritical level includes controlling a pressure-regulating device downstream of the gas cooling stage.

4. The method according to claim **1**, further including accumulating CO_2 refrigerant in a liquid state in a reservoir prior to said absorbing heat.

5. The method according to claim **1**, wherein absorbing heat from at least one ice-playing surface includes circulating CO_2 refrigerant in a circuit of pipes to absorb heat from the at least one ice-playing surface.

6. The method according to claim **5**, wherein circulating CO_2 refrigerant in a circuit of pipes includes vaporizing the CO_2 refrigerant with at least one expansion valve.

7. The method according to claim **5**, wherein circulating CO_2 refrigerant in a circuit of pipes includes pumping the CO_2 refrigerant in the liquid state into the circuit of pipes.

8. The method according to claim **1**, wherein at least one of the plurality of heat-reclaim units absorbs heat from the CO_2 refrigerant in the gas cooling stage by heat exchange with a secondary refrigerant.

9. The method according to claim **8**, wherein the secondary refrigerant heats water in at least one water tank.

10. The method according to claim **1**, wherein the plurality of heat-reclaim units absorbs heat from the CO_2 refrigerant in the gas cooling stage in series.

11. The method according to claim **1**, wherein the plurality of heat-reclaim units absorbs heat from the CO_2 refrigerant in the gas cooling stage in parallel.

12. The method according to claim **1**, wherein at least one of the plurality of heat-reclaim units absorbs heat from the CO_2 refrigerant in the gas cooling stage by blowing air on a coil in which circulates the CO_2 refrigerant.

13. The method according to claim **1**, further including collecting oil downstream of said compressing, and directing the oil upstream of said compressing for the CO_2 refrigerant in said compressing to have an oil content.

14. The method according to claim **13**, wherein collecting oil includes collecting oil from a bottom of a reservoir.

15. The method according to claim **3**, wherein controlling the pressure-regulating device downstream of the gas cooling stage includes modulating a valve to maximize the heat reclaim as a function of the heat demand of the plurality of heat-reclaim units.

16. The method according to claim **1**, wherein causing the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to reach a transcritical level as a function of said heat demand includes causing the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to reach a pressure of at least 1400 Psi as a function of the heat demand during a winter month period.

17. The method according to claim **16**, wherein causing the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to reach a transcritical level as a function of said heat demand includes causing the pressure of the CO_2 refrigerant to reach a pressure including 550 Psi as a function of the heat demand during a summer month period, wherein an outdoor temperature is warmer in the summer month period than in the winter month period.

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