

COMPACT RETRACTABLE LABEL

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to techniques for attaching information labels to equipment such as computers.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Labels are sometimes placed on equipment to make important information about the equipment readily observable. For example, labels are sometimes used on items of electrical equipment to record the item's serial number or LAN ID or the like. One labeling technique employs a retractable label that can be retracted into the equipment enclosure when not in use, but can be pulled out of the enclosure for reading. Retractable labels are aesthetically advantageous because they are not visible when retracted. On the other hand, because they retract into the interior of the equipment, sufficient room within the enclosure must be provided in order to receive the retracted label. Consequently, limitations exist as to where a prior art retractable label may be placed on an enclosure. It would be desirable to have a retractable label design that facilitates a wider variety of placement options than do the retractable labels of the prior art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] A retractable label assembly according to the invention includes a flexible label tongue and a guide bracket for receiving the label tongue. The guide bracket is adapted to mount to the inside of an enclosure surface such that the label tongue may be pulled from a mouth of the bracket to the outside of the enclosure surface. The guide bracket has a curved profile so that the label tongue bends when it is pushed inside the enclosure. The bend in the excursion path of the label tongue preserves space inside the enclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] FIG. 1 is an oblique view of a retractable label assembly according to a preferred embodiment of the invention shown with the label tongue extended.

[0005] FIG. 2 is an oblique view of the retractable label assembly of FIG. 1 shown with the label tongue retracted.

[0006] FIG. 3 is a top view of the retractable label assembly of FIG. 1 shown with the label tongue extended.

[0007] FIG. 4 is a side view of the bracket of FIG. 1.

[0008] FIGS. 5 and 6 are front and back oblique views of the bracket of FIG. 4.

[0009] FIGS. 7-10 are assembly views illustrating a preferred manner of installing the label tongue into the bracket.

[0010] FIG. 11 is an orthogonal plan view of a preferred mounting surface for receiving the bracket.

[0011] FIGS. 12-16 are assembly views illustrating a preferred manner of installing the bracket onto the mounting surface of FIG. 11.

[0012] FIGS. 17 and 18 are oblique views of a computer chassis incorporating a label assembly according to a preferred embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0013] A retractable label assembly 100 according to a preferred embodiment of the invention includes a flexible label tongue 102 and a guide bracket 104 for receiving the label tongue. FIGS. 1 and 3 show tongue 102 in an extended position. FIG. 2 shows tongue 102 in a retracted position. As is apparent from the side view shown in FIG. 4, bracket 104 has a curved profile so that flexible label tongue 102 bends when it is pushed inside bracket 104. In the embodiment shown, bracket 104 bends approximately 90 degrees. In other embodiments, other degrees of bending may be employed depending on the compactness requirements of the application. Bracket 104 may be made of any relatively rigid material. Tongue 102 may be made of any relatively flexible material. In one embodiment, both bracket 104 and tongue 102 may both be made of plastic having suitable properties.

[0014] To prevent tongue 102 from being pulled all the way out of bracket 104, removal stops 300 may be provided at the tail end 304 of tongue 102. Shoulders 302 disposed at bracket mouth 106 engage stops 300 as tongue 102 is pulled out, effectively preventing further outward movement of tongue 102.

[0015] As can be seen in FIGS. 5 and 6, bracket 104 may include a curved surface 500 having left and right sides 502, 504. A plurality of tabs 506 may be located adjacent curved surface 500 along its left and right sides 502, 504. Together, surface 500, sides 502, 504, and tabs 506 define a channel 508 in which tongue 102 moves. Preferably, enough space should be provided between tabs 506 and surface 500 to allow tongue 102 to move relatively freely in channel 508. Channel 508 is terminated at one end as indicated at 510. Preferably, the total length of channel 508 from mouth 106 to termination 510 should not be longer than the length of tongue 102, so that tongue 102 may not inadvertently be pushed so far into bracket 104 that it cannot easily be retrieved.

[0016] FIGS. 7-10 illustrate a preferred manner for installing tongue 102 into bracket 104. Head end 700 may be inserted into channel 508 between two pairs of tabs 506, as shown in FIG. 7. Then, as shown in FIGS. 8 and 9, tongue 102 may be fed further into channel 508 so that head end 700 travels toward mouth 106. Finally, as shown in FIG. 10, tail end 304 of tongue 102 snaps into channel 508. Once this has occurred, tail end 304 of tongue 102 tends to remain pressed against surface 500 due to the elastic tendency of tongue 102 to straighten.

[0017] Bracket 104 is adapted to be mounted to the inside of an enclosure surface 400 so that tongue 102 may be pulled from bracket mouth 106 through an opening in the enclosure and then pushed back in again. One way to accomplish the mounting is to provide first and second support surfaces 402, 404 on bracket 104, and to provide left and right catches 108, 110 between support surfaces 402, 404 as shown. As illustrated in FIG. 4, support surfaces 402, 404 are adapted to engage the inside of enclosure surface 400, and catches 108, 110 are adapted to extend through enclosure surface 400 to catch the outside of the surface.

[0018] A preferred manner of engaging bracket 104 to a surface 1100 securely is illustrated in FIGS. 11-16. An