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Witten Technologies Inc. is developing a non-invasive system for detecting, mapping and inspecting steel and plastic pipelines. The system will combine measurements from ultra-wideband radar and electromagnetic induction arrays with precise positioning and advanced image processing. One component of the system—a radar that can produce 3D underground images up to 20 times faster than previous systems—is already in place and has been tested extensively in projects with major utilities, including several large projects with Consolidated Edison Co. of New York.

The major new work is the development of a novel array of 3-component induction sensors with inversion software to complement the imaging radar system. Ultrawideband radar (in the MHz range) and broadband induction (in the kHz range) should allow accurate mapping of steel and plastic pipelines in nearly all soil types, down to sufficient depths to cover most lines in place in the United States. The dual array will also be useful for mapping large areas to detect leaks.

A 6-channel prototype induction receiver system that records time-domain magnetic fields in the kHz range has been built. The prototype works in conjunction with multiple commercially available clamp-on transmitters that induce currents on buried pipes. Software has been developed to control the data acquisition and processes the data to determine the location of the pipelines. Field tests of the prototype were successful and validated the concept that will be used in the construction of the array induction system.

The design of a 48-channel array induction prototype system has been finalized, assembled and extensive field testing is on-going. The array consists of sixteen 3-component induction sensors and a data acquisition system that is capable of recording the 48 channels simultaneously and resolving signals up to 200 kHz. This system works in conjunction with multiple commercially available clamp-on transmitters that induce currents on buried pipes and/or integrated onboard transmitters that travel with the system at a fixed geometry with respect to the receiver array. Those components together with an appropriate power supply, survey wheel and counter electronics are assembled on a custom-build trailer for towed and efficient deployment behind a vehicle.

Software has been developed to control the 48-channel data acquisition and to process the data to determine the location of the pipelines. In addition software solutions have been developed and tested to create utility maps in CAD and GIS environments based on the acquired radar and electromagnetic induction data. We continue to develop additional software to process and interpret such data, in particular for the on-board transmitter configuration of the system.

A larger commercial field test of the dual array system has been conducted in August 2004 and the processing and interpretation is underway.

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