DANGEROUS FLAW DISCOVERED IN VIA FERRATA ENERGY-ABSORBING SYSTEMS (EAS, ALSO KNOWN AS KLETTERSTEIG SETS)

AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRANSLATION OF THE ALPINE CLUB'S PRESS RELEASE, *GEFÄHRLICHER MANGEL BEI KLETTERSTEIGSETS ENTDECKT*

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A dangerous flaw has been discovered in a number of via ferrata energy-absorbing devices (EAS, also known as klettersteig sets). This discovery is the result of an investigation into a fatal via ferrata accident in Tirol that occurred in August (2012). In addition to the model implicated in this accident, several other EAS models with so-called "elastic" lanyards that connect the energy absorber unit to the carabiners that clip to the via ferrata cables have also been found to be defective. The German, Austrian, Swiss, and South Tirol alpine clubs are alerting all via ferrata users to use EAS devices with elastic lanyards only if they are listed as "not affected" in the table below.

THE ACCIDENT

On August 5, 2012, a fatal accident occurred on a via ferrata in the vicinity of Walchsee in Tirol. The climber fell several meters and both lanyards on the EAS severed—a failure mode that had never before been observed. Such an accident seemed not be possible with correct use, in the absence of previous damage to the EAS, and without contact with sharp edges. The Innsbruck district attorney's office has initiated an investigation into the cause of the accident. The following information is independent of the Innsbruck DA investigation and instead is the result of the investigation and research undertaken by the German Alpine Club in conjunction with EAS manufacturers.

THE ALPINE CLUB INVESTIGATION AND ITS RESULT

An investigation of the model of EAS used in the accident indicates that repeated stretching of the elastic lanyard leads to a reduction in the strength of the fibers. Such stretching occurs during normal via ferrata travel. When the elastic and strength bearing threads are woven together the two types of fibers move differently and the resulting rubbing commonly causes a reduction in fiber strength. Depending on the construction, it is possible to reduce the strength of the elastic lanyard. The mixing of the elastic and non-elastic fibers occurs not only in the lanyards of the EAS involved in the Walchsee accident but also in models produced by other manufacturers. The manufacturers Austrialpin, Edelrid, Edelweiss, and Singing Rock have issued recalls for affected EAS.

ALPINE CLUBS PROMPT MANUFACTURERS TO TEST THEIR EAS

As an immediate response to the accident, the German, Austrian, Swiss, and South Tirol alpine clubs, in collaboration with the accredited test laboratory TÜV Sud, developed a testing procedure for elastic lanyards. Then, manufacturers were asked to test their EAS models according to the new procedure. Table 1 shows the results of this request.

EAS WITHOUT ELASTIC LANYARDS ARE NOT AFFECTED

EAS without elastic lanyards are unaffected by the recently discovered, dangerous failure mode. To help distinguish between elastic and non-elastic EAS, figures 1a and 1b show examples of unaffected and affected lanyards.

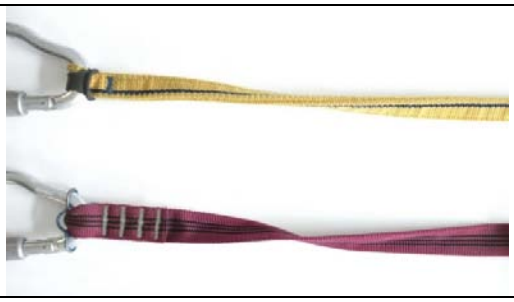	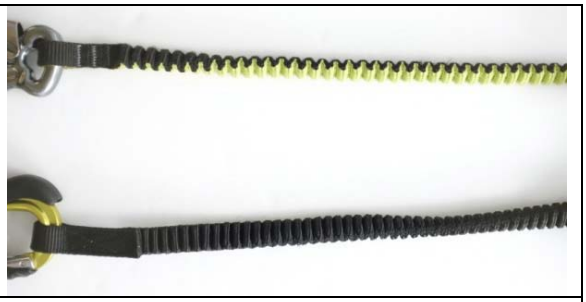
Fig 1a: NOT affected by the recall no elastic in the lanyards	**Fig 1b: Caution:** elastic lanyards

EAS with elastic lanyards are in practice constructed in two different ways, and only one construction can be problematic. If an EAS with elastic lanyards is problematic or not is not discernable to the naked eye. Only detailed testing similar to that undertaken by the alpine clubs can determine whether the EAS is affected.

WHICH EAS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN IDENTIFIED AS DEFECTIVE

Table 1 lists all the elastic lanyard EAS models that have been recalled by the manufacturer. Details, photos, and exchange information are listed under “downloads” at: http://www.alpenverein.de/presse/gefaehrlicher-mangel-bei-klettersteigsets-entdeckt_aid_11787.html
Also listed are all the EAS with elastic bands that according to the manufacturer are not affected by this problem.

Table 1: LIST OF VIA FERRATA EAS, THOSE RECENTLY RECALLED & THOSE UNAFFECTED BY "ELASTIC" PROBLEMS?

Hersteller	betroffen > Hersteller-Rückruf	nicht betroffen
Anlo Mountain		▪ Ibex
Austrialpin	▪ Colt ▪ Hydra	▪ DB 4
Black Diamond		▪ Easy Rider ▪ Iron Cruiser
Camp		▪ Matrix Rewind ▪ Martix Gyro Rewind ▪ Vortex Rewind ▪ Vortex Rewind Light
CT	▪ Top-Shell Spring Set ▪ Classic-K Spring Set	▪ Top Shell Spring ▪ Classic K-Spring ▪ Revolving K-Set
Edelrid	▪ Cable Lite ▪ Cable Lite 2.0 ▪ Cable Comfort ▪ Cable Comfort 2.0 ▪ Cable Kit 4.0 ▪ Brenta Comfort ▪ Cable Kit Xtra-Light Schuster	▪ Cable Vario ▪ Cable Kit / Cable Kit 2.0 ▪ Cable Kit 3.0 ▪ Cable Lite 2.1 ▪ Cable Lite 2.2 ▪ Cable Comfort 2.2 ▪ Cable Kit 4.2
Edelweiss	▪ Upsilon EVO ▪ Upsilon EVO junior ▪ Upsilon EVO Swivel Performance ▪ Upsilon EVO Performance ▪ Upsilon EVO Swivel	▪ Upsilon
Kong		▪ K.K.L. ▪ K.K.E.
LACD		▪ Via Ferrata Set Pro
Mammut		▪ Tec Step Turn ▪ Tec Step Bionic ▪ Tec Step Classic ▪ Tec Step Brenta Classic ▪ Tec Step Via Ferrata Brenta Turn ▪ Tec Step Via Ferrata Brenta ▪ Tec Step Via Ferrata Element ▪ Tec Step Via Ferrata Turn KL ▪ Tec Step Via Ferrata KL ▪ Via Ferrata Turn Web Key Lock ▪ Via Ferrata Step Web Key Lock ▪ Via Ferrata Performance Key Lock
Ocún	▪ Via Ferrata Y – form „Harmonica" ▪ Via Ferrata Rip'n'stop „Harmonica"	▪ Via Ferrata Y – form „Trombon" ▪ Via Ferrata Rip'n'stop „Trombon"
Petzl		▪ Scorpio*
Salewa		▪ Ergo Zip ▪ Ergo Tex ▪ Attac Zip ▪ G4 Classic Cobra ▪ G4 Attac Cobra old (red/white) ▪ G4 Attac Cobra new (black) ▪ G4 Attac Premium old (black) ▪ G4 Attac Premium new (red/white)
Simond		▪ Vitalink
Singing rock	▪ Easy Go Xp ▪ Easy Go Xp Complete ▪ Easy Go Xp Lock	
Skylotec		▪ Skyrider ▪ Skysafe
Stubai	▪ Connect Compact Mod. 1211, SN 498 ▪ Connect Flex Mod. 1211, SN 499	▪ Connect Compact, außer SN 498 ▪ Ferrata Connect Flex, außer SN 499 ▪ Ferrata Connect Basic, alle Serien
Wild Country	▪ Via Ferrata Set	

* Petzl Scorpio den Überprüfungsaufruf vom 13.05.2011 beachten

Stand: 13. September 2012

OTHER EAS NOT LISTED:
Similarly, some other EAS are not listed in the table because the manufacturers have not had enough time to respond to the alpine clubs before the issue of this press release. For EAS with elastic lanyards that are not listed in this table, contact the manufacturer to determine the integrity of the EAS model.