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(54) **ENERGY ABSORBING PROTECTIVE MEMBER**

ENERGIE ABSORBIERENDE SCHUTZVORRICHTUNG

ELEMENT DE PROTECTION AMORTISSEUR

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(73) Proprietor: **Plant, Daniel James**
Nr. Monmouth NP5 4BU (GB)

(72) Inventor: **Plant, Daniel James**
Nr. Monmouth NP5 4BU (GB)

(74) Representative: **Woodward, John Calvin et al**
Venner Shipley & Co.
20 Little Britain
London EC1A 7DH (GB)

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US-A- 3 663 973

US-A- 5 090 053

US-A- 5 138 722

US-A- 5 507 866

US-A- 5 599 290

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Description

[0001] This invention relates to a new energy absorbing member which is particularly applicable for protection and is especially suitable for incorporation into garments or apparel worn by people who need their body parts protected against impact. The protective member can also be mounted on an object such as a door frame or wall edge which a person might accidentally come into contact with.

[0002] The protective member of the invention is particularly applicable for use in the medical field, by sportsmen, motor cyclists, urban street wear (cycling/rollerblading), work wear, body armour, riot police gear, oil riggers gear or film crews etc, as well as many other applications such as in crash barriers or as an energy absorbing wall or floor covering.

[0003] One established way of absorbing and/or spreading impact energy is to make a pad out of an energy absorbing material. Such pads are generally made of foam and are either worn by the person who needs protection or attached to the part of the fixture likely to be impacted. Static pads can be flexible or rigid as they do not need to bend in use. In some applications, a rigid pad is worn by the wearer. For instance, as a shin pad in the case of a rugby or soccer player or a forearm pad in the case of a cricketer as neither of these limb parts need to bend or articulate in use. However, where a joint needs to be protected, a high degree of flexibility is required so the protective pads need to be made of a flexible material to give the wearer the required level of mobility to make the pad comfortable to wear.

[0004] Body impact protection currently available is limited because it is either based on a rigid exterior shell (for example as used as roller blade pads) or upon some form of foam laminate (as used in ski pant inserts). However, foam laminates provide poor levels of protection and rigid shells are uncomfortable to wear.

[0005] A protective member is known from US 5138722 in which an energy absorbing material is contained in an envelope, the material remaining soft and flexible until it is subjected to an impact when its characteristics change rendering it temporarily rigid. The shape of the envelope however is not very efficient at absorbing and quickly dissipating the impact energy.

[0006] Energy absorbing materials of the required properties are, for example, known from US 5 507 866 or US 5 599 290.

[0007] It is an object of the present invention therefore to provide a protective member which more effectively absorbs and spreads impact energy and is soft and flexible yet has high energy absorbing properties. It is a further object of the invention to provide an energy absorbing member which can be permanently attached and tailored into a garment or part thereof.

[0008] According to the invention there is provided a protective member comprising an energy absorbing material contained in an envelope, the material remaining soft and flexible until it is subjected to an impact force when its characteristics change rendering it temporarily rigid, the invention being characterised in that the envelope is formed with at least one convolution having an apex directed towards the direction of said impact force whereby the impact force applied to the apex is absorbed as the material becomes rigid, the material returning to its normal flexible condition after said impact.

[0009] Preferably the energy absorbing material is encapsulated in the envelope and absorbs the impact force and spreads the load thereof during the duration of the impact. Preferably the energy absorbing material is a strain rate sensitive material such as a dilatant compound whose mechanical characteristics change on impact.

[0010] The preferred material is a Dimethyl siloxane hydroterminated polymer such as the material sold by DOW CORNING under their Catalogue or Trade number 3179.

[0011] The encapsulating envelope can be made of foam, fabric, plastic, rubber or metal or a combination of these materials, to contain the energy absorbing material and prevent egress thereof from the envelope. The envelope is however preferably made from an elastomer which conveniently is thermo plastic. A thermoplastic polyester elastomer preferably having a crystalline PBT hard segment with an amorphous glycol soft segment has been found to be particularly suitable. The preferred material is the thermo plastic elastomer sold by Dupont under their Trade Mark HYTREL.

[0012] The encapsulating envelope can be substantially planar but is preferably corrugated along its length. The angle of the sides of each corrugation is not critical but 54° has been found to give excellent energy absorbing results.

[0013] The encapsulating envelope has an outer and inner surface and, a flexible foam layer can be attached to said inner surface. For some uses, the foam layer may be attached to only one surface or both the inner and outer surfaces.

[0014] In another embodiment, the protective member is a channel shaped segment which is arcuate along its length. A plurality of these segments can be joined together to form a sheet of protective material with the longitudinal axis of one segment at 90° to an adjacent segment. In order to form the sheet, the corners of each segment are connected to the corners of a contiguous segment.

[0015] Several embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of one form of protective member of the invention;

Figure 2 is a cross section through the corrugated protective member of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is an enlarged view of the portion of the protective member circled in Figure 2;

Figure 4 is a view of a protective segment of the invention;

Figure 5 is a view of a sheet of material made up from a plurality of interconnected protective segments shown in Figure 4;

Figure 6 is a perspective view of a person wearing a garment incorporating protective members of the invention;

Figure 7 is a view of another form of protective member of the invention for use as an elbow protector;

Figure 8 is a cross sectional view of another form of protective member; and

Figure 9 is a view of the protective member of Figures 6 and 7 in position on a wearer's shin.

[0016] Figures 1 and 2 show a protective member 1 of the invention which comprises a quantity of energy absorbing material 2 encapsulated in an envelope comprising an upper layer 3 and a lower layer 4 connected together at their periphery 5 to provide a sealed enclosure for the material 2. The envelope can however be blow moulded from a single piece of material.

[0017] The energy absorbing material 2 can be a strain rate sensitive polymer, a non-Newtonian fluid or a dilatant compound which is normally malleable under low strain rates and behaves in a manner similar to a putty like substance. However, when an impact is applied to the material 2, it momentarily changes from being malleable and instantaneously becomes rigid thereby absorbing and spreading the impact energy. The preferred material is a dimethyl siloxane hydroterminated polymer such as the material manufactured by DOW CORNING and sold under their catalogue or trade No. 3179.

[0018] The encapsulating layers 3 and 4 are preferably made of a thermo plastic elastomer material manufactured by Du Pont and sold under their trade mark HY-TREL. This material is strong enough to withstand the impact energy without the material tearing or fracturing but at the same time allows the impact energy to be transferred through the material layer 3,4 to be absorbed by the putty-like energy absorbing material 2.

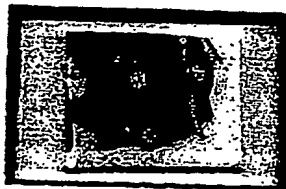
[0019] This unique multi-layer energy absorbing member can flex with movement of the body when protection is not needed and thus is very comfortable to wear. When impacted however, the strain rate sensitive polymer in the energy absorbing member reacts instantaneously to form a semi-rigid structure that absorbs and dissipates the blow giving maximum protection. Independent tests have confirmed that the energy absorbing member of the invention is substantially more effective than conventional foam and/or plastic systems.

[0020] The Active Protection System (APS) of the invention has been impact tested and the results compared with identical impact tests carried out on a known impact protection member sold to motorcyclists under the trade mark "Dianese". In order to record the magnitude of pressure and force distribution on impact, a special film is used which changes colour in accordance with the level of impact pressure that it receives.

[0021] In order to carry out the test, a piece of Dianese and APS of the invention were impacted in a comparative test and the four photographs hereafter record the impact.

DIANESE (prior art)

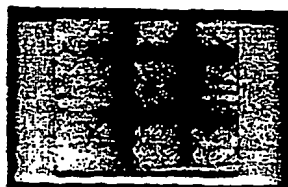
APS (invention)



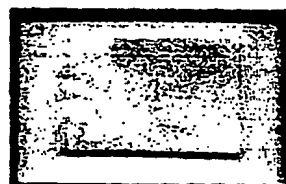
Dianese Outside



APS Outside



Dianese Inside



APS Inside

(less black shows lower pressure, i.e. better protection).

[0022] It can be seen from the photographs that the APS energy absorbing member of the invention performed significantly better than the known "Dianese" pad because only very light grey areas are visible on the inside surface of APS member whereas substantial black areas are visible on the inside surface of the Dianese member. This clearly demonstrates that the APS member of the invention provides a much higher level of protection as comparatively very little force has passed through to its inside surface.

[0023] The energy absorbing member shown in Figures 1-3 has a corrugated configuration with a plurality of convolutions 8 along its length to increase its energy absorbing properties. The energy absorbing material 2 is encapsulated between sheets 3 and 4 made of HY-TREL which are sealed at 5 around their periphery to contain the material 2 within the envelope (see Figure 2). To increase its energy absorbing properties and also for increased comfort, a layer of foam 9 can be attached to inner layer 7 of membrane 4. The envelope has to be of a thickness which is sufficient to enable it to return to its original configuration after impact. 0.5-1.5mm has been found to be particularly satisfactory.

[0024] Referring now to Figure 3, when an impact load I is applied to the energy absorbing member 1 in the direction of the arrow, the load I will be dissipated by the apexes 8A of the convolutions down either side thereof which creates shear forces as the material hardens thereby absorbing the impact load. Preferably the apexes 8A are curved rather than pointed as this further assists in dissipating the impact load I down either side of each of the corrugations 8.

[0025] It should be noted that the foam backing 9 is preferred rather than essential and is usually provided on the inner surface of the energy absorbing member for increased comfort for the wearer.

[0026] Figure 4 shows an alternative form of energy absorbing member 1 in accordance with the present invention which is particularly suitable for use in making up a sheet of material as shown in Figure 5. Each energy absorbing member 1 comprises an outer membrane 3 and an inner membrane 4 between which the putty-like energy absorbing material 2 is encapsulated. The energy absorbing member 1 can be channel or arch shaped and conveniently but not essentially has connecting means in the form of a foot or pad 10 at each corner thereof having a hole 11 therein. It can however be cone shaped or of any energy absorbing profile.

[0027] As can be seen more clearly in Figure 5, the plurality of the channel shaped energy absorbing members 1 can be connected together for instance by means of their feet 10 to form a sheet of material which is flexible and bendable in several planes.

Each energy absorbing member 1 of the sheet works in exactly the same way as the energy absorbing member just

described in that when an impact load is applied to the sheet of material, the normally malleable energy absorbing material 2 within each member 1 temporarily becomes rigid thereby absorbing the load, the material 2 returning to its normal malleable state shortly after the impact energy has been absorbed.

[0028] The configuration of the sheet illustrated in Figure 5 is only one example of the way in which a sheet of material can be formed using individual energy absorbing members 1 connected together with their longitudinal axis normal to each other. Other configurations are however possible.

[0029] A particularly useful application of energy absorbing members of the present invention is shown in Figure 6 where an energy absorbing elbow pad 16 and a shoulder pad 17 is incorporated into garment 15. Similar pads can be incorporated into the knee, shin or thigh area of a pair of trousers (not shown).

[0030] Figure 7 shows a design of elbow pad in accordance with the present invention which comprises an elongate main body section having optional out-riggers 21,22 attached to the main body section by means of spars 23. The main body section has a dome shaped section 24 to receive the wearer's elbow joint. The energy absorbing member illustrated in Figure 7 is of the same construction as the embodiments already described in that it comprises an energy absorbing putty-like material 2 encapsulated between inner and outer layers 3 and 4 made of HY-TREL.

[0031] The main body section and the out-riggers 21 are corrugated as illustrated and are therefore similar in construction to the protective member shown in Figures 2-5.

[0032] In use, the wearer would place the main body section inside the garment sleeve with their elbow joint located within the dome shaped section 24. The elongate body section would extend down the wearer's arm generally coaxial therewith and the out-riggers 21 and 22 would be folded around the arm on either side thereof. Thus, the elbow region would be protected against direct impacts on the elbow joint itself and also the portions of the arm on either side of the elbow joint would be protected. The protective member shown in Figure 9 can either be inserted within the wearer's sleeve for instance into a stretch pocket or alternatively can be attached to the fabric from which the garment is made as an integral part thereof, e.g. by stitching or thermal attachment.

[0033] Whilst the embodiment shown in Figure 7 is an elbow pad, it will be appreciated that the design thereof could be changed while still operating in the same way to protect other body parts such as shoulders, knees or hips.

[0034] Figures 8 and 9 show a further embodiment of energy absorbing member 1 of the present invention which comprises a textile layer or tube 12 to which an energy absorbing pad of the invention is attached to protect, for example, a knee, elbow or hip joint. The energy absorbing member 1 comprises an outer layer 3 and an inner layer 4 preferably made of a material such as HY-TREL between which is encapsulated the putty-like malleable material 2. The edges of the layers 3 and 4 are preferably connected together at 5 to seal the putty-like material which the envelope 3,4. The layers 3 and 4 can however be made of a textile material whose surfaces are coated, preferably with a water proofing material such as polyurethane or any other membrane which will encapsulate and contain the malleable material 2.

[0035] To assist its energy absorbing properties, an annular foam ring 13 can be attached to inner surface 7 of the membrane 4. A spacer 14 made from a textile material is preferably provided within the annular foam ring 13 to ensure that the putty layer 2 does not come into contact with the users limb to be protected.

[0036] As can be seen more clearly in Figure 9, when the impact load I is applied to the energy absorbing member 1 fitted to a limb 12 of a wearer, the energy impact is initially dissipated laterally in the directions of arrows T thereby deflecting the impact load I away from the wearer's shinbone 12A. The initial impact is absorbed by the putty-like material 2 which changes from its malleable state to its rigid state but the load is then transferred laterally to the outer edges of the member 1 where it is absorbed as load E in the foam ring 3 and the soft skin or muscle of the wearer's limb 12. It will be appreciated that the energy absorbing member just described and illustrated moves the impact force I away from the bone 12A and into layer 3 and the fatty tissue in the leg. The energy absorbing member 1 can be shaped to include the convoluted sections 8 shown in Figures 1-3 or 7.

[0037] The Active Protection System (APS) of the invention protects the human body from abrasions and impacts. This flexible system can be incorporated directly into a garment. The APS is malleable under normal conditions and will easily conform to the movements of the body and is therefore non-restrictive. Upon impact the APS becomes momentarily rigid, spreading and absorbing the impact force before returning to its normal flexible, comfortable state.

[0038] The APS is made from two materials combined in layers. The heart of the system is the active strain rate sensitive polymer material 2 which reacts to impact, and is encapsulated in the flexible outer sheath 3,4. The system has been designed to work synergistically producing a significant increase in impact performance, over and above that of either material in isolation.

Claims

1. A protective member comprising an energy absorbing material (2) contained in an envelope (3,4) the material remaining soft and flexible until it is subjected to an impact force when its characteristics change rendering it temporarily rigid, **characterised in that** the envelope (3,4) is formed with at least one convolution (8) having an

apex (8A) directed towards the direction of said impact force (1) whereby the impact force applied to the apex (8A) is absorbed as the material becomes rigid, the material returning to its normal flexible condition after said impact.

2. A protective member as claimed in claim 1 **characterised in that** the energy absorbing material (2) is encapsulated in the envelope (3,4).
3. A protective member as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 **characterised in that** the mechanical characteristics of the material (2) change on impact.
4. A protective member as claimed in any preceding claim **characterised in that** the energy absorbing material (2) is a strain rate sensitive material.
5. A protective member as claimed in any preceding claim **characterised in that** the energy absorbing material (2) is a dilatant compound.
6. A protective member as claimed in any preceding claim **characterised in that** the energy absorbing material (2) is a dimethyl siloxane hydroterminated polymer.
7. A protective member as claimed in any preceding claim **characterised in that** the energy absorbing material (2) is made by DOW CORNING and sold under catalogue number 3179.
8. A protective member as claimed in any of claims 1-7 **characterised in that** the envelope (3,4) is corrugated along its length and comprises a plurality of said convolutions (8).
9. A protective member as claimed in claim 8 **characterised in that** the angle of the sides of each convolution (8) is 54°.
10. A protective member as claimed in any preceding claim **characterised in that** the envelope (3,4) has an inner face (7) to which a flexible foam layer (13) is attached.
11. A protective member as claimed in any of claims 1-7 **characterised in that** the envelope (3,4) is channel shaped and arcuate along its length to provide a protective segment (1).
12. A protective member as claimed in any preceding claim **characterised in that** the envelope (3,4) is made of foam, fabric, plastic, rubber or metal or a combination of these materials, to contain the energy absorbing material (2) and prevent egress thereof from the envelope.
13. A protective member as claimed in any preceding claim **characterised in that** the envelope (3,4) is made of an elastomer.
14. A protective member as claimed in claim 8 **characterised in that** the elastomer is a thermoplastic elastomer.
15. A protective member as claimed in claim 14 **characterised in that** the elastomer is a polyester elastomer.
16. A protective member as claimed in claim 15 **characterised in that** the elastomer has a crystalline PBT hard segment with an amorphous glycol soft segment.
17. A protective member as claimed in any of claims 12-16 **characterised in that** the envelope (3,4) is made of the thermoplastic elastomer sold by DuPont under the Trade Mark HYTREL.
18. A sheet of protective material made from a plurality of protective segments (1) as claimed in claim 11 **characterised in that** a plurality of said segments are connected together to form the sheet.
19. A sheet of protective material as claimed in claim 18 **characterised in that** each segment (1) has a longitudinal axis and one segment is connected to an adjacent segment with its longitudinal axis at 90° thereto.
20. A sheet of protective material as claimed in claim 18 or claim 19 **characterised in that** each segment (1) has means thereon to enable it to be connected to an adjacent segment, the edges of contiguous segments being

joined together to form the sheet.

21. A sheet of protective member as claimed in claim 20 **characterised in that** the connecting means are feet (10).

5 22. A length of textile material with a protective member or protective sheet as claimed in any of claims 1-17 or claims 18-21 permanently attached thereto.

23. A garment or part thereof made from a textile material as claimed in claim 22.

10

Patentansprüche

1. Schutzelement, umfassend ein in einem Mantel (3, 4) enthaltenes energieabsorbierende Material (2), wobei das Material weich und flexibel bleibt, bis es eine Schlagkraft erfährt, bei der sich seine Eigenschaften so ändern, dass es vorübergehend starr wird, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Mantel (3, 4) mit wenigstens einer Faltung (8) mit einem Scheitelpunkt (8A) ausgebildet ist, der zu der genannten Schlagkraft (1) hin gerichtet ist, so dass die auf den Scheitelpunkt (8A) aufgebrachte Schlagkraft absorbiert wird, wenn das Material starr wird, wobei das Material nach dem genannten Schlag wieder in seinen normalen flexiblen Zustand zurückkehrt.

20 2. Schutzelement nach Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das energieabsorbierende Material (2) in dem Mantel (3, 4) eingekapselt ist.

3. Schutzelement nach Anspruch 1 oder Anspruch 2, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** sich die mechanischen Eigenschaften des Materials (2) bei dem Schlag ändern.

25 4. Schutzelement nach einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das energieabsorbierende Material (2) ein für Verformungsgeschwindigkeit empfindliches Material ist.

30 5. Schutzelement nach einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das energieabsorbierende Material (2) eine dilatante Masse (Dilatant Compound) ist.

6. Schutzelement nach einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das energieabsorbierende Material (2) ein Dimethylsiloxan-hydroterminiertes Polymer ist.

35 7. Schutzelement nach einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das energieabsorbierende Material (2) von DOW CORNING hergestellt und unter der Katalognummer 3179 verkauft wird.

8. Schutzelement nach einem der Ansprüche 1-7, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Mantel (3, 4) über seine Länge gewellt ist und eine Mehrzahl von Faltungen (8) aufweist.

40 9. Schutzelement nach Anspruch 8, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Winkel der Seiten jeder Faltung (8) 54° beträgt.

45 10. Schutzelement nach einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Mantel (3, 4) eine Innenfläche (7) hat, an der eine flexible Schaumstofflage (13) angebracht ist.

11. Schutzelement nach einem der Ansprüche 1-7, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Mantel (3, 4) über seine Länge kanalförmig und bogenförmig ist, um ein Schutzsegment (1) zu bilden.

50 12. Schutzelement nach einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Mantel (3, 4) aus Schaumstoff, Textilgewebe, Plastik, Gummi oder Metall oder einer Kombination aus diesen Materialien gefertigt ist, um das energieabsorbierende Material (2) aufzunehmen und zu verhindern, dass dieses aus dem Mantel austritt.

55 13. Schutzelement nach einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Mantel (3, 4) aus einem Elastomer besteht.

14. Schutzelement nach Anspruch 8, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Elastomer ein thermoplastisches Elasto-

mer ist.

15. Schutzelement nach Anspruch 14, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Elastomer ein Polyesterelastomer ist.

5 16. Schutzelement nach Anspruch 15, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Elastomer ein kristallines PBT-Hartsegment mit einem amorphen Glykolweichsegment hat.

17. Schutzelement nach einem der Ansprüche 12-16, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** der Mantel (3, 4) aus einem Elastomer besteht, das von DuPont unter der Handelsmarke HYTREL verkauft wird.

10 18. Schutzmaterialbahn, hergestellt aus einer Mehrzahl von Schutzsegmenten (1) nach Anspruch 11, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** eine Mehrzahl der genannten Segmente miteinander zu der Bahn zusammengefügt sind.

15 19. Schutzmaterialbahn nach Anspruch 18, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** jedes Segment (1) eine Längsachse hat und ein Segment mit einem benachbarten Segment mit seiner Längsachse in einem Winkel von 90° dazu verbunden ist.

20 20. Schutzmaterialbahn nach Anspruch 18 oder Anspruch 19, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** an jedem Segment (1) Mittel vorgesehen sind, damit es mit einem Nachbarsegment verbunden werden kann, wobei die Ränder von aneinander angrenzenden Segmenten zu der Bahn miteinander verbunden werden.

21. Schutzelementbahn nach Anspruch 20, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Verbindungsmittel Füße (10) sind.

25 22. Textilmateriallänge mit einem Schutzelement oder einer Schutzbahn nach einem der Ansprüche 1-17 oder 18-21, das/die permanent daran angebracht ist.

23. Kleidungsstück oder Teil davon, hergestellt aus einem Textilmaterial nach Anspruch 22.

30 Revendications

35 1. Un élément protecteur comprenant un matériau absorbant l'énergie (2) contenu dans une enveloppe (3, 4), le matériau restant mou et flexible jusqu'à ce qu'il soit soumis à une force impulsive, suite à quoi ses caractéristiques changent, le rendant temporairement rigide, **caractérisé en ce que** l'enveloppe (3,4) est formée d'au moins une circonvolution (8) ayant un sommet (8A) orienté dans la direction de ladite force impulsive (1) de telle façon que la force impulsive appliquée au sommet (8A) est absorbée alors que le matériau devient rigide, ce matériau reprenant son état flexible normal après ledit impact.

40 2. Un élément protecteur selon la revendication 1 **caractérisé en ce que** le matériau absorbant l'énergie (2) est encapsulé dans l'enveloppe (3,4).

3. Un élément protecteur selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2 **caractérisé en ce que** les caractéristiques mécaniques du matériau (2) changent à l'impact.

45 4. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication précédente **caractérisé en ce que** le matériau absorbant l'énergie (2) est un matériau sensible au taux de déformation.

50 5. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication précédente **caractérisé en ce que** le matériau absorbant l'énergie (2) est une substance dilatante.

6. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication précédente **caractérisé en ce que** le matériau absorbant l'énergie (2) est un polymère du diméthylsiloxane hydroterminé.

55 7. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication précédente **caractérisé en ce que** le matériau absorbant l'énergie (2) est fabriqué par DOW CORNING et vendu sous le numéro de catalogue 3179.

8. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication 1 à 7 **caractérisé en ce que** l'enveloppe (3,4) est nervurée sur sa longueur et comprend un certain nombre desdites circonvolutions (8).

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9. Un élément protecteur selon la revendication 8 **caractérisé en ce que** l'angle des côtés de chaque circonvolution (8) est de 54°.
- 5 10. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication précédente **caractérisé en ce que** l'enveloppe (3,4) a une face intérieure (7) à laquelle est fixée une couche de mousse flexible (13).
11. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication 1 à 7 **caractérisé en ce que** l'enveloppe (3,4) est rainurée et courbée en arc sur sa longueur de façon à donner un élément protecteur (1).
- 10 12. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication précédente **caractérisé en ce que** l'enveloppe (3,4) est faite de mousse, de tissu, de plastique, de caoutchouc ou de métal ou d'une combinaison de ces matériaux, afin de contenir le matériau absorbant l'énergie (2) et d'empêcher qu'il s'échappe de l'enveloppe.
- 15 13. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe quelle revendication précédente **caractérisé en ce que** l'enveloppe (3,4) est en élastomère.
14. Un élément protecteur selon la revendication 8 **caractérisé en ce que** l'élastomère est un élastomère thermo-plastique.
- 20 15. Un élément protecteur selon la revendication 14 **caractérisé en ce que** l'élastomère est un élastomère de polyester.
- 25 16. Un élément protecteur selon la revendication 15 **caractérisé en ce que** l'élastomère a un segment dur PBT cristallin avec un segment mou glycol amorphe.
17. Un élément protecteur selon n'importe laquelle des revendications 12 à 16 **caractérisé en ce que** l'enveloppe (3,4) est fabriquée avec l'élastomère thermoplastique vendu par DuPont sous la marque déposée HYTREL.
- 30 18. Une feuille de matériau protecteur constituée de plusieurs segments protecteurs (1) selon la revendication 11 **caractérisée en ce que** plusieurs desdits segments sont connectés ensemble pour former la feuille.
19. Une feuille de matériau protecteur selon la revendication 18 **caractérisée en ce que** chaque segment (1) a un axe longitudinal et qu'un segment est connecté à un segment adjacent avec son axe longitudinal à 90° de celui-ci.
- 35 20. Une feuille de matériau protecteur selon la revendication 18 ou la revendication 19 **caractérisée en ce que** chaque segment (1) a sur lui un moyen permettant de le connecter à un segment adjacent, les bords des segments contigus étant joints ensemble pour former la feuille.
- 40 21. Une feuille d'élément protecteur selon la revendication 20 **caractérisée en ce que** les moyens de connexion sont des pieds (10).
22. Une longueur de matériau textile avec un élément protecteur ou une feuille protectrice selon n'importe laquelle des revendications 1 à 17 ou des revendications 18 à 21 attachés de manière permanente à celle-ci.
- 45 23. Un vêtement ou une partie de vêtement constituée d'un matériau textile selon la revendication 22.

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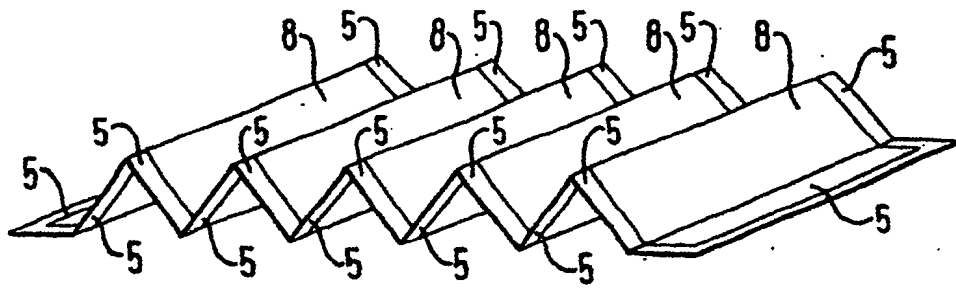


FIG. 1

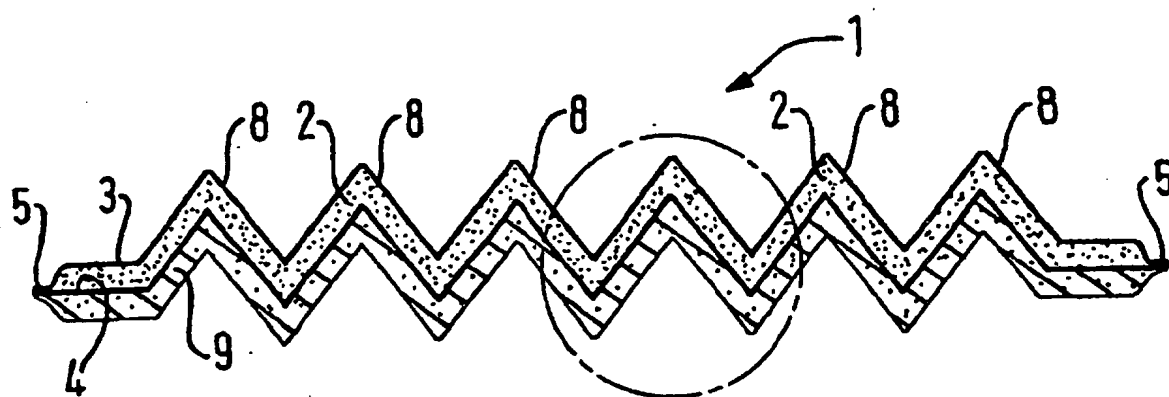


FIG. 2

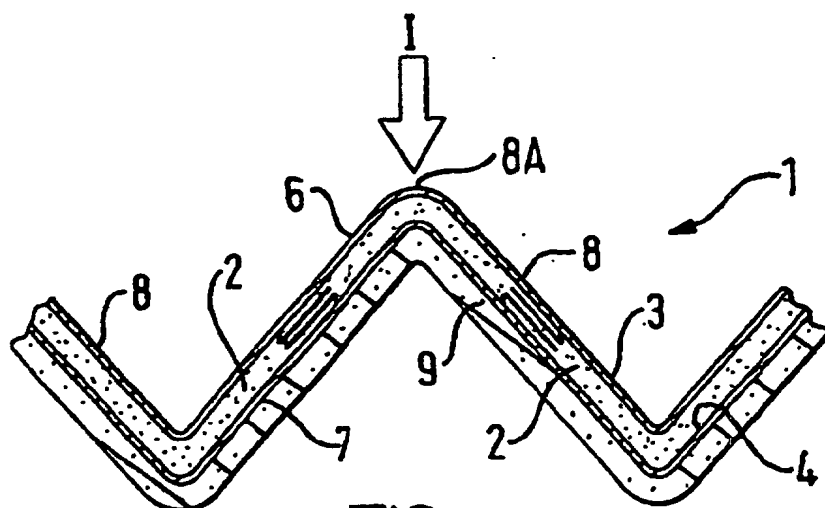


FIG. 3

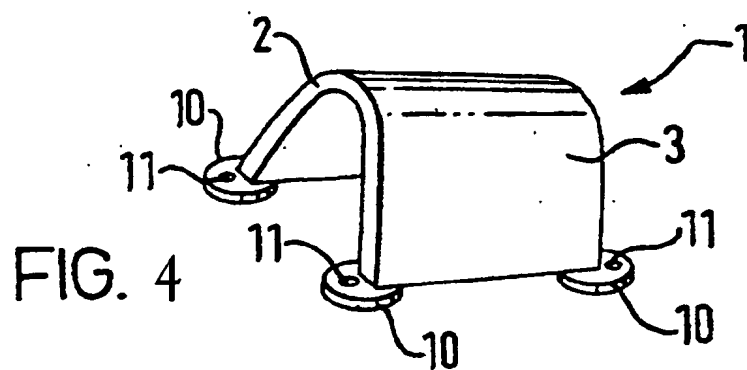
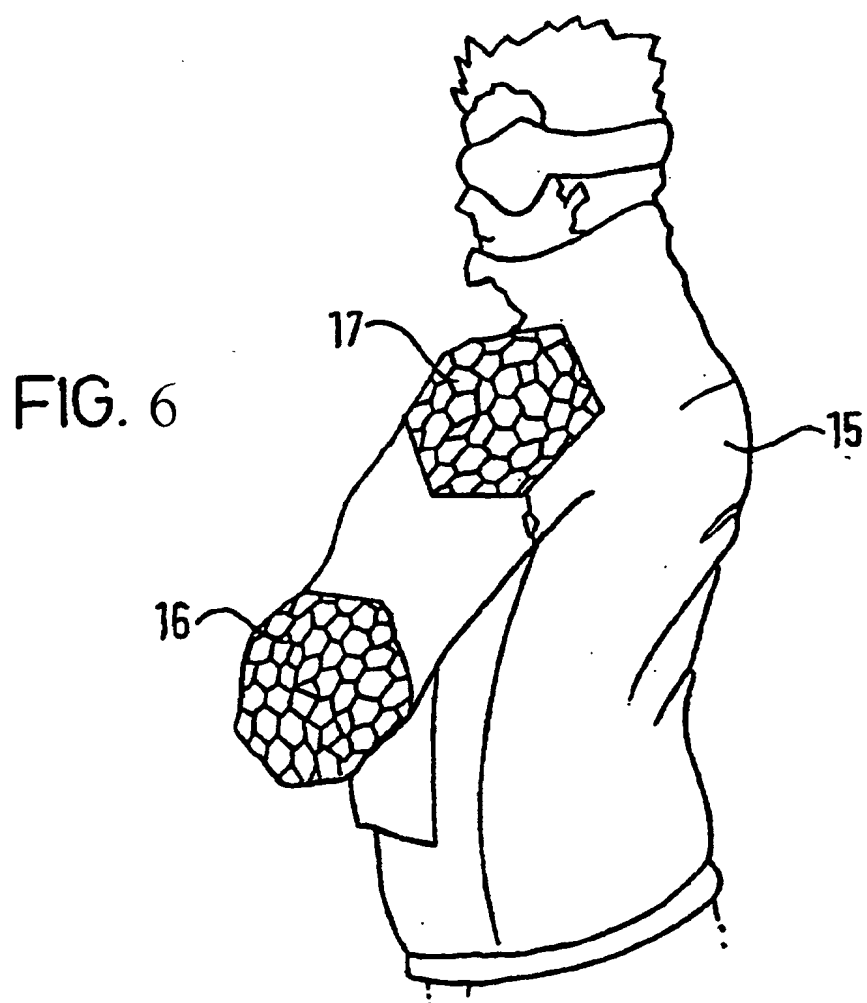
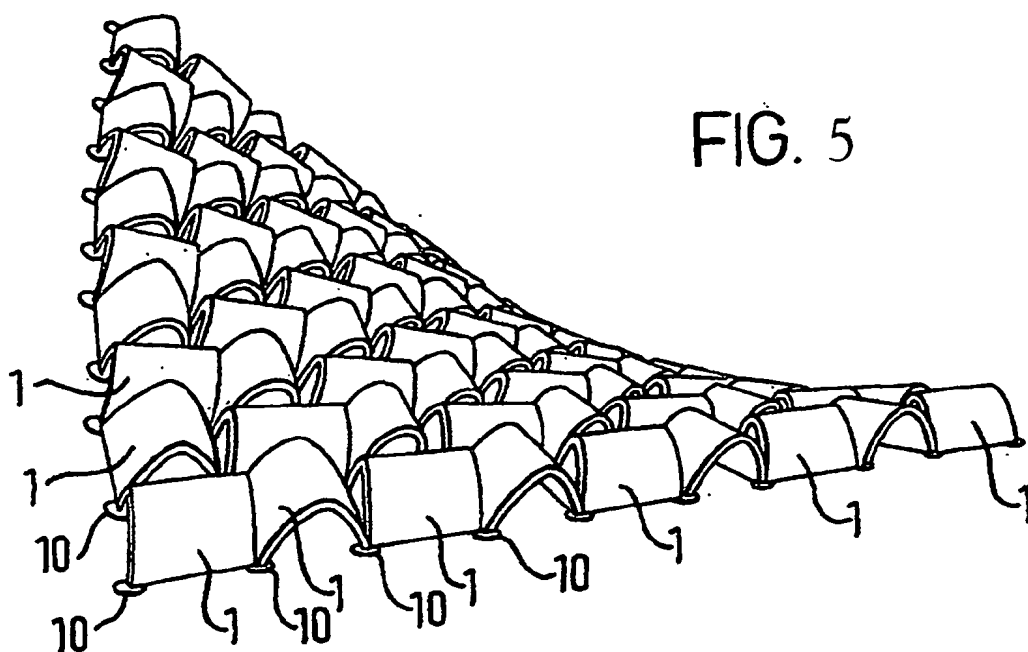
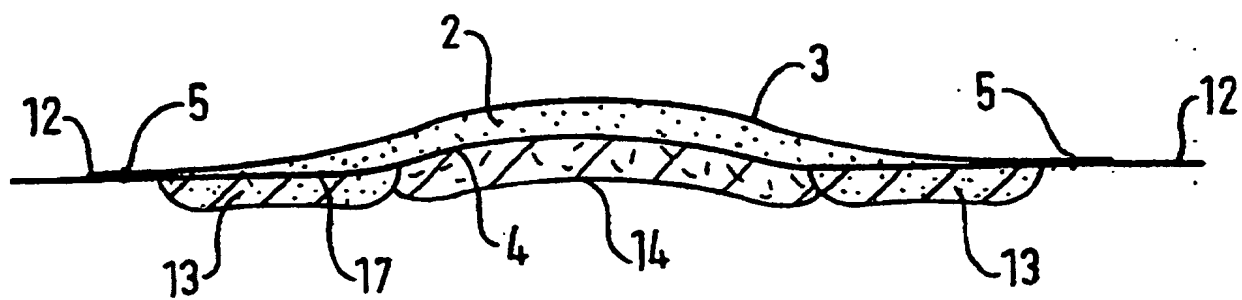
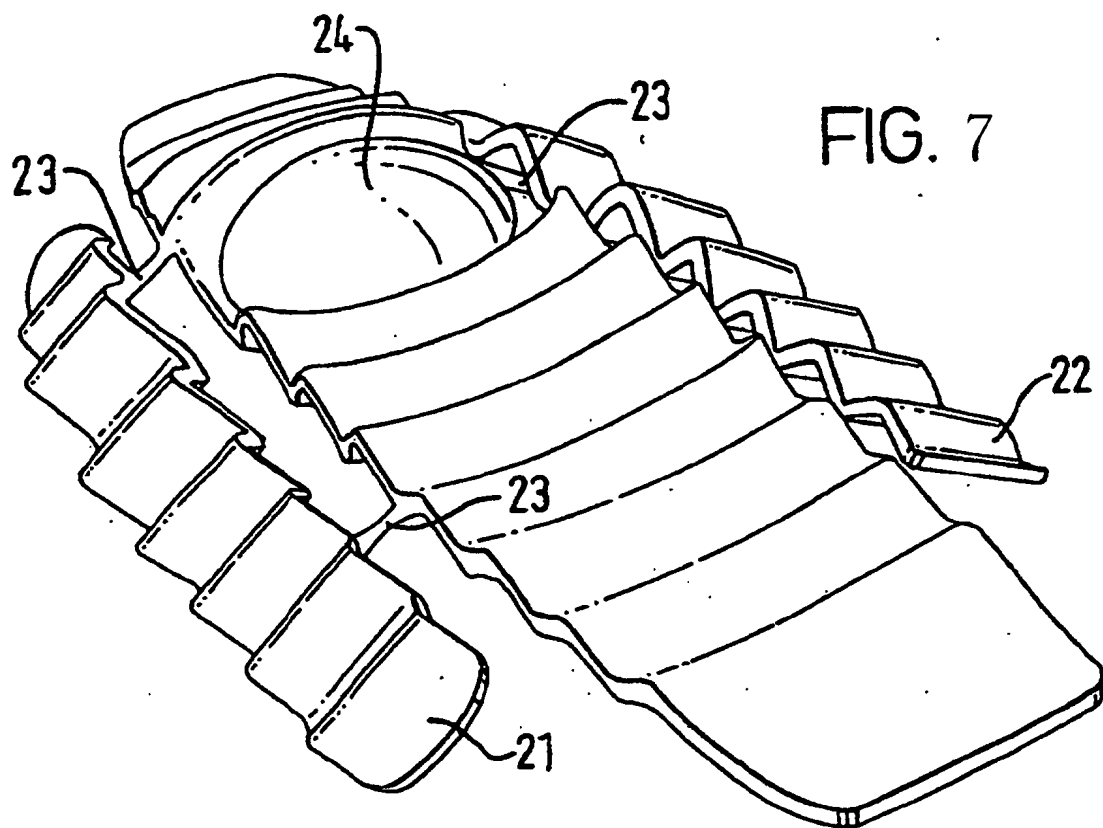


FIG. 4





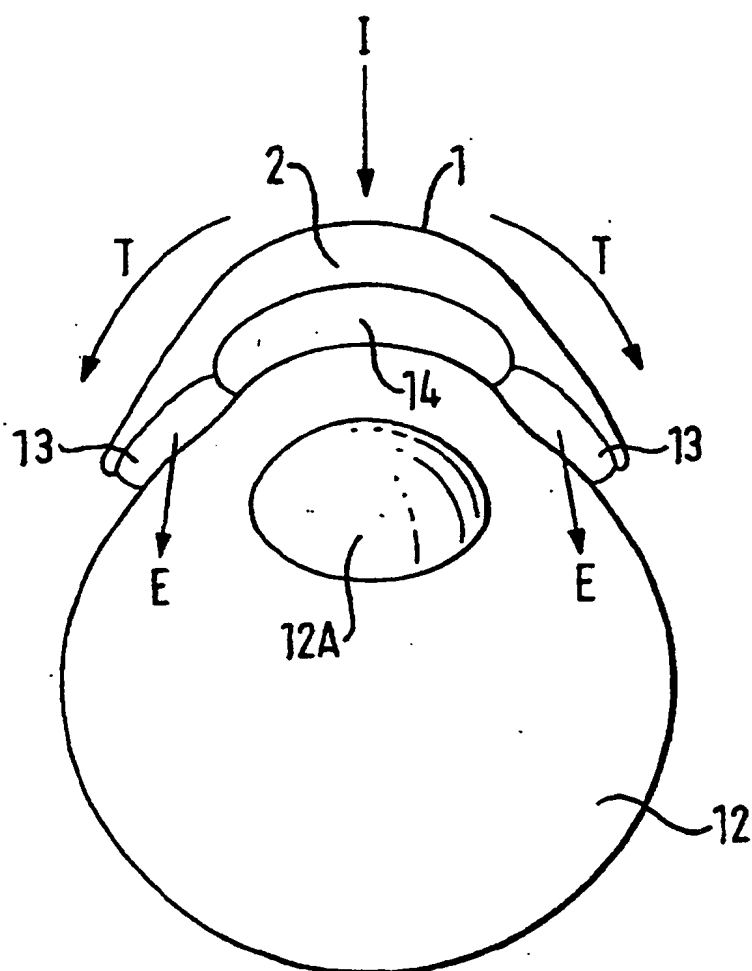


FIG. 9