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(54) Title: D-RING KEEPER ASSEMBLY

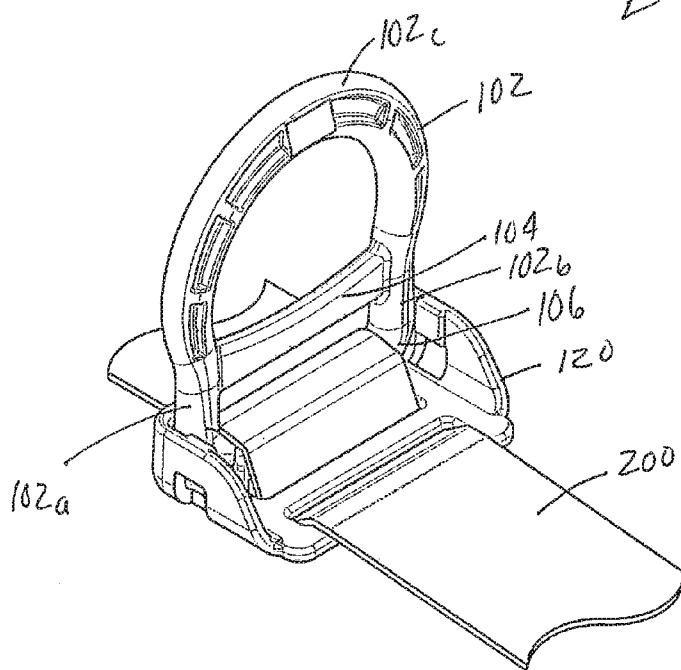


FIG. 2A

(57) **Abstract:** A D-ring keeper assembly is provided. The D-ring keeper assembly includes a D-ring and a base member. The D-ring has a mid-portion, a first end portion and a second end portion. The mid-portion is curved in generally a C-shape. The D-ring further has at least one post that extends between the first and second end portions. The base member is configured and arranged to be coupled to a webbing. The at least one post of the D-ring is pivotally in communication with the base member. The base member further includes at least one locking tab that is configured and arranged to lock the position of the D-ring in relation to the base member.



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GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Declarations under Rule 4.17:

- *as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted
a patent (Rule 4.17(ii))*

D-RING KEEPER ASSEMBLY

BACKGROUND

[0001] Various occupations place people in precarious positions at relatively dangerous heights thereby creating a need for fall-arresting or fall protection safety apparatus. Among other things, such apparatus usually includes a safety line interconnected between a support structure and a safety harness donned by a person working in proximity to the support structure. A connector may be used to interconnect the safety line and the full-body safety harness as well as provide a connection for other attachments to the safety harness. A safety harness may also include a D-ring that can be used, for among other things, to couple a rescue system to the safety harness after a fall event. The D-ring should be accessible yet not hinder the user during normal operations.

[0002] For the reasons stated above and for other reasons stated below which will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon reading and understanding the present specification, there is a need in the art for a D-ring that can be selectively positioned along a webbing of a safety harness and not hinder normal operations of the user donning the safety harness.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0003] The above-mentioned problems of current systems are addressed by embodiments of the present invention and will be understood by reading and studying the following specification. The following summary is made by way of example and not by way of limitation. It is merely provided to aid the reader in understanding some of the aspects of the invention.

[0004] In one embodiment, a D-ring keeper assembly is provided. The D-ring keeper assembly includes a D-ring and a base member. The D-ring has a mid-portion, a first end portion and a second end portion. The mid-portion is configured and arranged to provide a connection point to the D-ring. The D-ring further has at least one post that extends between the first and second end portions. The base member is configured and arranged to be coupled to a webbing. The at least one post of the D-ring is pivotally in communication with the base

member. The base member further includes at least one locking tab that is configured and arranged to lock the position of the D-ring in relation to the base member.

[0005] In another embodiment, another D-ring keeper assembly is provided. This D-ring keeper assembly includes a D-ring and a base member. The D-ring has a mid-portion, a first end portion and a second end portion. The mid-portion is curved in generally a C-shape. The D-ring further has at least one post that extends between the first and second end portions. The base member is configured and arranged to be slidably coupled to a webbing. The at least one post of the D-ring is pivotally in communication with the base member. The base member is further configured and arranged to lock the D-ring in one of an activated position and a stored position in relation to the base member.

[0006] In yet another embodiment, another D-ring keeper assembly is provided. The D-ring assembly includes a D-ring and a base member. The D-ring has a mid-portion, a first end portion and a second end portion. The mid-portion is curved in generally a C-shape. The D-ring further has at least one post that extends between the first and second end portions. The base member is configured and arranged to be slidably coupled to a webbing of a safety harness. The at least one post of the D-ring is pivotally in communication with the base member. The base member further includes at least one locking tab that is configured and arranged to lock the D-ring in one of an activated position and a stored position in relation to the base member. The activated position of the D-ring is generally perpendicular to the stored position of the D-ring in relation to the base member.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The present invention can be more easily understood and further advantages and uses thereof will be more readily apparent, when considered in view of the detailed description and the following figures in which:

[0008] Figure 1 is a front view of a D-ring keeper assembly coupled to a safety harness donned by a user of one embodiment of the present invention;

[0009] Figure 2A is a side perspective view of the D-ring keeper of Figure 1 with its D-ring in an activated position;

[0010] Figure 2B illustrates the D-ring keeper of Figure 1 with its D-ring in a stowed configuration;

[0011] Figure 3A illustrates a side perspective view of a base member of the D-ring keeper assembly of Figure 1 in one embodiment of the present invention;

[0012] Figure 3B is a front view of the base member of Figure 3A;

[0013] Figure 3C is an end view of the base member of Figure 3A;

[0014] Figure 4A is a front view of the D-ring keeper assembly of Figure 1; and

[0015] Figure 4B is a cross-sectional side view of the D-ring keeper along line 4B-4B.

[0016] In accordance with common practice, the various described features are not drawn to scale but are drawn to emphasize specific features relevant to the present invention.

Reference characters denote like elements throughout Figures and text.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] In the following detailed description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, which form a part hereof, and in which is shown by way of illustration specific embodiments in which the inventions may be practiced. These embodiments are described in sufficient detail to enable those skilled in the art to practice the invention, and it is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and that changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. The following detailed description is, therefore, not to be taken in a limiting sense, and the scope of the present invention is defined only by the claims and equivalents thereof.

[0018] Embodiments of the present invention provide a D-ring keeper assembly 100 for use with a safety harness 60 donned by a user 50 as illustrated in Figure 1. One of the features of the D-ring keeper 100 is that it can be, as illustrated in Figure 1, coupled to chest strap 200 (or chest webbing) of the safety harness 60. Placing a D-ring 102 in front of the user 50 provides some benefits. One benefit is that if a fall event occurs, the user 50 can help guide and attach a safety lanyard (not shown) to the D-ring 102 for a rescue. Moreover, placing the D-ring on the front of the safety harness is ideal for ladder climbing situations where a lifeline and/or a lifeline that is part of a climb assist system is positioned in front of the user 50. The D-ring keeper assembly 100 is further designed, as discussed below, to be selectively positioned along the chest webbing 200. Moreover, allowing the D-ring keeper assembly 100 to move relative to the chest webbing 200 allows the D-ring 102 to be centered regardless of the length of the chest webbing 200. In addition, this feature allows the D-ring 102 to be self centered during a fall event. The D-ring keeper assembly 100 includes a D-

ring 102 and a base member 120. In embodiments, the base member 120 is configured to provide an activated position and a stored position for the D-ring 102.

[0019] An illustration of the D-ring 102 in an activated position is illustrated in Figure 2A. The D-ring 102 includes a mid-portion 102c, a first end portion 102a and a second end portion 102b. The mid-portion 102c of the D-ring 102 is curved in generally a C-shape. The D-ring 102 further has a first post 104 and a second post 106. The first and second posts 104 and 106 extend between the first and second end portions 102a and 102b in a spaced configuration. The mid-portion 102c is designed to be attached to a lifeline or lanyard via connector (not shown) if a fall event occurs and a rescue is required. The D-ring 102 in the stored position in relation to the base member 120 is illustrated in Figure 2B. The D-ring 102 would be in the closed position during normal use of the safety harness 60. As discussed below, the base member 120 selectively holds the D-ring 102 in either the stored position or the activated position as discussed further in detail below.

[0020] The base member is illustrated in Figures 3A through 3C. The base member 120 includes a base plate 120a. The base plate 120a has a front edge 122a and opposed back edge 122b, a first side edge 122c and an opposed second side edge 122d as best illustrated in Figure 3B. The base member 120 further has a first side wall 120b that extends from the first side edge 122c of the base plate 120a and a second side wall 120c that extends from the second side edge 122d of the base plate 120a as best illustrated in Figure 3A. Along the back edge 122b extends a back wall 120d. The back wall 120b further extends between the first side wall 120b and the second side wall 120c. The base plate 120a further includes parallel spaced first and second slots that generally extend a select distance between the first side edge 122c and the second side edge 122d. The back wall 120d further includes a third slot 125 that is also positioned in a parallel fashion with the first and seconds slots 121 and 123. Extending from a surface of the base plate 120a between the second and third slots 123 and 125 is a holding plate member 124. The holding plate member 124 is also positioned generally parallel with the first, second and third slots 121, 123 and 125. The first side wall 120b and the second sidewall 120c further include aligned locking tabs 130a and 130b that extend out of an inner surface of the respective first and second sidewalls 120b and 120c towards each other. Positioned between the locking tabs 130a and 130b and the base plate 120a are respective passages 131a and 131b.

[0021] The holding plate member 124 and the base plate 120a form a curved surface 127 that generally matches the radius of curvature of the second post 106 of the D-ring 102 between the holding plate member 124 and the back wall 120d. This is best illustrated in the cross-sectional side view in Figure 4B. The cross-sectional side view in Figure 4B is along the line 4B-4B on D-ring keeper assembly 100 in Figure 4A. The second post 106 of the D-ring is positioned to engage the curved surface 127. Webbing 200 is routed through the third slot 125, over the second post 106 of the D-ring 102, through the second slot 123 and then through the first slot 121. This arrangement couples the D-ring 102 to the keeper base member 120. The D-ring 102 pivots about the curved surface 127. The aligned locking tabs 130a and 130b on the respective first and second side walls 120b and 120c are positioned to selectively lock the D-ring 102 in either an activated position in relation to the base member 120 or a stored position in relation to the base member 120. That is, the locking tabs 130a and 130b selectively prevent movement of the D-ring 102 in relation to the base plate 120a without a select force that causes the D-ring to pass over the locking tabs 130a and 130b. Hence, the base member 120 is made of semi-pliable material that allows the tabs 130a and 130b to be moved out away from each other under a select force and then return to their original position after the force is removed. The select force is applied to the locking tabs by rotation of the D-ring 102. In use, the user locks the D-ring 102 in the stored position by forcibly rotating the D-ring until the first and second end portions 102a and 102b are positioned past the locking tabs 130a and 130b. The locking tabs 130a and 103b are then positioned to prevent the D-ring 102 from moving. In the stored position, the D-ring 102 is in a position that does not interfere with normal operations of the user (i.e. it is unlikely to get hung up on objects). In the stored position, the D-ring 102 is positioned generally parallel with the base plate 120a of the base member 120. If a fall event occurs, and a rescue attempt is to be attempted via the D-ring keeper assembly 100, the D-ring 102 is rotated in relation to the base member 102 with enough force to once again move the locking tabs 130a and 130b of the base member 120 away from each other. Once the first and second end portions 102a and 102b of the D-ring 102 rotate past the locking tabs 130a and 130b, the locking tabs 130a and 130b return back into their normal spaced location in relation to each other locking the D-ring 102 in the activated position. In the activated position, the D-ring 102 is generally positioned perpendicular to the base plate 120a of the base member 120. This position allows easy access to couple a connector such as, but not limited to, a carabiner that is coupled to a lifeline or lanyard.

[0022] As briefly discussed above, another feature of the D-ring keeper assembly 100 is that it can be positioned at any location along the chest webbing 200. Hence, the D-ring keeper assembly 100 can be positioned for convenience or for optimal position during a rescue. This feature is illustrated in the cross-sectional view in Figure 4B. As illustrated, the webbing 200 is routed through the third slot 125, over the second post 106 of the D-ring 102, through the second slot 123 and then through the first slot 121 of the base member 120. This arrangement allows the base member 120 to move along the length of the webbing 200 via pulling or pushing on the D-ring keeper assembly 100. Friction between the webbing 200 and the base member 120 holds the D-ring keeper assembly 100 in a static relationship to the webbing 200 until sufficient force is applied to the D-ring keeper assembly 100. Although, the D-ring keeper assembly 100 is illustrated as being attached to a chest webbing 200, the D-ring keeper assembly 100 can be attached to any webbing and is not limited to a chest webbing 200 of a safety harness 60.

[0023] Although specific embodiments have been illustrated and described herein, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that any arrangement, which is calculated to achieve the same purpose, may be substituted for the specific embodiment shown. This application is intended to cover any adaptations or variations of the present invention. Therefore, it is manifestly intended that this invention be limited only by the claims and the equivalents thereof.

CLAIMS

1. A D-ring keeper assembly comprising:
 - a D-ring having a mid-portion, a first end portion and a second end portion, the mid-portion being configured and arranged to provide a connection point to the D-ring, the D-ring further having at least one post that extends between the first and second end portions; and
 - a base member configured and arranged to be coupled to a webbing, the at least one post of the D-ring pivotally in communication with the base member, the base member further including at least one locking tab configured and arranged to lock the position of the D-ring in relation to the base member.
2. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 1, wherein the at least one locking tab of the base member is configured and arranged to selectively lock the D-ring in at least one of an activated position and a stowed position.
3. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 1, wherein the base member is slidably coupled to the webbing.
4. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 1, wherein the at least one post includes a first post and a second post in a spaced configuration, the first post pivotally in communication with the base member, the webbing passing between the first post and the second post.
5. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 1, wherein the base member further comprises:
 - a base plate, the base plate having a front edge and opposed back edge, the base plate further having a first side edge and an opposed second side edge, the base plate having at least a pair of spaced slots configured and arranged to couple the base plate to the webbing.
6. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 5, further comprising:
 - a first side wall extending from the first side edge of the base plate;
 - a second side wall extending from the second side edge of the base plate; and
 - a back wall extending from the back edge of the base plate.
7. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 6, further comprising:

a holding plate member extending from a surface of the base plate, the holding plate extending out from the surface in generally a parallel fashion with the back wall and being positioned between the first side wall and the second side wall, the holding plate, a portion of the base plate and the back wall forming a curved surface that is configured to engage the at least one post of the D-ring.

8. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 7, wherein the back wall having a back slot further configured to receive the webbing, the webbing holding the at least one post of the D-ring in the formed curved surface of the base plate.

9. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 5, wherein the at least one locking tab includes a first locking tab and a second locking tab.

10. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 9, further comprising:
the first locking tab extending out from a surface of the first side wall over the base plate; and
the second locking tab extending out from a surface of the second side wall over the base plate, the first locking tab being aligned with the second locking tab.

11. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 10, further comprising:
the first locking tab engaging the first end portion of the D-ring; and
the second locking tab engaging the second end position of the D-ring.

12. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 11, wherein the base member is semi-pliable to allow the first and second locking tabs to move away from each other under a select force applied by pivoting the D-ring.

13. A D-ring keeper assembly comprising:
a D-ring having a mid-portion, a first end portion and a second end portion, the mid-portion being curved in generally a C-shape, the D-ring further having at least one post that extends between the first and second end portions; and

a base member configured and arranged to be slidably coupled to a webbing, the at least one post of the D-ring pivotally in communication with the base member, the base member further configured and arranged to lock the D-ring in one of an activated position and a stored position in relation to the base member.

14. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 13, further comprising:

the base member including at least one locking tab configured and arranged to lock the position of the D-ring in each of the activated position and the stored position in relation to the base member.

15. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 13, wherein the base member further comprises:

a base plate, the base plate having a front edge and opposed back edge, the base plate further having a first side edge and an opposed second side edge, the base plate having a first slot and a spaced second slot;

a first side wall extending from the first side edge of the base plate;

a second side wall extending from the second side edge of the base plate; and

a back wall extending from the back edge of the base plate, the back plate further having a back slot, the first slot, the second slot and the back slot configured and arranged to slidably couple the base plate to the webbing.

16. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 15, further comprising:

a holding plate member extending from a surface of the base plate, the holding plate extending out from the surface in generally a parallel fashion in relation to the back wall and being positioned between the first side wall and the second side wall, the holding plate, a portion of the base plate and the back wall forming a curved surface that is configured to engage the at least one post of the D-ring, the webbing holding the at least one post of the D-ring in the formed curved surface of the base plate.

17. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 16, wherein the at least one locking tab further comprises:

a first locking tab extending out from a surface of the first side wall toward the base plate, the first locking tab engaging the first end portion of the D-ring; and

a second locking tab extending out from a surface of the second side wall toward the base plate, the second locking tab engaging the second end position of the D-ring, the first locking tab being aligned with the second locking tab.

18. A D-ring keeper assembly comprising:

a D-ring having a mid-portion, a first end portion and a second end portion, the mid-portion being curved in generally a C-shape, the D-ring further having at least one post that extends between the first and second end portions; and

a base member configured and arranged to be slidably coupled to a webbing of a safety harness, the at least one post of the D-ring pivotally in communication with the base member, the base member further including at least one locking tab configured and arranged to lock the D-ring in one of an activated position and a stored position in relation to the base member, the activated position of the D-ring being generally perpendicular to the stored position of the D-ring in relation to the base member.

19. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 18, wherein the base member further comprises:

a base plate having a front edge and opposed back edge, the base plate further having a first side edge and an opposed second side edge, the base plate having a first slot and a spaced second slot;

a first side wall extending from the first side edge of the base plate;

a second side wall extending from the second side edge of the base plate;

a back wall extending from the back edge of the base plate, the back plate further having a back slot, the first slot, the second slot and the back slot configured and arranged to slidably couple the base plate to the webbing; and

a holding plate member extending from a surface of the base plate, the holding plate extending out from the surface in generally a parallel fashion with the back wall and being positioned between the first side wall and the second side wall, the holding plate, a portion of the base plate and the back wall forming a curved surface that is configured to engage the at least one post of the D-ring, the webbing holding the at least one post of the D-ring in the formed curved surface of the base plate.

20. The D-ring keeper assembly of claim 18, wherein the at least one locking tab further comprises:

a first locking tab extending out from a surface of the first side wall toward the base plate, the first locking tab engaging the first end portion of the D-ring; and

a second locking tab extending out from a surface of the second side wall toward the base plate, the second locking tab engaging the second end position of the D-ring, the first locking tab being aligned with the second locking tab.

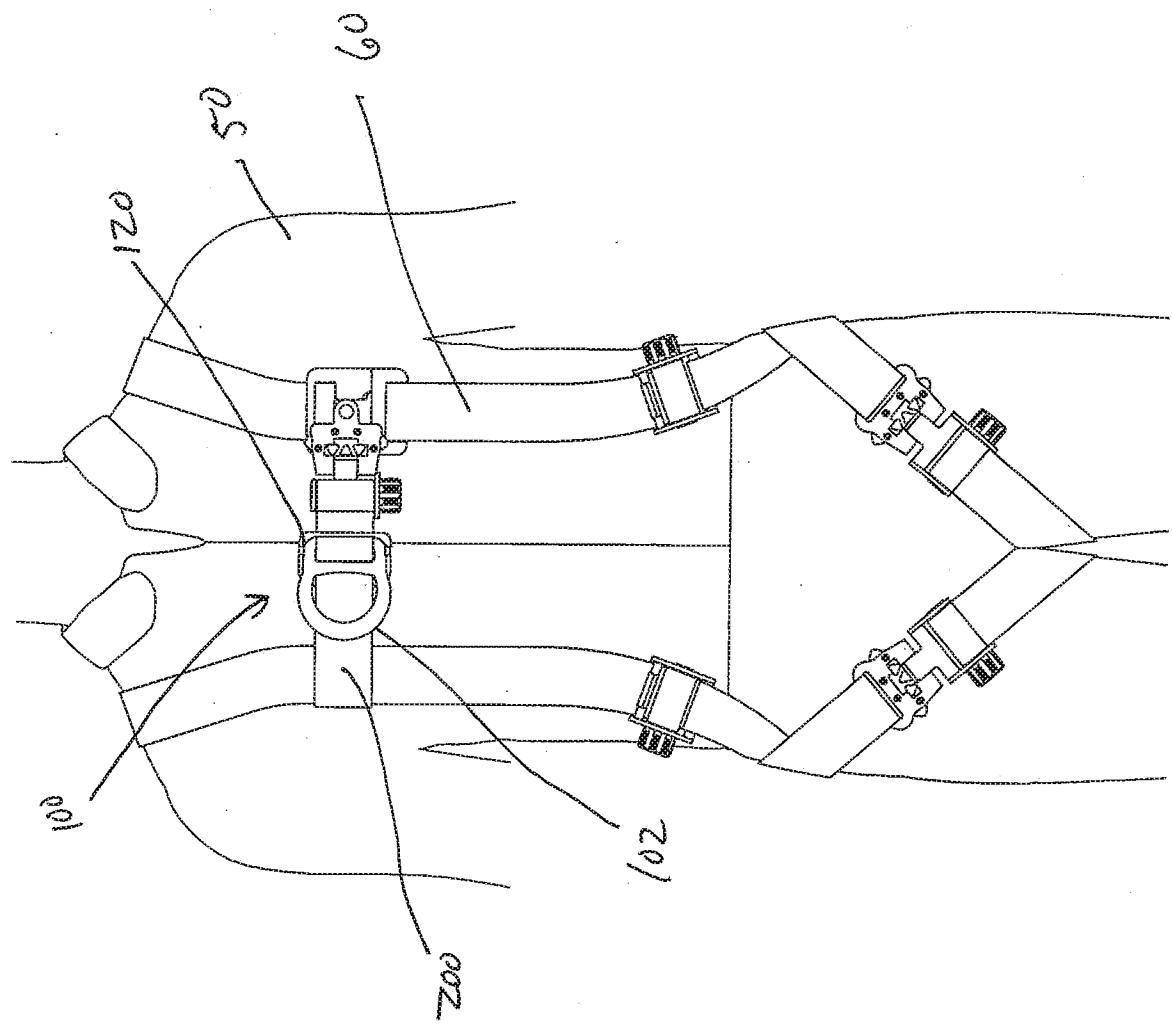


FIG. 1

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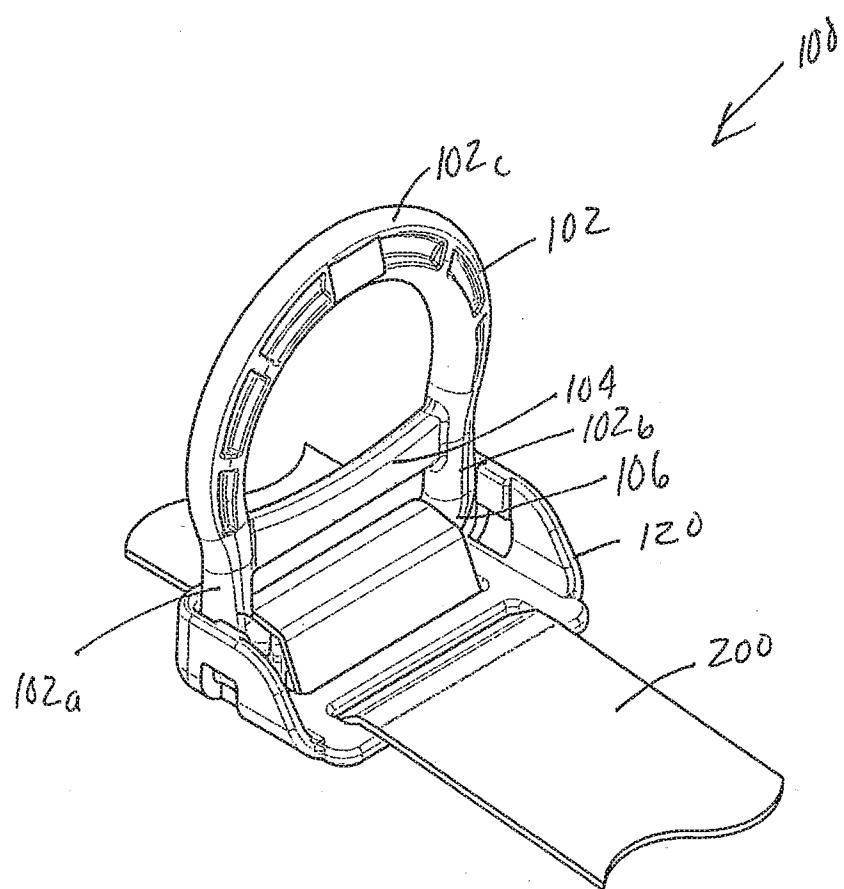


FIG. 2A

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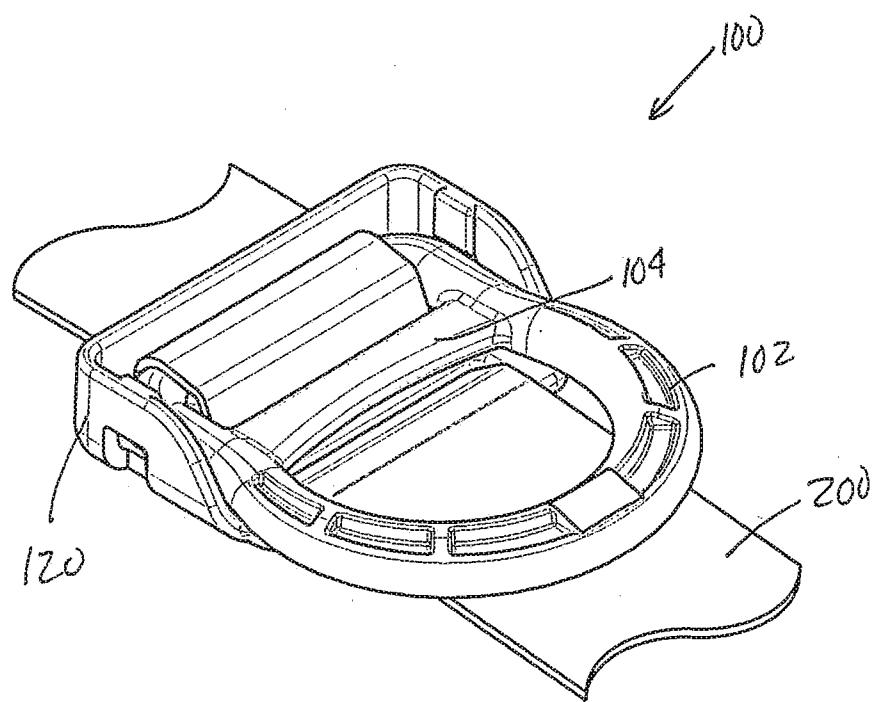


FIG. 2B

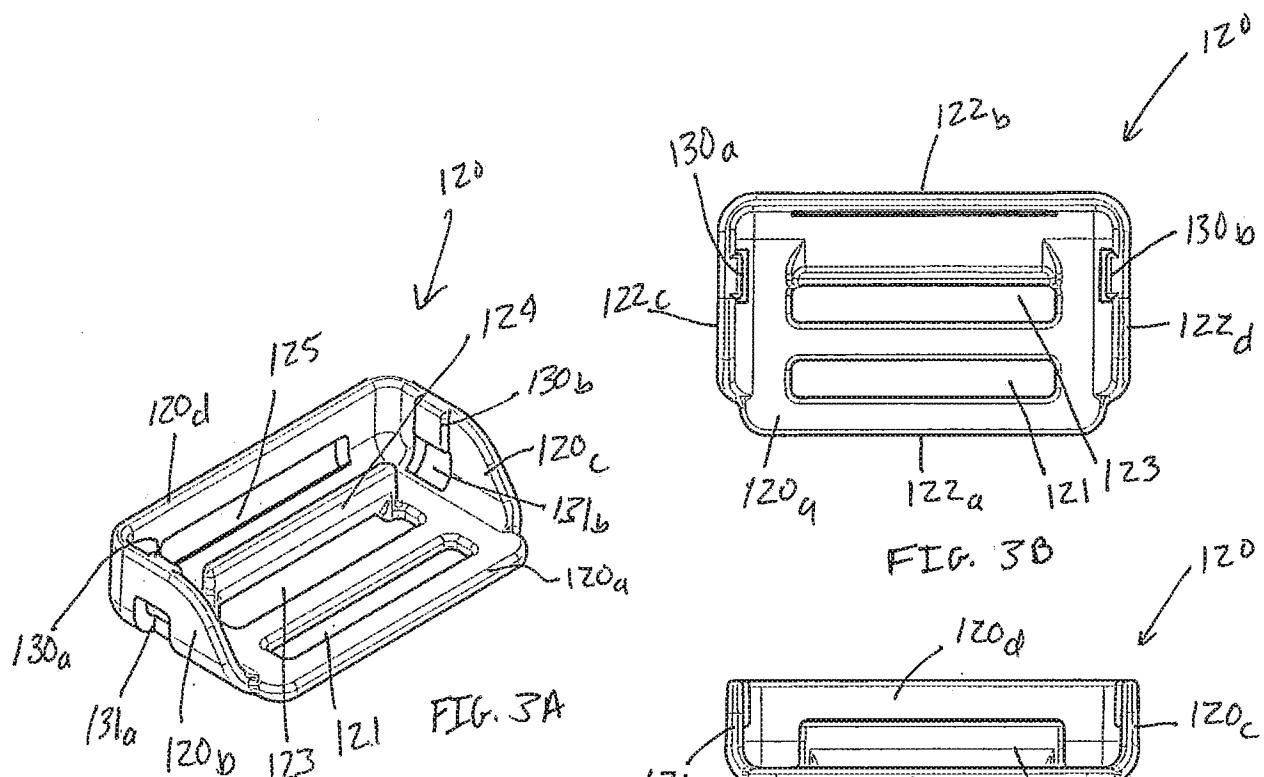


FIG. 3C

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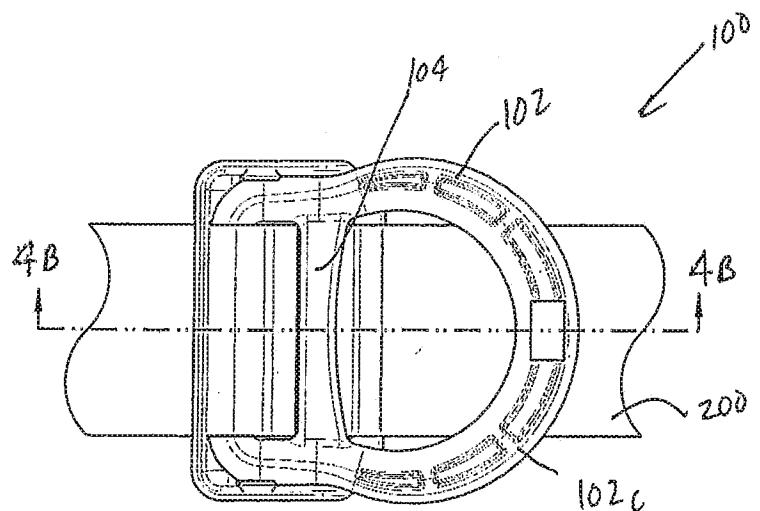


FIG. 4A

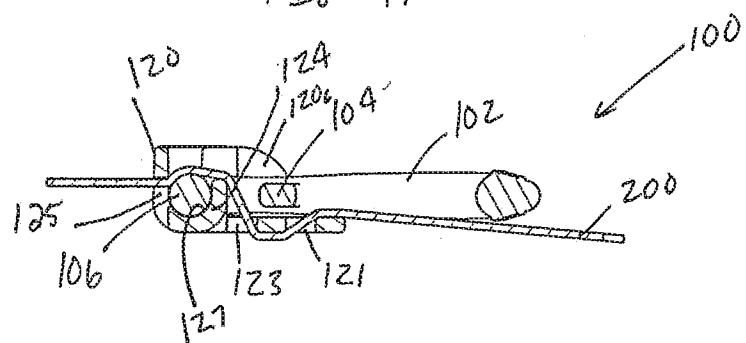


FIG. 4B

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. A62B35/00
ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

A62B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2012/228056 A1 (LANG TRACY [US] ET AL) 13 September 2012 (2012-09-13) paragraphs [0079] - [0085]; claims; figures -----	1-5, 9, 13, 14, 18
A	US 2005/082114 A1 (CASEBOLT SCOTT C [US] ET AL) 21 April 2005 (2005-04-21) claims; figures -----	1, 13, 18



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date
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"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

Date of mailing of the international search report

12 August 2016

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Name and mailing address of the ISA/

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No

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Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)			Publication date
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