



Press Release

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For immediate release

Fatal attraction?

Mountain experts warn against magnets in clothing

Mountain safety experts have warned against a worrying trend in the outdoor clothing market.

Magnetic closures on gloves and jackets are being marketed as the modern alternative to Velcro or poppers.

But magnets are well-known for deflecting compass needles, and there is already evidence that this may have been the cause of a recent Mountain Rescue call-out.

Heather Morning, Mountain Safety Adviser for Mountaineering Scotland, said: "We have reviewed the circumstances of a recent incident in the mountains east of Glen Shee, which involved hundreds of hours of rescue personnel hours and police time.

"A group of walkers were caught in low cloud and headed east instead of west, becoming totally disorientated and ending miles away from a road. Fortunately no-one was hurt – just pride dented – but it could have turned out so much worse had mountain conditions been more severe.

"The reason for the error was the compass. It had been stored in a pocket next to a mobile phone in a case which had a magnetic closure on it, and the magnet had reversed the polarity of the compass needle, so that the north arrow pointed south."

This phenomenon of 'reversed polarity' has been widely publicised in mountaineering circles and people are advised to keep their compasses well away from mobile phones.

But there is concern at the growing use of magnetic closures in outdoor clothing.

Popular outdoor brands are producing mitts/gloves with fold-back flaps using magnetic closures and there is a wide choice of outdoor jackets out there replacing Velcro with magnets hidden away in folds of the garment. Pockets, hoods, front fastenings, wrist closures... they're all out there.

Heather warned: "Modern technology is great. The resources available now to keep us warm and safe in the mountains have never been better. But more joined-up thinking is needed between outdoor clothing manufacturers and mountain users to avoid potentially life-threatening consequences.

"My advice is to steer well clear of any garments utilizing this latest trend of magnetic closures or you could end up with an expensive bill for replacing your compass or – worse – a life-threatening navigation error."

Ends

Notes for editors:**Image:**

http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/Mag_closures_and_compasses.JPG

Two identical new compasses show a wide difference in 'north' when one is held in a glove with a magnetic closure.

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About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,000 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers, funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- Mountaineering Scotland has launched the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression. It offers a dedicated website and a development team, which will introduce young people to climbing at schools, climbing walls and via youth organisations with a range of activities and events, while developing kids clubs and providing specialist support to parents, volunteers and teachers.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sports climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.
- The MCofS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
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