

Description**FALL ARREST DEVICE**

- [0001] This invention relates to a fall arrest device.
- [0002] It is known, for example from WO2005044383 to provide a fall arrest device which protects a user against a fall with the aid of cam members responsive to the application of the weight of the user to the fall arrest device and which operates in both directions. Bi-directional operation has the advantage that it is not necessary to mount the device on a cable or the like in a particular direction, with serious consequences if the device is mounted incorrectly. However, the reliance of the fall arrest device on the weight of a falling person to activate the device is not effective in all situations. For example, where the fall arrest device is used on an incline, under which conditions the full weight of the user may not be applied to the device in the event of a fall, the fall arrest device may not activate with the result that the user continues to slide down an inclined surface either until the end of the incline is reached or the incline becomes a vertical fall and the fall arrest device is activated.
- [0003] It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a fall arrest device which overcomes, or at least ameliorates, the above disadvantage and which is more effective on inclined surfaces.
- [0004] According to the present invention there is provided a fall arrest device comprising: a guide for a track member which, in use, passes through the device; a cam member including a cam portion; and clutch means responsive to at least one of the relative speed and relative acceleration of the fall arrest device and the track member and adapted to determine when the relative speed and/or acceleration is at least a predetermined value, the clutch means including means connecting to the cam member so as to move the cam portion of the cam member toward the guide so as to lock the track member between the cam member and the guide when at least the predetermined value is attained.
- [0005] The device may include two guides and cam members, the cam members being adapted and arranged to lock the track member against movement in either of two opposing directions. In such a case the clutch means may

comprise a single bi-directional clutch means or a pair of clutch means responsive to movement in opposing directions.

- [0006] The or each guide may be substantially triangular with the apex of the triangle innermost relative to the device.
- [0007] The device may include a spring-biased retainer to retain the track member in position.
- [0008] The device may include a back plate on which other components of the device are mounted. The or each cam member may be pivotably mounted on a pivot pin extending from the back plate. The cam member may be mounted on the pivot pin by way of a biasing assembly for biasing the cam member away from the track member. The pivot pin may be provided on that side of the retainer remote from the guide.
- [0009] The or each cam member may include a re-set handle for re-setting the cam member to an inactive position after the device has been activated to lock the track member between the cam member and the guide.
- [0010] The or each cam member may be protected by a cover plate. The cover plate may be movable to permit mounting and demounting the device relative to the track member.
- [0011] The connecting means may comprise a trigger arm. The or each trigger arm may pass through the respective guide. The or each trigger arm may be profiled in the region of the cam member so as to engage with the cam member such that movement of the trigger arm in a first direction causes the cam member to rotate from its inactive position to its active position in which the track member is locked between the cam member and the guide.
- [0012] When the cam member is in its active position in which the track member is locked between the cam member and the guide, but the device is stationary and not under load, the cam member may be re-set to its inactive position with a re-set handle forming part of the cam member.
- [0013] The cam member may be internally profiled to engage with and re-set the trigger arm by moving the trigger arm in a second direction, opposite to the first direction.
- [0014] The trigger arm may be formed with a recess which has an arcuate

surface. The arcuate surface may align with an edge of an arcuate slot formed in the back plate. The cam member may be formed with a stop pin which engages in the arcuate slot provided in the back plate and also engages with the recess in the trigger arm.

- [0015] Activation of the or each cam member may be effected by way of a clutch arrangement. The clutch arrangement may include a rotatable wheel adapted to engage with the track member as it passes through the device. The wheel may incorporate an elastomeric ring for engaging with the track member. The wheel or the ring may be profiled to enhance engagement with the track member. The clutch arrangement may include electronic or electromechanical means to determine the speed and/or acceleration of the fall arrest device relative to the track member, such as means for determining the rotational speed of the wheel, and electromechanical means, such as a solenoid, may be used to activate the or each cam member.
- [0016] The clutch arrangement may comprise a centrifugal clutch assembly including a rotatable inertia device having an inertia reel positioned to at least one side of the wheel. An inertia reel may be positioned to each side of the wheel. The or each inertia device may be rotatable about an axis transverse to the axis of the track member. The or each inertia reel may rotate with the wheel.
- [0017] The centrifugal clutch assembly may include at least one slip disc provided with means for engaging with the respective inertia reel when the relative speed and/or acceleration of the fall arrest device attains at least the predetermined value. The centrifugal clutch assembly may include two slip discs, each responsive to a different direction of movement of the track member relative to the fall arrest device. The engagement means may comprise a pin provided in a peripheral region of the slip disc and connected to the respective trigger arm.
- [0018] The inertia reel may include at least one actuating member for engaging with the engagement means of the at least one slip disc. The actuating member may be pivotally mounted on the inertia reel. The or each actuating member may include an arcuate arm which is received in a

corresponding arcuate recess formed in the inertia reel. A compression spring may be provided in the recess to urge the actuating member away from the recess and tending to rotate the actuating member such that a free end of the actuating member is urged radially inwardly. The free end of the actuating member may be formed with an engagement face which extends substantially in a radial direction for engaging with the engagement means of the respective slip disc.

- [0019] For a better understanding of the present invention and to show more clearly how it may be carried into effect reference will now be made, by way of example, to the accompanying drawings in which:
- [0020] Figure 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a fall arrest device according to the present invention;
- [0021] Figure 2 is a front elevational view of the fall arrest device shown in Figure 1;
- [0022] Figure 3 is a perspective view of the fall arrest device with a number of components removed;
- [0023] Figure 4 is a front elevational view of the fall arrest device shown in Figure 3;
- [0024] Figure 5 is a front elevational view corresponding to Figure 4, but with further components, including a cam member, removed;
- [0025] Figure 6 is a perspective view of the cam member removed from Figure 5; and
- [0026] Figure 7 is an elevational view of the cam member shown in Figure 6.
- [0027] The fall arrest device which forms part of a lifeline system is shown in the figures and comprises a back plate 1 to which is attached a pair of cable guides 3 which are generally triangular and narrow from the edges of the back plate 1 towards a centre region thereof (that is, the apex of the triangle is innermost relative to the device), the adjacent tapered ends of the cable guides being spaced from each other (it should be noted the left-hand cable guide has been removed in Figure 2 in order to show other features of the device). A spring-biased retaining block 5 is urged towards a track member in the form of a cable 7, forming another part of the lifeline system, to retain the cable between the retaining block and the cable

guides 3. The cable 7 may be arranged in use at any angle between 0 and 90 degrees to the horizontal. Although a metal cable is illustrated, other commonly used forms of cable or the like may be provided, including rope, webbing and solid or inflexible materials such a metal bar.

[0028] A pair of rotatable cam members 9 are pivotably mounted on a pivot pin 11 extending from the back plate 1 on that side of the retaining block remote from the cable guides with a cam portion of one cam member substantially opposite a respective cable guide so as to grip against the cable when actuated and to urge the cable against the adjacent cable guide so as to give rise to a braking effect. A re-set handle 13 is provided for re-setting the cam members 9 to an inactive position after the device has been activated. Figures 3 and 4 show a left-hand cam member in an inactive position and a right-hand cam member in an active position in which it is braking movement of the cable from the left to the right as shown in Figures 3 and 4. That is the cam members 9 are in a configuration in the inactive position in which the re-set handle extends generally parallel to the cable 7, and the cam members 9 are in a configuration in the active position in which the re-set handle extends generally transverse to the cable 7.

[0029] In use of the device, the retaining block 5 and the cam members 9 are protected by a cover plate 15 which is fixed relative to the remainder of the device, but which shields an inner plate that is movable by way of a release button 17 to allow the device to be mounted and demounted relative to the cable 7. While the device is removable from the cable 7, the device as illustrated works in both directions and orientation is therefore unimportant for this embodiment of the present invention.

[0030] A trigger arm 19 (which also acts as a re-set arm) is arranged between each of the cam members 9 and the back plate 1 and is connected to a triggering mechanism which will be explained in detail hereinafter. Each trigger arm 19 passes through the respective cable guide 3. The trigger arm 19 is profiled in the region of the cam member 9 and engages with the cam member such that movement of the trigger arm in a direction away (i.e., upwardly as shown in the figures) from the pivot pin 11 of the cam

member 9 causes the cam member to rotate from its inactive position to its active position when the device is moving at least at a predetermined speed and/or acceleration relative to the cable. That is, the right-hand cam member is moved to its active position when the cable is moving to the right relative to the device at least at a predetermined speed and/or acceleration relative to the device and the left-hand cam member is moved to its active position when the cable is moving to the left relative to the device at least at a predetermined speed and/or acceleration relative to the device.

- [0031] When the cam member is in its active position, but the device is stationary and not under load, the cam member can be re-set to its inactive position with the re-set handle 13. The cam member is internally profiled to engage with and re-set the trigger arm 19 by moving the trigger arm in a direction towards (i.e., downwardly as shown in the figures) towards the pivot pin 11 of the cam member.
- [0032] Figure 5 shows the fall arrest with one of the cam members 9 (the right hand cam member) removed. The cam member itself is shown in Figures 6 and 7. As can be seen from Figure 5, the trigger arm 19 is formed with a recess 51 which has an arcuate surface, the arcuate surface aligning with an edge of an arcuate slot 53 formed in the back plate 1. The recess 51 effectively forms a hook at each end of the arcuate slot. The cam member 9 is mounted on the back plate 1 by way of pivot pin 11 which engages in a corresponding bore provided in the cam member 9. The cam member is also formed with a stop pin 57 which engages in the arcuate slot 53 provided in the back plate and also engages with the recess 51 in the trigger arm 19. The cam member 9 is mounted on the pivot pin 11 by way of a biasing assembly 59 which includes a spring retention pin 61 protruding from the back plate 1 and a torsion spring (not shown) which terminates in a spring retention profile 63 for biasing the cam member 9 to its disengaged configuration.
- [0033] Activation of the cam members 9 is controlled by a rotatable inertia device 21 (or centrifugal clutch assembly) which is in the form of a central wheel 23 with an inertia reel 25 positioned to each side of the central wheel. The

spring-biased retaining block 5 also helps to ensure the central wheel 23 rotates with relative movement between the fall arrest device and the cable 7. The inertia device is rotatable about an axis transverse to the axis of the cable 7. The central wheel 23 has an elastomeric insert 27 between two circular side walls 29, the insert having a smaller diameter than the side walls so as to accommodate a part of the cross-sectional area of the cable 7 where the cable passes over the retaining block 5. The insert 27 may be formed with angled grooves adapted to engage with corresponding strands of the cable so as to increase friction, and therefore grip, between the cable and the wheel.

[0034] The central wheel 23 rotates as the cable 7 passes between the wheel and the retaining block 5. The inertia reels 25 rotate with the central wheel. A slip disc 30 forms part of the centrifugal clutch and is positioned between the side walls 29 of the central wheel 23 and the inertia reel 25. Each slip disc 30 is attached to a different one of the trigger arms 19 by way of a cover 31 for the respective inertia reel. That is, the cover is generally circular, but is provided with an extending portion which is pivotally connected to a pin 33 forming part of the trigger arm 19. A further pin 35 is provided in the peripheral region of the respective slip disc 30 and extends between the slip disc and the respective cover 31. The inertia reel 25 is therefore positioned between the slip disc 30 and the cover 31.

[0035] Each inertia reel 25 also includes a pair of actuating members 37 (or pawls) which are positioned diametrically opposite the axis of rotation of the inertia device. In practice, the number of actuating members is not important and may be fewer than two (i.e., a single actuating member may be provided) or may be greater than two. The actuating members are pivotally mounted on the inertia reel and pivot about an axis 38 parallel to the axis of rotation of the inertia device. Each actuating member 37 includes an arcuate arm 39 which is received in a corresponding arcuate recess 41 formed in the inertia reel 25. A compression spring 43 is provided in the recess and urges the actuating member 37 away from the recess tending to rotate the actuating member such that a free end 45 of the actuating member is urged radially inwardly. The free end 45 of the

actuating member 37 is profiled with a landing area 47 which extends substantially in a circumferential direction and an engagement face 49 which extends substantially in a radial direction. As the inertia device rotates in an anti-clockwise direction as shown in Figures 4 and 5, the mass of the free end 45 of the actuating member causes the actuating member to pivot about the axis 38 such that the arcuate arm 39 compresses the spring 43 and the free end 45 moves radially outwardly as a result of centrifugal force. When the inertia device rotates at a predetermined speed the free end 45 will have moved radially outwardly a sufficient distance for the engagement face 49 to engage with the further pin 35.

- [0036] The number of inertia reels 25 is also optional in that a single inertia wheel may be provided. In such a case, either the fall arrest device may only operate in a single direction, or the actuating member(s) may be constructed to move outwardly irrespective of the direction of rotation of the inertia device. Moreover, separate inertia wheels may be provided for each direction if desired.
- [0037] Once the device activates it locks onto the cable 7 and prevents relative movement between the cable and the device until the device is released.
- [0038] Each inertia reel 25 works in the opposite direction to the other in order to control relative movement of the cable 7 in either direction. That is, the outer inertia reel operates if the cable is moving at more than a predetermined speed and/or acceleration to the right as shown in the figures (or the device is moving at more than a predetermined speed and/or acceleration to the left) and the inner inertia reel operates if the cable is moving at more than a predetermined speed and/or acceleration to the left as shown in the figures (or the device is moving at more than a predetermined speed and/or acceleration to the right).
- [0039] Other forms of clutch arrangement may be used, having the same effect as a centrifugal clutch. For example, electronic or electromechanical means may be provided to determine the speed and/or acceleration of the fall arrest device relative to the cable 7, such as means for determining the rotational speed of the central wheel 23, and electromechanical means,

such as a solenoid, may be used to activate the cam member(s) 9. Electrical power for such devices may be provided, for example by batteries and/or by generating power as a result of relative movement between the fall arrest device and the cable and/or by using the cable 7 as an electrical conductor and/or by providing a separate electrically-conducting cable. Such an electromechanical clutch arrangement would permit the fall arrest device to be more compact and would allow greater flexibility in the relative arrangement of the components of the device.

Claims

1. A fall arrest device comprising: a guide (3) for a track member (7) which, in use, passes through the device; a cam member (9) including a cam portion; and clutch means (21) responsive to at least one of the relative speed and relative acceleration of the fall arrest device and the track member and adapted to determine when the relative speed and/or acceleration is at least a predetermined value, the clutch means including means (19) connecting to the cam member so as to move the cam portion of the cam member toward the guide so as to lock the track member between the cam member and the guide when at least the predetermined value is attained.
2. A device as claimed in claim 1 and including two guides (3) and cam members (9), the cam members being adapted and arranged to lock the track member (7) against movement in either of two opposing directions.
3. A device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the clutch means (21) comprises a single bi-directional clutch means.
4. A device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the clutch means (21) comprises a pair of clutch means responsive to movement in opposing directions.
5. A device as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the or each guide (3) is substantially triangular with the apex of the triangle innermost relative to the device.
6. A device as claimed in any preceding claim and including a spring-biased retainer (5) to retain the track member (7) in position.
7. A device as claimed in any preceding claim and including a back plate (1) on which other components of the device are mounted.
8. A device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the or each cam member (9) is pivotably mounted on a pivot pin (11) extending from the back plate (1).
9. A device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the cam member (9) is mounted on the pivot pin (11) by way of a biasing assembly (59) for biasing the cam member away from the track member (7).
10. A device as claimed in claim 8 or 9 when dependent on claim 6, wherein the pivot pin (11) is provided on that side of the retainer (5) remote from the guide (3).
11. A device as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the or each cam member

- (9) includes a re-set handle (13) for re-setting the cam member (9) to an inactive position after the device has been activated to lock the track member (7) between the cam member and the guide (3).
12. A device as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the or each cam member (9) is protected by a cover plate (15).
13. A device as claimed in claim 12, wherein the cover plate (15) is movable to permit mounting and demounting the device relative to the track member (7).
14. A device as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the connecting means (19) comprises a trigger arm.
15. A device as claimed in claim 14, wherein the or each trigger arm (19) passes through the respective guide (3).
16. A device as claimed in claim 14 or 15, wherein the or each trigger arm (19) is profiled in the region of the cam member (9) so as to engage with the cam member such that movement of the trigger arm in a first direction causes the cam member to rotate from its inactive position to its active position in which the track member (7) is locked between the cam member and the guide (3).
17. A device as claimed in claim 16, wherein, when the cam member (9) is in its active position in which the track member (7) is locked between the cam member and the guide (3), but the device is stationary and not under load, the cam member is re-settable to its inactive position with a re-set handle (13) forming part of the cam member.
18. A device as claimed in claim 16 or 17, wherein the cam member (9) is internally profiled to engage with and re-set the trigger arm (19) by moving the trigger arm in a second direction, opposite to the first direction.
19. A device as claimed in any one of claims 14 to 18, wherein the trigger arm (19) is formed with a recess (51) which has an arcuate surface.
20. A device as claimed in claim 19, wherein the arcuate surface aligns with an edge of an arcuate slot (53) formed in the back plate (1).
21. A device as claimed in claim 20, wherein the cam member (9) is formed with a stop pin (57) which engages in the arcuate slot (53) provided in the back plate (1) and also engages with the recess (51) in the trigger arm (19).
22. A device as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein activation of the or each cam member (9) is effected by way of a clutch arrangement (21).

23. A device as claimed in claim 22, wherein the clutch arrangement (21) includes a rotatable wheel (23) adapted to engage with the track member (7) as it passes through the device.
24. A device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the wheel (23) incorporates an elastomeric ring (27) for engaging with the track member (7).
25. A device as claimed in claim 23 or 24, wherein the wheel (23) or the ring (27) is profiled to enhance engagement with the track member (7).
26. A device as claimed in any one of claims 22 to 25, wherein the clutch arrangement (21) includes electronic or electromechanical means to determine the speed and/or acceleration of the fall arrest device relative to the track member (7).
27. A device as claimed in claim 26, wherein the electronic or electromechanical means comprises means for determining the rotational speed of the wheel (23).
28. A device as claimed in claim 26 or 27, wherein electromechanical means is used to activate the or each cam member (9).
29. A device as claimed in claim 28, wherein the electromechanical means comprises a solenoid.
30. A device as claimed in any one of claims 23 to 25, wherein the clutch arrangement (21) comprises a centrifugal clutch assembly including a rotatable inertia device having an inertia reel (25) positioned to at least one side of the wheel (23).
31. A device as claimed in claim 30, wherein an inertia reel (25) is positioned to each side of the wheel (23).
32. A device as claimed in claim 30 or 31, wherein the or each inertia device is rotatable about an axis transverse to the axis of the track member (7).
33. A device as claimed in claim 30, 31 or 32, wherein the or each inertia reel (25) rotates with the wheel (23).
34. A device as claimed in any one of claims 30 to 33, wherein the centrifugal clutch assembly (21) includes at least one slip disc (30) provided with means (35) for engaging with the respective inertia reel (25) when the relative speed and/or acceleration of the fall arrest device attains at least the predetermined value.

35. A device as claimed in claim 34, wherein the centrifugal clutch assembly (21) includes two slip discs (30), each responsive to a different direction of movement of the track member (7) relative to the fall arrest device.
36. A device as claimed in claim 34 or 35, wherein the engagement means comprises a pin (35) provided in a peripheral region of the slip disc (30) and connected to the respective trigger arm (19).
37. A device as claimed in any one of claims 30 to 36, wherein the inertia reel (25) includes at least one actuating member (37) for engaging with the engagement means (35) of the at least one slip disc (30).
38. A device as claimed in claim 37, wherein the actuating member (37) is pivotally mounted on the inertia reel (25).
39. A device as claimed in claim 37 or 38, wherein the or each actuating member (37) includes an arcuate arm (39) which is received in a corresponding arcuate recess (41) formed in the inertia reel (25).
40. A device as claimed in claim 39, wherein a compression spring (43) is provided in the recess (41) to urge the actuating member (37) away from the recess and tending to rotate the actuating member such that a free end of the actuating member is urged radially inwardly.
41. A device as claimed in any one of claims 37 to 40, wherein the free end of the actuating member (37) is formed with an engagement face (49) which extends substantially in a radial direction for engaging with the engagement means (35) of the respective slip disc (30).