



Critical Mass Labs

Gekkomat gets users climbing the walls

Look out, Spider-Man

Peter Parker, a.k.a. Spider-Man, would be proud, even if Gerald Winkler's device for scaling walls is named after a lizard. The Gekkomat is a startling, 25-kg contraption that allows users to ascend a wide variety of flat surfaces. The climber wears vacuum pads on each limb, and Scuba-like air tanks, good for about two hours, on the back to create suction. Winkler, based in the Bavarian city of Herzogenaurach, hopes emergency service workers will one day use the Gekkomat for rescues in high-rise buildings. For safety, only one suction pad can be moved at a time. And like underwater divers, users must keep an eye on how much air is left in the tanks so they don't run empty. "You must never," says Winkler, "let this happen." His device, it seems, lacks Spidey's web shooter for handling sudden free-falls.

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