

### New option for keeping out the cold and wet

Nextec Srl, the Italian company behind laminated waterproofing technology OutDry, has joined forces with US outdoor clothing brand Mountain Hardwear to create new glove styles for autumn 2009.

OutDry uses a three-dimensional laminating process to laminate a waterproof, windproof, and breathable membrane to the inside of the outermost layer of shoes, boots and gloves. The technology permanently bonds to the shoe or glove creating advanced fit with no folds, seams or seam-sealing tape. The company claims that its system creates a more waterproof finished product, reduces "wet weight" and improves comfort and dexterity. OutDry uses recyclable, non-toxic materials and is PTFE-free.

Mountain Hardwear product manager, Dan Ramos, said on announcing the deal that he and his team had been "so impressed with the superior performance" of the OutDry lamination process that they have chosen to incorporate the technology into all three of their glove categories: Alpine, Backcountry and Snowwear.

For his part, Matteo Morlacchi, Nextec's research and development director, says the gloves market, on top of the success OutDry has enjoyed so far in the footwear field, is becoming an interesting one for his company. "We are receiving great support from Mountain Hardwear," he says, "and we're grateful for it, but I truly believe that OutDry is great for gloves. You feel the difference, not just because your hand remains dry, but also because there is a big difference in weight."

He insists that laminating a waterproof coating onto gloves and then sealing the seams with tape is "almost impossible" with gloves because there are so many curves around fist and fingers. "Any time you have sealing by tape you have issues, because it has to be done by hand," Mr Morlacchi continues. "OutDry means there is no tape—the machine does it all." When brands choose to use OutDry, Nextec supplies all the technology required to their manufacturing partners. It then aims to provide all the support and assistance necessary.

Matteo Morlacchi points out that these manufacturing partners can be companies of any size; the technology



Gloves from the latest Mountain Hardwear range, incorporating OutDry to keep gloves light and hands warm and dry.

Mountain Hardwear

works fine in smaller production set-ups too. "I think we're manufacturer-friendly," he adds. "There are fewer steps and less human involvement, so even factories that are not huge and don't have strict control can work use OutDry successfully."

Of the brands, Mountain Hardwear is the first to go public, but he says there is a lot of interest from other North American and European big names in bringing gloves with OutDry to the market next winter.

Even in a tight economy, brands, retailers and consumers are keen on genuine innovation, he argues. Winter sports enthusiasts may feel they can make a saving if last season's gloves are still useable and the shops only have similar styles with similar capabilities on offer. Present them with something genuinely new and they will invest. ●

derived from petroleum." She adds that it: "Reduces energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 80% each, compared to developing polyester materials from petroleum."

### Onus on the consumer

While Teijin and Swany have developed a scheme that could help reduce the environmental impact of producing the high-tech gloves, it will only work if consumers play their part. The Teijin spokesperson is confident that they will, claiming that the two companies are expecting 80% of the used products to be returned as "customers' environmental awareness is quite high".

Swany America's senior vice president, Bill Dzierson, is of a similar opinion. "I believe all of us think we must start somewhere if future generations are to have a suitable habitat in which to live," he says. "A glove is a small article but a start for our industry; tens of millions of gloves are produced each year." The company urges consumers not to throw their used Eco-X gloves away as there is no limit to the number of times they can be recycled. Perhaps this model will be taken up by other sporting goods manufacturers and consumers will become so accustomed to recycling worn out items that "throw-away" apparel and accessories will almost become a thing of the past. ●