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The Swiss Army Knife

Victorinox, one of the makers of the Swiss Army Knife, is located in Ibach under the shadow of the Mythen, in Canton Schwyz. More than one hundred years ago Victorinox won its first contract to make knives for the Swiss Army. Since then many people from all over the world have written to Victorinox stating how their lives have been saved, made safer, easier or better because of the pocketknife.

Carl Elsener, Victorinox boss and an octogenarian, says "My life is knives ... I think about them 24 hours a day". Carl Elsener is only the third man to run the family business since its foundation in 1884 by his grandfather Karl. "Victorinox don't make weapons, they make pocket tools", he says. Victorinox is the biggest business in Canton Schwyz and in 2003 had 960 employees.

There are more than one hundred different models of the pocket knife. Various tools of the pocket knives include blades, screwdrivers (including spectacle screwdrivers), corkscrews, can openers, scissors, toothpicks, tweezers, digital altimetres, built-in timers and alarm clocks, torches, pens and many more useful accessories. However after the 9/11 attacks, the pocket knives became less popular for travellers as airport security confiscated anything pointed or sharp. Victorinoxs' sales fell by 30%, and they have tried to package the pocketknive in tamper-proof plastic blisters that can't be opened without a sharp instrument.

Now a new hi-tech model includes a memory chip that can store up to 512 megabytes of data. Victorinox have brought out the "Swiss Memory" series which has a small data chip that can store anything from photos to MP3 files and can be plugged directly into a computer's USB port.

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