

## CONSUMER PLACEMENTS



## *FREESKIER*

### RECCO AVALANCHE RESCUE SYSTEM

A Giant Step toward a safer Backcountry Experience

Words: Matt Harvey

In 1973, Magnus Granhed found himself digging out the lifeless body of a close friend from an avalanche in Are, Sweden. At that time, only rescue dogs and probes were available for searching for avalanche victims. This tragic incident inspired Granhed to create the RECCO avalanche rescue system, now in use at more than 500 locations around the world.

The system works in two parts: a RECCO reflector (part one), requiring no batteries or other power source, is embedded into a skier's clothing. In the case of an avalanche at one of the in-bound or heli operations that use the system, a trained rescue team uses the RECCO detector (part 2) to sweep the avalanche area for buried skiers.

From the air, the system has an accurate range of about 200 meters, so in most rescue situations, a helicopter equipped with the system can sweep over the avalanche path and quickly determine the exact location of the victim.

With traditional transceivers, a signal is transmitted from the victim in flux lines, and rescuers follow these arched radio waves to the buried person. The RECCO reflector, on the other hand, bounces the signal back to the detector in a straight line, saving crucial time in the rescue process and allowing rescuers to pinpoint deeper burials? and distinguish between individual victims in a multiple burial situation.

The first commercial system became available in 1987. At the time, the detector—used by the rescue team—weighed more than 35 pounds. Now it weighs less than four. This improvement, among many others, is why RECCO is now used at more than 500 locations, including popular resort destinations such as Mammoth Mountain, Whistler, Vail and heli operations like Bella Coola.

The detector is not for sale; it is leased to major ski areas, heli ops and rescue teams who have training in its use, which means it won't be showing up in the average backcountry skier's pack. For that reason, backcountry skiers should still be trained and equipped with a traditional avalanche transceiver.

The reflectors—used by the skier—have also become smaller and lighter and less expensive. As a result, many popular jackets and shells—from companies like Sessions, The North Face, Quiksilver, Volcom and Vans—come with the RECCO reflector (about half the size of a credit card) built into them as a standard feature.

As venturing into the backcountry continues to gain popularity and lure less experienced riders its way, the RECCO system can help improve your chances of survival, should you get caught in a slide. And while it won't matter how fast rescuers find you if you're crushed under 20 feet of wet snow or wrapped backward around a tree, the RECCO system represents one of the most significant improvements in avalanche rescue technology in years.

## TELEMARK SKIER

### RECCO Adds More Brands

#### Apparel Companies and Ski Resorts Joining with Avalanche Rescue System

For fall 2005, outerwear giant The North Face joins the growing list of snowsports companies incorporating the RECCO Avalanche Rescue System into their apparel and equipment. Atomic, Arc'teryx, The North Face, Quiksilver, Roxy, Volcom, Vans, Pro-Tec, Sessions, Cold As Ice, Dainese, Millet, Billabong, and RLX all integrate the RECCO reflectors into at least a portion of their ski apparel and non-separable equipment—like ski boots, helmets and protective gear which, unlike skis, would stay attached to the person in the event of an avalanche.

The thumb-sized RECCO reflectors should not take the place of a beacon, but instead work as an extra bit of insurance, especially for resort skiers frequently hopping the other side of boundary lines, where RECCO-equipped ski patrols or search and rescue groups would probably be among the first-responders to an avalanche incident. With a wide range of ski areas, SAR groups and guided skiing operations employing RECCO as a supplement to beacon searching, it's a worthy investment. That list now includes 440 organizations worldwide—nearly 70 ski resorts in North America, including Kicking Horse, Whistler, Alpine Meadows, Jackson Hole, Bridger Bowl, Kirkwood, Mammoth, Snowbird, Alta, Snowmass, Taos, Vail, and other notables like the Yellowstone and Mount Rainier National Parks, Parks Canada, Bella Coola Heli Lodge, Chugach Powder Guides, Summit County SAR, and Wasatch Backcountry Rescue.

Though primarily available pre-attached with the above companies, RECCO reflectors can be bought as an aftermarket add-on to clothing or equipment at some outdoor retailers, like Mountain Gear ([www.mgear.com](http://www.mgear.com)).

## *TRANSWORLD SNOWBOARDING*

### RECCO

RECCO's avalanche rescue system redefines the term "functional" in outerwear. The RECCO reflectors are found mainly on top-of-the-line models in companies' outerwear lines. Check online at [recco.com](http://recco.com) to see if your resort, heli-op, or backcountry lodge is equipped with a RECCO detector. If you're buried in an avalanche, the detector will find the transmitter sewn into your outerwear—and you. The RECCO is not an alternative for an avalanche beacon (a.k.a. transceiver, Pieps) in the backcountry, though. Think of it as extra protection, or your secondary parachute.