

avalanche SAFETY

be **PREPARED**

mentally
physically
equipment-wise

Spring brings conditions that are often ideal for an avalanche. The weight of the melting snowpack becomes heavier until reaching the point where the underlying snow is no longer able to support it and lets loose.

February 19, 2012 there was a fatal avalanche in the backcountry of Stevens Pass. All of the people in the group were experienced backcountry skiers, carrying avalanche rescue gear, and skiing the line in sections, one by one, in accordance with standard safety protocol. Four skiers were caught up in the slide. The only survivor, Elyse Saugstad, credits the ABS Airbag she was wearing for saving her life.

The ABS Airbag

For more than 25 years ABS Peter Aschauer GmbH have been dedicated to the prevention of avalanche snow burial by developing airbags for skiers and snowboarders.



photo courtesy ABS Airbags

The ABS Airbag has rescued over 200 victims during 100 documented real-life scenarios from snow burial. In other words it works.

The most common cause of death in an avalanche is not the injury sustained when the skier or snowboarder is hit by an avalanche but the burial. 90% of cases of death are a result of suffocation and / or due to the enormous pressure of the snow.

Statistically chances of survival drop markedly after 15 minutes. 50% of avalanche victims who are buried are found dead despite the use of transceivers.

The average depth of burial in an avalanche without the ABS Airbag is just over 3 feet. To dig someone out from under 3 feet of snow, there is 71 cubic feet of dense snowpack to be moved, very hard to do within 10 minutes. Keep in mind that probing can alone take 15 minutes.

ABS Activated

A deployed airbag can keep the victim of an avalanche close to or above the surface.



When a skier or boarder pulls the activation handle, this releases pressure that causes a pin to pierce each gas cartridge. The gas then fills the airbags, with suction and release valves taking in air from the surroundings to aid inflation.

It takes just two seconds to inflate both airbags to a total capacity of 170 liters (6 cubic feet). Used canisters can be refilled by ABS for a small charge.

ABS Statistics

Since 1990, the Swiss Federal Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research (SLF) has documented Avalanche Accidents when an ABS airbag was used.

- Of 106 documented cases, 105 people survived.
- Of the 105 people that survived, 90% were not even buried or only partially buried.
- Of the 10% of those completely buried, they were buried so close to the surface that they were easy to locate.
- Statistical Analysis by the International Committee for Alpine Rescue (ICAR) has shown that survival in an avalanche will increase by 98% with the use of an airbag. ♦

North American Public Avalanche Danger Scale		Know Before You Go
Danger Level		
5 Extreme		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Does your group have the skills, knowledge and training to travel in avalanche terrain? ✓ Are you carrying transceivers, shovels and probes? ✓ Can you self-rescue? Do you have a plan? ✓ Do you know the emergency number? ✓ Have you checked the current avalanche bulletin and weather forecast? ✓ Have you checked out with someone? ✓ Do you have any other route options?
4 High		
3 Considerable		
2 Moderate		
1 Low		
You control your own risk.		