

Safety, Health & Fitness —

Life-Link / Dynafit stack the odds of avalanche survival

Life-Link will distribute the ABS (air bag system) backpack in North America beginning this winter. "The ABS system is the only tool backcountry travelers have to actively prevent themselves from burial in an avalanche. The question is would you rather be on top or on the bottom?" says John Scott, Vice President of Life-Link International. With the growing popularity of backcountry winter sports and an increase in avalanche fatalities over the past few winters, this system is sure to attract those who want to and/or need to travel in avalanche prone areas, yet remain as safe as possible from the risk of being buried.

The ABS backpack is designed to keep the skier above the surface during an avalanche by increasing the volume and surface area to help "float" the victim to the surface during the avalanche and as the snow settles. The airbags stow conveniently in the backpack until the trigger handle on the shoulder strap is pulled. Within 2-2.5 seconds the Nitrogen-air cartridge is activated, deploying two 75-liter air bags out of the sides of the pack. The system can be reused over and over by simply folding the air bags back up into their backpack pockets, inserting a new cartridge of Nitrogen Air, and replacing the Trigger handle (the cartridge and handle come as a package).

Approximately two-thirds of buried avalanche victims are recovered dead while statistics have shown that 90% of non-buried victims survive avalanches*. There have been over 30 documented cases in Europe where the ABS backpack has saved lives. Only time will tell if the ABS system is as popular in the U.S. as it is in Europe. With the growth of backcountry powder skiing taking off across the country, many skiers and snowboarders will be investigating this new avalanche safety tool and stacking the odds, as high as they can, in their favor.

Safety Issue: Identity Theft—

Since a big part of our health & fitness is our financial wellness, I bring you this important bulletin. Do you have any idea what type of information is embedded in the credit card type hotel room keys?

Although room keys differ from hotel to hotel, a key obtained from the "Double Tree" chain that was being used for a regional Identity Theft Presentation was found to contain the following the information:

- Customers (your) name
- Customers partial home address
- Hotel room number
- Check in date and check out date
- Customers (your) credit card number and expiration date!

When you turn your key into the front desk your personal information is there for any employee to access by simply scanning the card in the hotel scanner. An employee can take a hand full of cards home and using a scanning device, access the information onto a laptop computer and go shopping at your expense.

Simply put, hotels do not erase these cards until an employee issues the card to the next hotel guest. It is usually kept in a drawer at the front desk with YOUR INFORMATION ON IT!!!

The bottom line is, keep the cards and destroy them! NEVER leave them behind and NEVER turn them in to the front desk when you check out of a room.

Information courtesy of Sergeant K. Jorge, Detective Sergeant, Pasadena Police Department.

Ski Flex: Flexibility, Fitness & Conditioning

It is well established that stretching improves ones' ability to ski or board. Resistance exercises strengthen the muscles, but they also shorten them. Stretching makes muscles longer again. This leads to flexibility and greater range of motion in the joints which allows one to get the most out of a training program while helping one to ski/board longer, in better control, and with less fatigue.

The Ski Flex program is simple, quick and enjoyable. The program shows one how to prepare and warm up the specific muscles used on the mountain. The program also encompasses functional stretching and explains how to incorporate it into everyday living activities.

Stretching is also key to counteract skiing's weather conditions. The cold can tighten your muscles and shorten your tendons and sap your energy. It is equally important to stretch after skiing/boarding. And remember you are never too old or young to start a stretching program. Just a few minutes a day and you will see how much more limber you will be on the slopes.

Many ski fitness books in the past have emphasized primarily physical training during the off-season period. In the last few years, flexibility and stretches have gotten increasingly larger attention. This book is entirely focused on stretches.

Flexspots—

Moving your body down a mountain in a fluid, balanced and efficient way involves a series of movements. The areas of the body that are particularly important to provide an overall flexibility are called “flexspots.”

Neck.

Prepares you for the stress of pounding down the mountain.

Upper Back & Shoulder.

More flexibility gives greater range of motion & more fluid pole action.

Lower Back & Trunk.

This is your center of balance and provides strength & stability in your turns.

Inner Thigh & Outer Hips.

Aids in weight transfer from one side of your body to the other.

Hamstrings & Quadriceps.

These are your shock absorbers on every bump and turn. Tight legs will all affect your lower back and hips.

Calves, Achilles Tendon & Ankles.

These are the muscles that balance and hold yourself upright in your ski boots and are needed for omnidirectional movement.