

## Safety, Health & Fitness—

### Kirkwood Opens Avalanche Beacon Training Site

by Chris Bradford

Kirkwood, in partnership with Backcountry Access (BCA), has announced the first avalanche beacon training site in California. Dubbed "Beacon Basin", the site features avalanche beacon transmitters buried at various depths that simulate an actual avalanche burial.

Originally created for advanced training, Kirkwood will open Beacon Basin to the public on the weekends, offering people a chance to practice with their own equipment. For those who do not have equipment or would like assistance in learning how to use their own avalanche gear, Kirkwood will provide instruction and equipment for guests to use from 11am to 1pm. Use of the training area and equipment, as well as instruction, are free of charge to the public; the site will also be incorporated into Kirkwood's backcountry awareness courses and cat skiing operations.

Kirkwood has a Class A avalanche rating and, when conditions permit, allows access to some of the best backcountry terrain in the Tahoe region. Avalanche safety and backcountry awareness are high priorities of resort operations and Beacon Basin is a very useful tool for both guests and staff.

The transmitters have been designed to remain in the snow for a full season before the batteries need to be replaced and can be activated and deactivated via radio signals by means of a control unit. This allows for very realistic practice, since trainees do not know the location of the buried transmitters. The transmitter(s) to be activated may be selected at random by the control unit or deliberately by an individual, making multiple burial situations easy to simulate and practice.