

HATCHER PASS AVALANCHE CENTER

P.O. Box 1223, Chickaloon, Alaska 99674

www.hpavalanche.org

Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center installs first avalanche beacon checker signs in Alaska

Three new signs, and the first ones of their kind in Alaska, have been installed at trailheads in Hatcher Pass State Park this season reminding winter recreationists about avalanche safety. These new “Are You Beeping?” beacon checker stations include public information and a solar/battery powered BCA Beacon Checker™. The messages on the signs include the 5 Gets, part of a national campaign for avalanche awareness: Get the Gear, Get the Training, Get the Forecast, Get the Picture, and Get out of Harm’s Way. The BCA Beacon Checker displays a Red X when no beacon signal is detected. Once your beacon is powered up and in transmit mode, the checker will display a Green O, indicating the Beacon Checker is picking up your beacon’s signal. This is a new tool for motorized and non-motorized backcountry travelers to easily check that their beacon is transmitting a signal before heading into avalanche terrain. All signs will also include trail counters, and one sign will include a weather station. “Having a working avalanche beacon can save lives”, said Allie Barker, HPAC Avalanche Forecaster. Beacons are one of the primary ways that avalanche victims can be found and dug out before it is too late. Look for the signs at the Gold Mint, Fishhook, and Independence Mine parking fee stations at Hatcher Pass.



Photo: Tim Leach

The signs were installed by volunteers with the Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center with funding assistance from the Liam Walsh Memorial Fund, friends and family of Dr. Liam Walsh, the Anchorage Nordic Ski Patrol, and the Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation.

Walsh was caught and killed in an avalanche at Hatcher Pass on November 22, 2015. Fourteen people have died in avalanches at Hatcher Pass since 1985.

“We want people to have fun in the snow and come back home at the end of the day”, said Jed Workman, HPAC Avalanche forecaster. Barker and Workman started HPAC in 2010 after recognizing the lack of, and need for, avalanche information in the region. The center depends on community donations and grants for basic operations, and is seeking funding for one permanent forecaster position.

Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center will hold a **ribbon-cutting ceremony** for the “Are You Beeping” signs at **11am on January 27th, 2018 at the Independence Mine trailhead at Hatcher Pass**. The local community and general public are invited to attend. While this is a memorial to lost friends and family to avalanche accidents, it is also a celebration for a brighter future as the community participates and strengthens its avalanche awareness.

HPAC provides weekly forecasts on avalanche conditions from November through April. To view the forecasts or submit observations, go to www.hpavalanche.org

For more information contact:
Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center
info@hpavalanche.org