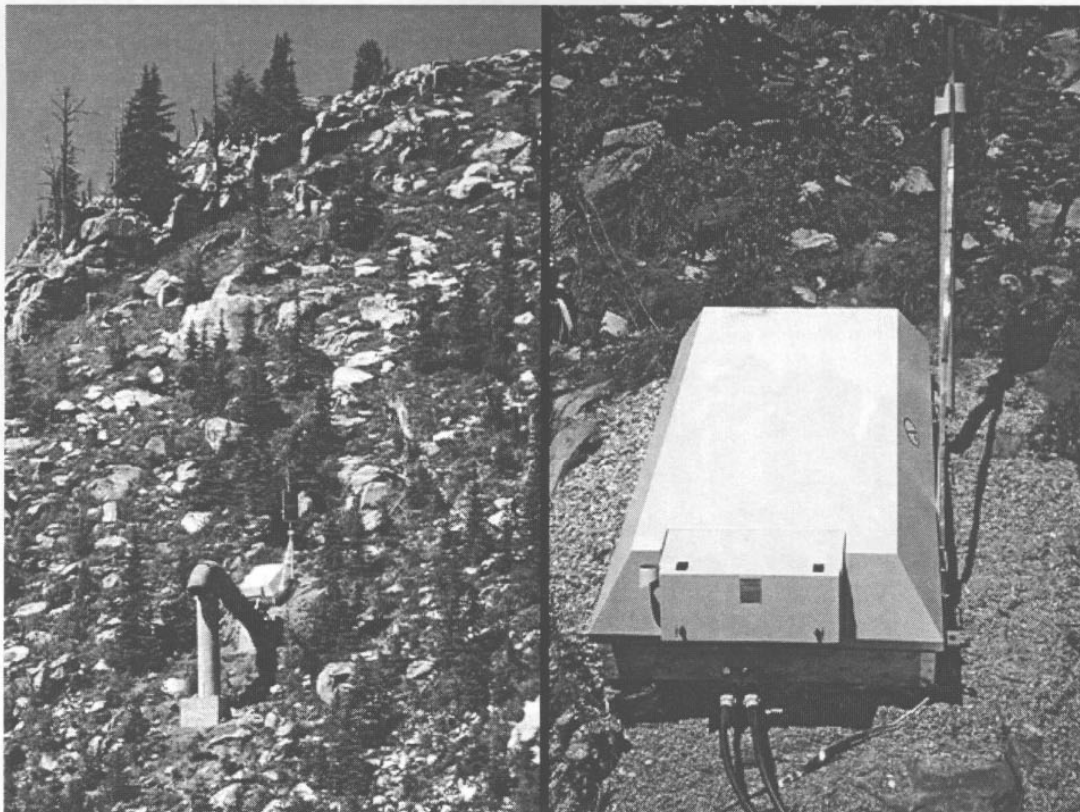


Kootenay Pass Avalanche Staff Lay Down Their Guns

BY KARL ERNST, AVATEK SYSTEMS LTD.

During the summer of 2005, avalanche control technicians at Kootenay Pass retired the last of their 30-year-old Avalaunchers. It was replaced with an autonomous Gaz.ex Exploder, which is a compact version of the regular Gaz.ex system designed for single or double slide paths. With this latest addition to the Kootenay Pass avalanche control system, the most problematic avalanche starting zones of the Salmo-Creston section of Highway #3 will now be controlled with a total of 21 Gaz.ex exploders, all remotely activated from Kootenay Pass headquarters.



The autonomous model, or "Inertia" type exploder, is a variation of the standard Gaz.ex that's used for installation at sites where poor rock or soil prevents effective anchors. The gases, which are stored in a chest behind the exploder, are fed into a large open-ended tube which is located in the avalanche starting zone. Once the predetermined mixture has been reached, a high-voltage spark is introduced into the mixture creating an explosion above the snow surface. The 3m³ exploder has the approximate explosive equivalent of 15-18 kg of TNT and will control an area which previously required several shots with the old system.

In August, after the basic foundation was built, the exploder was installed and tested within three days. Each component is so light that only an A-Star helicopter was necessary for the entire installation.

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Product Information