

REVELSTOKE PREPARES FOR FREESKIING WORLD TOUR STOP 2

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Revelstoke Prepares for Freeskiing World Tour

By: Jason Tross

Revelstoke Mountain Resort (RMR) is in the final stages of preparing for its biggest ski event yet – the Subaru Freeskiing World Tour's second stop of the 2010 competition season Jan 6-10.

This week's big-mountain competition is the first of its kind for Revelstoke – both the town and ski area. According to locals, the boom really started last week.

"I can hear the avalanche blasts all the way here in town," said Inn on the River owner Don Teuton.

RMR's ski patrol and avalanche forecast professionals have been conducting anything but routine avalanche control on the terrain designated for use during Wednesday's Freeskiing World Tour.

The early-morning booms Teuton and his guests describe are not just from traditional dynamite and explosives. They're coming from the newest weapon against avalanches – the Daisy Bell.

"The thing seriously looks like some kind of moon landing craft hanging underneath the heli," said Revelstoke local and Salomon Team Rider Chris Rubens after observing avalanche control for more than an hour.

Tags

Revelstoke, powder, Daisy Bell, Freeskiing World Tour

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Daisy Bell
Daisy Bell in use.

"All of a sudden fire just shoots out of the bottom and an avalanche starts right afterward. I've never seen anything like it," he added.

Rubens' description isn't far off. The Daisy Bell is the only of its kind currently being used in North America. The cone-shaped device is a replacement for traditional heli-bombing, skier cutting and simply throwing charges to trigger avalanche activity. The unit hangs from Revelstoke's helicopter and hovers around 30 feet above the suspected unstable snow. The Daisy Bell has two tanks attached – one with hydrogen and the other with oxygen. After achieving a desired mixture, operators ignite the gas – creating the visual flame burst. However, the most active portion of the process is the audible boom – that same one heard more than three miles away in town. The air thrust is powerful enough to trigger seriously large avalanches.



DaisyBell® Tour 2009 – CANADA
by mnd_73800

"The DaisyBell does not use explosives and so is very cost efficient since we can do many blasts in a short time and there are no unsightly powder stains left on the snow nor are there duds or other issues associated with explosive use," said Jim Bay, whose company Avatek Mountain Systems Inc. owns the Daisy Bell currently being used at RMR.

According to Revelstoke officials, the Daisy Bell is more than just convenient.

"We could feasibly use this [Daisy Bell] for about 30 minutes and complete all our avalanche control with just a few people for an entire day – versus the more than 2.5 hours and 12-14 people we currently use," said Revelstoke Mountain Mountain Resort Avalanche Forecaster Troy Leahey.

"Our other option to skiing around the mountain, which we still do in rough weather, was to heli bomb," he added. Heli bombing required both more personnel on the ground and in the air.

"There's also that part when I think about having to wake up and be to work at at 5:30 a.m. or get here closer to seven," joked Leahey.

As of now, RMR intends to use the Daisy Bell for this week's FWT competition – weather permitting.

Click the names for more information on the Daisy bell, Revelstoke Mountain Resort and Inn on the River.

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