

# WHAT'S NEW?

## CIL-Orion Avalanche Control Products

By John Brennan

After the Big Sky tragedy, avalanche control programs in the U.S. faced problems with the availability of explosive components. Some operations were forced to go south of the border for detonators and safety fuse. Recently, a Canadian corporation, CIL-Orion, stepped in to fill the void for our niche market.

CIL-Orion has been doing business in Canada for six years, after Company President Everett Clausen and partner Andre Gagnon bought the rights to the CIL name and formed CIL-Orion. The company has provided the Canadian avalanche industry with tailored products since its inception. It recently expanded its distribution circle to the US by collaborating with Austin Powder and unveiling several new products. The more interesting products for snow safety programs include a military spec, statically shunted cap/fuse assembly, multiple sized primers made with 'environmentally positive microbial inoculants,' 'Snow Crusher' shaped primers and multiple sized ANFO bags (25kg, 12.5kg and 7 kg) that are packaged within an antiskid 'Surefoot' bag.

The first of these, the Mildet cap/fuse assembly, has been in the design and early production stage for four years. The product has many unique characteristics that ensure it works reliably and safely for avalanche control. These include ruggedness, resistance to condensation, ability to work in extreme temperatures and static protection. While not mandated in the U.S., these assemblies have a static shunting staple installed in them. Also of note is the fact that the exposed end of the fuse train is covered with a PVC nipple—a technique I recommended in the Fall 2002 issue of *The Avalanche Review*. Although these assemblies appear to be expensive at over \$7 each, CIL-Orion has had a zero dud rate with them under heavy use conditions for over six months.

In conjunction with Austin Powder, CIL-Orion has also made some interesting advances in their primers. They have a line of 1 and 2 pound shaped charges that go under the brand name of 'Snow Crushers.' These products are designed to direct the energy of the explosive into a cornice or any other desired snow feature. Their similarly monikered 'Cornice Crusher' is an emulsion based explosive laced with det cord. It looks like a conjoined string of sausage links, and it is easy to understand how it got its name! CIL-Orion makes its 1 kg TNT/ PETN blended hand charge line-up and their 1 kg "Snow Launcher" (the company's avalauncher round) with optional RECCO chips and a moisture loving degrading agent. This bio-organism agent consumes the explosive in the event duds can't be found quickly. As of this writing, the company hasn't fully established the exact time to full decomposition in various environmental conditions.

In addition, CIL-Orion also carries various ANFO primers, pull

wire igniters, shock tube detonation systems, emulsion based hand charges, detonators, and more. Their full product line can be viewed at [www.cilorion.com](http://www.cilorion.com). Direct product and pricing questions to David Sly, their Technical Sales Rep at 250-744-8765 or [davidgsly@mapleleafpowder.com](mailto:davidgsly@mapleleafpowder.com).

CIL-Orion certainly deserves to be complimented for directly addressing the explosive needs of snow safety programs. The company also gives a portion of all its avalanche related sales back into our industry. Their present arrangement in Canada includes a 3% rebate to the Canadian Avalanche Association from purchases by CAA members. Last year's donation was over \$8000. Some of this money went into the writing of the CAA's meticulously prepared *Explosive Training Manual*. A similar donation agreement could be set up with the National Ski Area Association - which is looking into purchasing a licensing agreement from the CAA to begin distribution of the CAA Manual in the U.S.

*John Brennan is Snow Safety Director at Snowmass Ski Area, a member of the International Society of Explosives Engineers (ISEE) and its Colorado Chapter, and a member of the National Ski Area Association's (NSAA) Explosives Committee.*

*Photos courtesy CIL-Orion.*



Snow Launcher



Top: Sure Foot; L to R: Cast Booster, Mildet Fuse Assemble, Cornice Crusher

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