

Do phones interfere with avalanche beacons?



Submitted by Mark Staples on Wed, 11/06/2013 - 16:45

YES. Portable electronics like phones, radios, GPS, cameras, etc. will interfere with an avalanche beacon (aka avalanche transceiver). Is it a problem? The interference is significant and may prevent you from finding a buried partner. These electronic devices typically need to be turned on to cause interference. Snowmobiles with running motors and electrical circuits will also cause interference.

Most solid, non-electrical, objects will not cause interference. These objects include snow, trees, rocks, clothing, skis, etc. Another common object is a RECCO reflector which is often built into jackets, and this object will not cause interference.

Studies have shown there is little interference with a transmitting beacon. If you're buried and you forgot to turn off your iPhone, don't worry. Just to be safe keep your iPhone or other device about 8 inches away from your beacon. Interference mostly occurs when beacons are in search mode.

Recommendations:

1. Turn off all electronics and put them in your backpack.
2. If you need to keep a phone or radio on your body, keep it 8 inches from your beacon. Keep the phone in "airplane mode" if possible
3. If conducting a search and you suspect interference, simply extend your arm to get your beacon about 1.5 feet away from any electronic devices.

Watch this [video](#). See how interference starts as the beacon gets closer than an arm's length away from the phone.

Read the attached articles for more information

“[Interference Myth NOT Busted](#)” by John Barkhausen, former GNFAC intern, provides a concise overview of interference and a simple study John conducted while a student at Prescott College.

“[Interference Issues Concerning Avalanche Rescue Transceivers](#)” by Manuel Genswein, a Swiss engineer and rescue consultant. This article provides very detailed information on beacon interference as well as a few practical recommendations.

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