AVALANCHE ONE-PIECE PROBE POLE

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ABSTRACT: Aluminum 6061-T6 1/4" Schedule 40 Pipe has been frequently recommended for use in One-piece Avalanche Probe Poles. Inexpensive additions to this aluminum pipe makes a more useful probe. These include: a larger diameter tip, a loop, reflective tape, and painting the bottom of the probe.

KEYWORDS: avalanche rescue, probe pole

Probe Shaft: Seamless Aluminum 6061-T6 1/4-in. Schedule 40 Pipe, 0.539-in. O.D. by 0.088-in. Wall, B241-93 Mil-P25995B, mfr. by Plymouth Tube, Chandler, AZ.
Length: Supplied in 3.66 m (12-foot) lengths.
Weight: 0.76 kg . (1.67 lb.) per 12-ft length.
Price: Price is about $1.00 per foot for 50 each 12-foot lengths. Best price in Seattle is from Earle M. Jorgensen (EMJ), 22011 76th Ave S, Kent, WA, phone (253) 872-0100.

Tip: A tip that is larger diameter than the probe reduces drag and icing along the 12-foot shaft. Use 3/8"-16 x 3/4" USS Button Socket Head Cap Screw. Attach with 5/64" x 1/2" Roll Pin. Or, cement in place with a marine adhesive such as Sikaflex 291 High Strength Adhesive in 10.5-oz cartridge. This can be ordered from West Marine #174508 $8.49 , phone (800) 262-8464.

Loop: A Loop allows the rescuer to clip the end of the probe to a carabiner and drag the probe behind. 45 cm (18-in.) of 2.5- to 3-mm cord can be attached through a hole drilled in the end of the probe. Or the cord can be passed through the center of a 3/8" dia. x 1.25" fluted dowel pin, and then cemented in place with Sikaflex 291 marine adhesive. Taping the cord to the probe has proven inadequate since the cord eventually cuts the tape.

Reflective Tape: When probing at night it is difficult for the 'probeline leader' to see the top of the probes across the line of probes. Attaching 2-inch wide reflective tape around the top of the probe increases the visibility of the probes at night. Use 4.5 cm (1.75-in.) per probe of 2" wide 3M SOLAS Grade Reflective Tape available from West Marine #320788, $1.75 per foot.

Paint bottom: As one digs down to the buried victim one must take care to not collapse any air pocket. Painting the bottom 1-meter (40-in.) of the probe provides a visual signal when one is getting close to the victim.