



Vital tool ... as well as capturing your friends' feats, mobiles link skiers to snow reports and last minute deals. Photo: Getty Images

Tweet it from the mountains

Real-time reports, high-tech lift passes and smart ways to clock your speed: technology has officially arrived, writes **Rachael Oakes-Ash**.

IF YOU'RE connected to the world with a mobile phone, an iPod or the internet, life on the snow just got a whole lot easier. Technology has officially arrived at the ski resorts of Australia and New Zealand and we're not talking automated snow guns and high-speed quad chairs.

Thanks to Twitter, snow lovers can see real-time snow reports with immediate images live from fellow skiers and snowboarders, which means the snow fields can no longer tell porkies about how much is on the ground.

Snowtweeters.com is an online community for Australian and New Zealand tweeters wanting to hear the latest bites from their favourite resorts and find other tweeters looking for someone to share the petrol on a ridge to the slopes.

Taken a wrong turn on a ski run? No trouble; just download skimapsapp.com to your iPhone or BlackBerry. The application has maps from resorts around the world, including Australia and New Zealand, and will home in on your GPS location and show you where you are on a ski run map so you can navigate your way back.

The resorts also offer their own communications with skiers and boarders. Perisher already has a mini site for mobiles (perisher.com.au/mobile) and has launched an iPhone application this season with the option to track your ski miles plus a Friend Finder to see where they are on the mountain. The application also includes the usual snow reports, accommodation and restaurant options.

Mount Buller (mtbuller.com.au) offers text message or email snow

alerts when new snow has fallen and another for last-minute deals. Falls Creek (falls creek.com.au) has an e-news subscription service with snow dump alerts, while Thredbo (thredbo.com.au) allows customers to choose which days of the week to be alerted – text message the day of choice to 0411 553 689 for an up-to-date snow report. Also new this year to Thredbo is an online trip planner. Invite your friends online; each person books and pays online for their share of the trip so the organiser doesn't foot the bill (thredbo.com.au/tripplanner).

Across the ditch the notoriously wild Mt Ruapehu (mtruapehu.com) on the North Island takes the guesswork out of which days to ski, with bluebird text alerts for both Whakapapa and Turoa fields, plus a radio frequency lift pass for season-pass holders to breeze through the lift stations. On the South Island,

family-friendly Cardrona (cardrona.com) resort has launched a new kids' website with interactive colouring-in books, videos, photos and storybooks.

NZ Ski (nzski.com) has followed the lead of the North Island and overseas resorts to produce its own radio frequency lift pass for Mount Hutt, Coronet Peak and The Remarkables. The "mypass" works like a ski lift credit card and users can pay for their lift passes online or top up at an on-site kiosk. This means no more queueing to buy a lift ticket.



The ski-o-meter app will measure your speed while skiing.

Snow statistics are stored on the mypass and can be viewed online to track and compare the vertical metres and number of runs completed each day.

Australia's leading snow community website, ski.com.au, offers a forum for people wanting to connect with like-minded holiday makers, for tips on where to go and up-to-date news from the industry. The website (<http://m.ski.com.au>) can be viewed on internet-friendly mobile phones.

Mountainwatch.com launched last year and offers a webcam service for resorts. Visitors to the site can view live streaming video from resorts in Australia and New Zealand to make their own judgement on snow conditions. The Mountainwatch iPhone app is called Mountainwatch Snow and goes live this winter.

A snow widget is also available for

download to desktops for three-day forecasts, conditions and the status of lifts.

Kiwi website snowreport.co.nz's iPhone application launched almost three years ago and soon became the most used snow application in that country. It is a free application monitoring all New Zealand fields, including Canterbury club fields, so skiers and boarders can stay on top of conditions, lift status and weather.

For the serious snow tragic, the ski-o-meter iPhone app will measure your speed while skiing downhill, with maximum speed, average speed and distance covered. Not enough? Then download the hangtimer.com app, which records how much time you spend in the air when making a ski jump in the terrain park or off a natural cliff jump; it will even place where in the world you did it.

Video star

YOUTUBE.COM and vimeo.com video-sharing websites have opened the world to budding filmmakers. Helmet cameras that shoot in broadcast-quality high definition, such as the Contour 1080P and GoPro (launchhelmetcams.com.au), allow anyone to make a Warren Miller-esque video of their time on the slopes.

Powderhound Magazine has launched a website where video heads can post their footage in the hope of being discovered as the next Torah Bright (powderhoundmag.com.au/submit-your-flicks).

Thredbo's One Hit Wonder event (onehitwonderevent.com) takes full advantage of both video and online skills, offering a prize kitty of \$10,000 for skiers, boarders and filmmakers who submit a film of their tricks.



If accepted, contestants compete from September 14-18 at Thredbo with a cinematographer. The footage is rated online by the public, with an all-expenses-paid trip to Niseko from Deep Powder Tours up for grabs.

No video is complete without a soundtrack and for those of us whose film clip exists inside our heads, the Sessions Metallica jacket is the perfect high-tech outerwear. A collaboration with the

Skullcandy headphone brand, the Metallica jacket has an iPod control unit on the sleeve that is hard-wired to an iPod port in the pocket that connects with your iPod or MP3 player.

Music is pumped into speakers in the jacket collar with a battery-powered amp should you want to share your tunes with the rest of the people on the chairlift.