



Cable is fed into plow blade.



Operator breaks up rocks in first pass.

He Plows A Path For Safety

WHETHER you are an amateur or a professional skier, chances are you may be a good deal safer on the slopes this winter. Especially if you ski at Winter Park about 70 miles from Denver, Colorado.

Dave Shelton, director of slope maintenance at Winter Park, has been busy during the "off season" making sure the view is prettier and the telephone service improved. He's been installing underground cable for telephone and electric service and for ski lift communications and operations.

"Being a recreation area, the ecology aspect of it is extremely important to us," he says. "I don't want to under-emphasize that. But service is important, too. Our season runs from around Thanksgiving to mid-April. Interrupted service is very costly. At times we have high winds here and when lines are overhead, there's always the danger they'll snap."

Winter Park is operated by the Winter Park Recreation Association, an agency for the Denver city and county governments. The association

operates 34 trails, 7 chair lifts and 2 high speed T bars.

"For us, the ski lift lines are perhaps the most important," says Shelton. Ski lift communications and operations lines go underground. We can operate the lift from the top, while all the equipment that powers it is below. The lines are installed from tower to tower.

Winter Park now uses its own 65-horsepower R65 Ditch Witch trencher with vibratory plow attachment. Before buying Ditch Witch, Shelton says a large, tracked diesel vehicle with a cable-laying ripper was employed. But the vehicle proved cumbersome. Costs were too high. It had to be hauled on a truck. And the machine was difficult to maneuver into position.

Ditch Witch is a four-wheel drive vehicle. It can be driven along the mountain roads and across the rugged terrain. And speaking of terrain, the Rockies are indeed rocky. As the pictures show, it's really the man-made elements against the natural elements.

Crews at Winter Park have done

all the work in burying the underground lines. This involved three separate telephone systems and a ski lift communication and operations lines. This includes a race telephone system for use in ski competition, an emergency telephone system for the Ski Patrol and the mountain telephone system for regular telephone service. That comes to about 41,000 feet of ski lift cable and another 28,750 feet of telephone lines. Cable sizes range from 1 pair to 50-pair.

Shelton says they rented equipment the summer of 1970 and have found that the Ditch Witch saved enough in the first summer's operation to pay for itself.

His crew makes one pass along the cable route with the plow in the ground, but without the cable, to break up the rock. A second pass is made to install the cable. This is done to prevent damaging the cable as it is installed.

Shelton concludes that this two-step operation is still less expensive than the original system. In fact, he claims, it's faster and frees the more expensive equipment for other jobs.