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STATE PARKS & RECREATION

IDAHO

AVALANCHE SAFETY



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION
IDAHO
SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM

Idaho's unlimited recreation potential is not without its dangers.

We offer this guide to provide you with resources that may help you recreate more safely.

Take away points that you will find in this booklet...

GET THE GEAR: Ensure everyone has an avalanche transceiver, shovel, and probe on their person and knows how to use them.

GET THE TRAINING: Take an avalanche course.

GET THE FORECAST: Make a riding plan based on the current avalanche and weather forecast.

GET THE PICTURE: If you see recent avalanche activity unstable snow exists. Riding on or underneath slopes is dangerous.

GET OUT OF HARM'S WAY: One at a time on all avalanche slopes. Don't go to help your stuck friend. Don't group up in runout zones.

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Explanation of Terms

Avalanche - A large mass of snow, ice, etc., detached from a mountain slope and sliding or falling suddenly downward.

Avalanche Path - A location where an avalanche normally recur from time to time in the same mountain locality.

Avalanche Transceiver or Beacon - A class of radio transceivers specialized to the purpose of finding people or equipment buried under snow.

Bed Surface - The main sliding surface under the slab.

Cornice - An overhanging build-up of snow, usually on the leeward side of ridges.

Crown Face or Fracture Line - Upper boundary of the slab avalanche.

Debris Field - This is the zone where deposition takes place after deceleration of the debris. The bottom boundary of a slab avalanche. **Where an avalanche victim is likely to be found.**

Depth Hoar - An advanced, generally larger, form of faceted crystal (see facets)

Facets - Angular snow with poor bonding created from large temperature gradients within the snowpack.

Flanks - The sides of a slab avalanche.

High-marking - Highmarking is the practice of climbing steep slopes with a snowmobile to attain the highest mark/location on the slope, or get over the top.

Propagation - The spreading of a fracture or crack.

Slab - One or more cohesive layers of snow that may start to slide together.

Slab Avalanche - slab avalanches occur when one or more layers of cohesive snow break away as a unit.

Sluff - A small avalanche usually made up of loose snow.

Surface Hoar - Crystals, often shaped like feathers, spikes or wedges, that grow upward from the snow surface when air just above the snow surface is cooled to the dew point.

Runout Zone - an area where avalanches can run and should be crossed one at a time and not a great place to stop.

Temperature Gradient - How fast temperature changes over a certain distance within the snowpack.

Terrain Trap - A terrain feature that increases the consequences of getting caught in an avalanche by increasing the odds of a deep burial.

Weak Layer - This is the lubrication layer, the layer that is the most likely to fail within the snowpack.

Whumpf - The sound of a fracture propagating along a weak layer within the snowpack.

Wind-loaded - Terrain on which the wind has deposited additional snow.

Wind-slab - One or more stiff layers of wind-deposited snow.

Why avalanche awareness?

Idaho's mountains offer opportunities to ride, ski, snowshoe, and explore through the winter. Some of those places also contain avalanche terrain. Recognizing that terrain and planning for the conditions are part of preparing for a day outside.

The Colorado Avalanche Information Center recorded 97 avalanche deaths in Idaho from the 1950–1951 season through 2025–2026. Twenty-four occurred during the most recent ten seasons in its published table. Across the United States, the center reports an average of approximately 23 avalanche deaths per winter over those ten seasons.



These figures represent people, families, and communities. They also show why avalanche awareness matters close to home. Many nonfatal incidents are never reported, so fatality records do not tell us how many people are caught or survive. This guide introduces the basics. Use it alongside current forecasts, hands-on training, and regular practice with the people you travel with.

Who can be caught?

Anyone who enters or travels beneath avalanche terrain can be caught. Snowmobilers, snowbikers, skiers, snowboarders, snowshoers, climbers, and hikers may all encounter avalanche exposure. Experience helps us recognize hazards, but it does not make us immune to mistakes or changing conditions. Familiar terrain, existing tracks, confidence in a partner, and a strong desire to reach a destination can all influence decisions.



A snowmobile or snowbike can carry a rider quickly into a new drainage, elevation, or slope aspect. Stop when the terrain or conditions change. Look at the route ahead, discuss what the group sees, and decide whether the plan still fits the forecast.
The important question is not whether your activity is safe in general. It is whether the terrain, conditions, group, and plan are appropriate for this particular day.



When and where avalanches happen

Avalanches can happen whenever enough snow and the right conditions exist. In the United States, avalanche fatalities have been recorded in every month, although most occur during the winter and spring recreation season.
Most slab avalanches start on slopes about 30 to 50 degrees steep. The moving snow can travel into lower-angle terrain. A groomed road, meadow, or valley floor may be exposed to a slope above it, and some avalanches can be triggered from a distance on connected terrain.



Pay attention to where an avalanche could start, where it could travel, and where snow could pile up. A terrain trap such as a gully, depression, trees, or a cliff can make even a small slide more dangerous.
Training helps you identify these relationships and make better decisions. The local forecast helps identify the avalanche problems and terrain features of concern for the day.

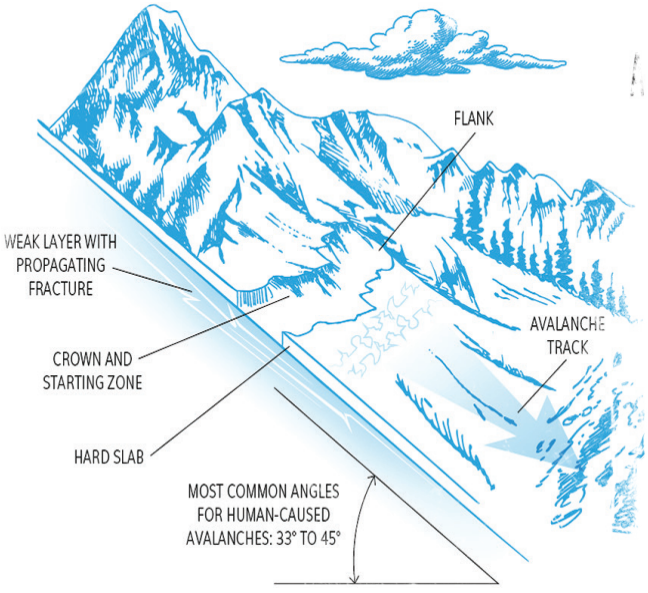
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Anatomy of an avalanche

An avalanche is snow moving downhill. Avalanches range from small releases of loose snow to large slabs that fracture across a mountainside.

A loose-snow avalanche often begins at a point and spreads as it travels downhill. A slab avalanche occurs when a cohesive layer of snow breaks away and slides over a weaker layer or bed surface. Slab avalanches can fracture above or around a person and involve enough snow to bury or injure them.

Snow can behave differently from place to place. The snow you see at the surface may cover a weak layer that formed earlier in the season. Weather, terrain, and the structure of the snowpack all influence whether a slope may release.

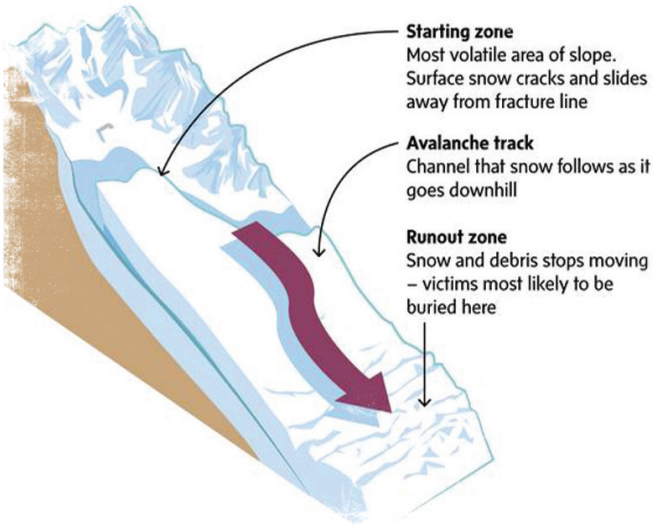


Use the accompanying illustration to locate the crown, flanks, track, debris, and runout. An avalanche does not have to look exactly like the illustration to be dangerous.

Starting zone track and runout

An avalanche path is commonly described in three parts.

STARTING ZONE: The area where snow first releases. Starting zones may be open slopes, bowls, or areas below ridgelines and cornices. A fracture can begin in different parts of a slope and spread beyond the initial trigger point.



TRACK: The terrain the moving snow follows downhill. A path may be a recognizable chute, but avalanches can also travel across open slopes and through or around trees.

RUNOUT: The area where moving snow can travel and eventually stop. Snow may reach flat ground, roads, trails, or valley bottoms. Do not park or regroup in terrain exposed to a slope above.

Debris can collect at different points along the path. Gullies, depressions, trees, and other features may deepen a burial. In a rescue, observe the entire debris area and use your training rather than assuming the person is at the bottom.

Avalanche factors: what conditions cause an avalanche?

Avalanches are influenced by terrain, weather, and the snowpack. People add another important element: where we travel, how we interpret information, and the decisions we make together.

TERRAIN: Slope angle, shape, aspect, elevation, connected slopes, and terrain traps affect exposure and consequences.

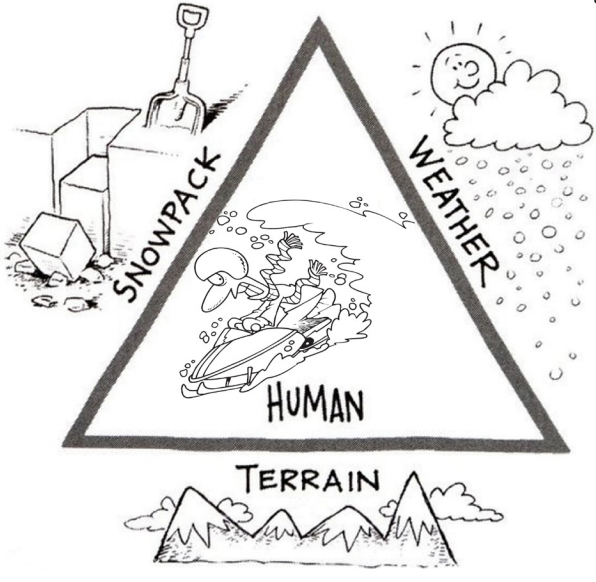
WEATHER: New snow, wind, rain, sun, and temperature changes affect the snowpack. Conditions may change during a trip.

SNOWPACK: Layers develop under different conditions. A weak layer beneath a cohesive slab can fail when stress exceeds its strength. Some weak layers persist long after a storm.

PEOPLE: A person or machine can trigger an unstable slope. Group communication, experience, expectations, and willingness to change the plan all matter.

Use the current forecast to understand the problems expected in your area. Then compare that information with the terrain and conditions you encounter.

Avalanche Triangle



Weather

Storms, wind, rain, and warming can rapidly change avalanche conditions. Look at both the current weather and the recent history, and read the local avalanche forecast before choosing terrain.
Significant new snow or wind loading can increase danger during a storm and after it ends. Some storm-related problems settle relatively quickly, while persistent weak layers can remain dangerous for weeks or longer. There is no universal number of days to wait before a slope becomes safe.

Snowfall

New snow adds weight to the snowpack. A slab can form within storm snow or above an older weak layer. The amount, rate, and character of snowfall matter, as do the layers beneath it.
There is no single snowfall amount that makes every slope dangerous or safe. When snowfall is heavy, visibility is poor, or the forecast identifies an avalanche problem, choose terrain well away from steep slopes and their runouts. If you cannot identify that terrain, change the plan or turn around.



Temperature

The snowpack changes as it is heated and cooled. Sun, warm air, and rain can weaken snow or introduce water into buried layers. Rapid warming and prolonged above-freezing temperatures can increase avalanche danger.
A solid overnight refreeze can temporarily strengthen a wet surface, but it does not guarantee that the entire snowpack is stable. A weak or absent overnight freeze can be a warning in spring conditions. Follow the forecast and adjust travel as conditions change.
Cold weather can preserve weak layers and, under certain snowpack conditions, contribute to the formation of weak, faceted snow. Do not use temperature alone to decide that a slope is safe.

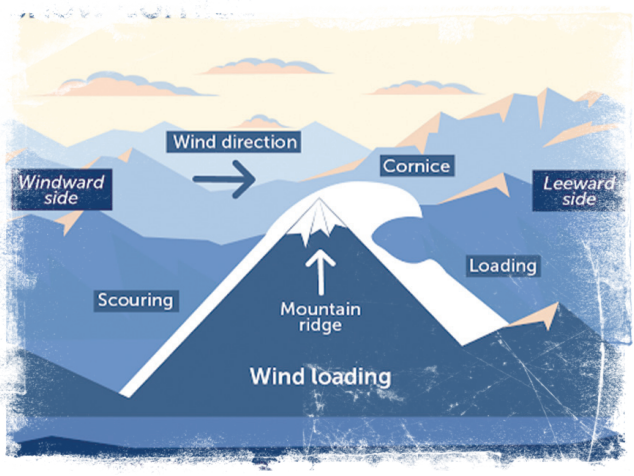


Wind direction

Wind moves snow from one place to another and builds drifts, slabs, and cornices. Wind loading can occur during a storm or after snowfall has ended. Watch for blowing snow, fresh drifts, and changing surface conditions, and read the forecast for the locations of wind-related problems.

Wind Loading

Wind often deposits snow on the sheltered side of ridges, but it can also cross-load the sides of gullies and other terrain features. Wind direction can change, and local terrain redirects airflow. Do not assume an entire side of a mountain is safe simply because it faces the wind.
Cornices are a visible sign that wind has moved snow. Give them a wide margin from above and below; they can break farther back than expected and can trigger avalanches on slopes beneath them.



Snowpack History

The snowpack develops one layer at a time through the winter. Each layer forms under particular weather conditions and may bond differently to the layers above and below it.
A warm, clear day can make the surface inviting while a buried weak layer remains. Review the forecast discussion to learn what is known about the snowpack's history and where forecasters expect problems.

Some weak snow layers gain strength relatively quickly. Others, including buried surface hoar and faceted snow such as depth hoar, can remain a concern for long periods. A persistent weak layer may be difficult to trigger in one place and easy to trigger nearby.

A strong surface, a few quiet days, or tracks on a slope do not prove the layers underneath are stable. Likewise, a crust does not have the same effect in every snowpack. The strength and arrangement of the layers matter.

Depth hoar consists of large, angular crystals that can bond poorly. It often develops near the ground when conditions favor strong temperature differences within a shallow snowpack, but weak facets can also occur elsewhere.

Pay attention when forecasters identify a persistent or deep persistent slab. These problems often require a wider margin for error and conservative terrain choices, even when obvious warning signs are absent.



Slope angle

Most slab avalanches begin on slopes approximately 30 to 50 degrees steep. A slope can vary in steepness, and its steepest part may be above your route. Avalanches can run into much gentler terrain.



An inclinometer can help you measure an angle, but learn to use it without entering exposed terrain simply to take a reading. Maps and terrain tools support planning; field observations and training remain important.

Aspect

Aspect is the direction a slope faces. Sun and wind affect aspects differently, and the locations of avalanche problems change with weather and the season. Avalanches can occur on slopes facing any direction.
Read the forecast to identify the aspects and elevations where problems are expected. Do not assume a slope is safe based on compass direction alone.

Wind loaded terrain and terrain traps

Wind can deposit snow below ridgelines, around rollovers, and along the sides of gullies. The loaded side depends on actual wind direction and terrain. Look for fresh drifts and cornices, but remember that buried weak layers may exist where wind loading is not obvious.

Terrain traps increase the consequences of an avalanche. In a gully, creek bed, or depression, debris can pile deeply. Trees and rocks can cause traumatic injuries; a cliff can turn a small slide into a serious fall. Look beyond the terrain immediately under you. A gentle road or valley floor may be exposed to slopes above. Connected terrain may allow a person to trigger an avalanche from a distance.

A slope that has already avalanched is not necessarily free of danger. Adjacent areas or remaining snow may still release. If observations or the forecast indicate a problem, select terrain that avoids the exposure.



Runout and vegetation

RUNOUTS: An avalanche that starts high on a slope can reach trails, roads, open meadows, and valley floors. Identify paths and runouts during trip planning and again in the field. Do not stop, park, or regroup in terrain exposed to a slope above.

VEGETATION: Dense, well-spaced terrain features and forests may influence where avalanches start, but trees do not guarantee safety. An avalanche starting above a forest can travel through it, and openings within the trees can contain steep avalanche terrain.

Trees and rocks can also cause serious injuries or collect debris around a person. Small shrubs and buried stumps may provide little restraint once snow covers them.



Slope orientation

Although avalanches will run on slopes facing any direction, most avalanches run on slopes facing north, east, and northeast. Because the sun is at such a low angle, particularly during the winter, a colder and deeper snowpack develops. Slopes that are under shadow throughout most of the day are suspect because the snowpack remains cooler, without much of the melting and bonding that can make the snow layers stronger.

Remember also that certain slope orientations are much more affected by wind-loading, particularly northeast, east, and southeast (similar to the orientations mentioned above). If you are not already familiar with the terrain, taking a compass along would be a good idea. Alternatively, if you know where you are going ahead of time, you could potentially plan your route in such a way as to avoid suspect slope orientations, especially if other potential avalanche factors exist.

Terrain

Paying attention to where you are in the grand scheme of things can offer clues about avalanche likelihood. Bowls and gullies are suspect at any time, regardless of other conditions. Snow can accumulate deeply and quickly in these areas, increasing the possibility of an avalanche. Even if you can see that an avalanche has already run, be wary. Avalanches can fall in a "piecemeal" fashion, where one avalanche will run and leave the rest of the slope weakened, and the slightest provocation can cause subsequent avalanches on that same slope. Smaller depressions or shallow gullies in the mountainside can also be hazardous. During an avalanche, these "terrain traps" serve as accumulation points for snow and debris in which a victim could be buried.



Crossing steep slopes where you may trigger the avalanche yourself should be done cautiously. In contrast, as you cross a valley floor you may also be caught in an avalanche triggered naturally on the steep slope above you. Therefore, during hazardous conditions minimize the amount of time traveling beneath avalanche starting zones and never park in a potential avalanche runout zone. Even a small avalanche starting high on the slope can carry down large amounts of snow onto and across the valley floor. Remember to keep an eye out for obvious avalanche chutes, where avalanches occur more frequently.

Tree line, above which conditions become too harsh for trees to grow, also plays a significant role in avalanche areas. Many avalanches start above the tree line, making high-elevation mountains especially risky. Although forests help stabilize the snowpack, if an avalanche starts above tree line, it can cut its own path, or chute, through the trees below. Likewise, where there is a swath of trees missing from a forested mountainside, there are probably frequent avalanches running down that particular chute.

Smooth surfaces, such as a rock face or grassy slope, may cause avalanches during the spring melting season. On the other hand, if the vegetation is very low-lying, such as tree stumps or shrubs, it can become buried underneath the first few snows and be relatively ineffective at anchoring the upper layers of the snowpack.

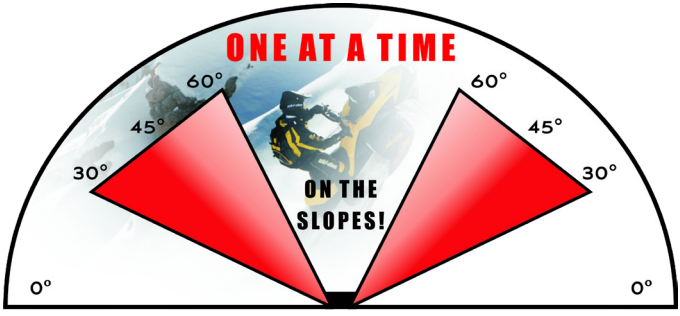


Recognizing signs of instability

Look for evidence that the snowpack may be unstable. Recent avalanches, shooting cracks, and collapsing sounds are important warning signs. Heavy snowfall, wind transporting snow, rain, and rapid warming can also increase danger.

If you see a warning sign, reassess the plan and choose terrain that avoids the relevant exposure. You do not need several signs before changing course. A lack of obvious signs does not establish that a slope is stable, especially when persistent weak layers are present. Snowpack tests can help a trained person observe weak layers and their behavior. A test samples one small location; results can differ elsewhere on the same slope. Do not use a single test or snow pit to declare a slope safe.

Check the local avalanche forecast, understand its warnings, and compare the information with what you see. When conditions do not match the plan, choose a less exposed option or turn around.



Avalanche safety gear - Carry an avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe on you at all times.



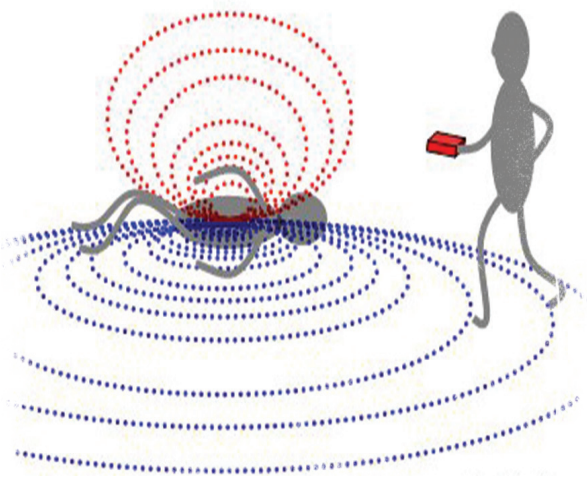
Avoiding an avalanche is the first priority. If someone is caught and buried, companions need the right equipment and the skills to act immediately.
Each person traveling in avalanche terrain needs a functioning avalanche transceiver, a dedicated probe, and a sturdy metal avalanche shovel. Wear the transceiver securely on your body according to the manufacturer's instructions. Carry the shovel and probe in a pack that stays with you, not only on a machine.
Check the condition of your equipment before winter. Review recalls and manufacturer guidance for your exact transceiver model, use the specified batteries, and practice operating it with gloves. Conduct a group transceiver check at the trailhead and confirm everyone returns to transmit mode before travel.

Asphyxia is a leading cause of avalanche death; traumatic injuries can also be fatal. Rescue equipment improves the ability to respond, but it cannot prevent an avalanche, guarantee survival, or substitute for terrain choices and training.

Probe - transceiver and search

A probe is used to pinpoint a buried person's location and estimate burial depth after a transceiver search. Choose a purpose-built avalanche probe suited to your group and expected conditions. Practice assembling and using it while wearing your normal winter gloves.

A transceiver transmits a signal when set to SEND or TRANSMIT. Before travel, confirm that every person's transceiver is functioning and transmitting. In a rescue, unburied searchers manage their own devices according to their training so they can search for a buried person's signal without creating confusion.
A companion rescue course teaches the signal, coarse, and fine phases of a transceiver search; probing; coordinated shoveling; and patient care. Learn the controls on your model, including any automatic return-to-transmit feature, and practice with your actual partners.
A transceiver cannot detect a person who is not wearing a transmitting avalanche transceiver. A phone, satellite messenger, or rescue reflector does not replace it.



An avalanche airbag is an additional piece of safety equipment that can reduce the likelihood or depth of burial when it is properly deployed. It does not prevent all burials or injuries and cannot make hazardous terrain safe.

Airbags must be carried, maintained, and operated according to their manufacturer's instructions. Systems use different inflation methods, including compressed gas or electric fans. Know how to check and deploy your own equipment and practice reaching the handle with gloves on.

An airbag does not replace a transceiver, probe, shovel, training, or careful terrain choices. It may not deploy in every incident, and a person can still be seriously injured or buried, especially in high-consequence terrain.

Include airbag checks in your preseason equipment preparation and understand the requirements for inspection, servicing, and travel with the system.



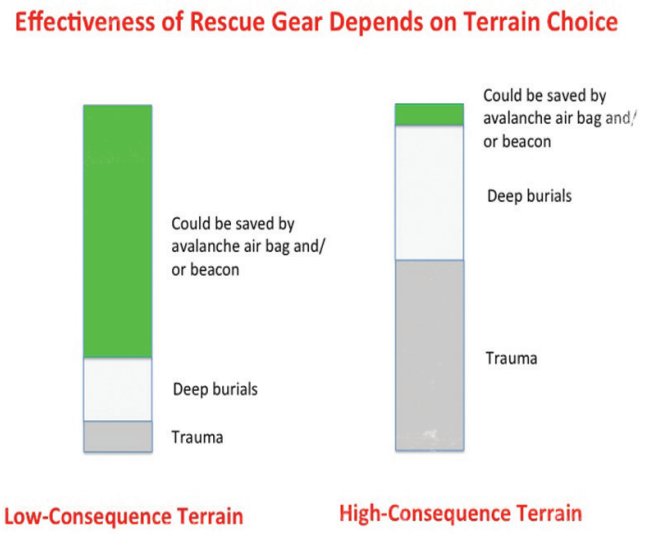
Airbags and terrain choices

Research indicates that deployed avalanche airbags can reduce burial and may improve survival in some

incidents. The benefit is not a guarantee: the result depends on deployment, terrain, the avalanche, and other circumstances.

Avoid letting any equipment change the terrain you are willing to enter. Gullies, trees, cliffs, and deep runouts can make an avalanche particularly difficult to survive, regardless of what you carry.

Discuss terrain choices before entering an exposed area. Keep the rest of the group in a protected location outside the avalanche path and runout. Practice the equipment checks and companion rescue skills that support those choices.



Each of these studies found that while avalanche flotation devices cannot in principle prevent burial, they can reduce the frequency and extent of burial in an avalanche. One study found that the use of an avalanche flotation device reduced the likelihood of complete burial from 39% to 16.2%. In cases where individuals were completely buried despite utilizing an avalanche flotation device, the presence of the avalanche flotation device was found to facilitate rapid rescue by companions, as at least part of the balloon was visible above the snow.

Travel Habits

Before entering the backcountry, agree on the route, alternatives, group communication, and terrain to avoid. Look for signs of instability and give everyone permission to speak up. If the conditions do not match the plan, change the plan.

When a crossing is appropriate, expose one person at a time. The others watch from a location outside the avalanche path and runout. One-at-a-time travel reduces the chance of multiple people being caught; it does not make an unacceptable slope safe.

If someone is stuck on exposed terrain, do not rush onto the slope. Stop, communicate, assess the hazard, and develop a response that limits additional exposure.

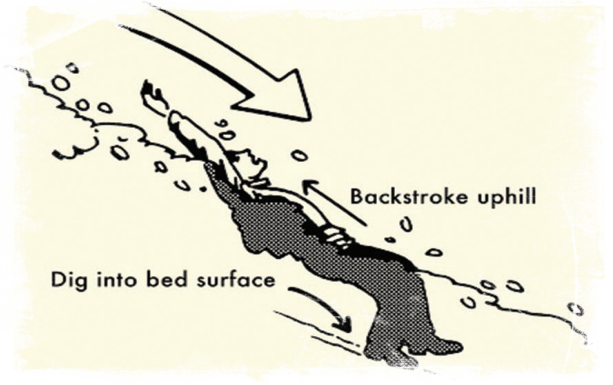


If You Are Caught

Try immediately to escape the moving snow toward a safer area if you have a viable path. A snowmobiler should follow current motorized avalanche training: if the machine remains controllable, attempt to leave the moving snow; if overtaken, try to get away from the machine. Deploy an airbag if you carry one and can reach its handle.

If you cannot escape, use any movements you can to try to avoid or reduce burial and protect your airway. These actions may not be possible or successful.

Prevention and prepared companions remain essential.



An avalanche can be violent and may carry a person into trees, rocks, or other hazards. If you are caught, try to move away from the moving snow. If that is not possible, continue trying to remain near the surface and protect your airway as conditions allow. As the snow slows, try to keep an arm or your hands near your face and make space to breathe if you can. Do not assume you will be able to move or make an air pocket once the debris stops.

There is no guaranteed survival technique or fixed amount of time. Serious injury or breathing problems can occur quickly, and individual circumstances vary. A person who is buried needs a rapid companion response and appropriate medical care.

The most effective preparation is to choose terrain carefully, carry and check your equipment, and practice rescue with your partners before an emergency.

Companion rescue immediate response

If a partner is caught, watch the person for as long as possible and note the last place you saw them. Alert the group and identify who is missing.

Assess the scene immediately for additional avalanches and other hazards. Do not prescribe a fixed waiting period or assume a lookout eliminates danger. Begin the rescue as soon as it can be done without creating additional victims.

Organize the response. Make sure unburied rescuers manage their transceivers according to their training so transmitting devices do not confuse the search. Watch for visible clues while starting a transceiver search.

If enough capable people and a working communication device are available, assign someone to contact 911 or activate emergency assistance while others continue the immediate rescue. If you are alone, prioritize immediate companion rescue and request help as soon as practicable without unnecessarily interrupting it.

Be aware of electronic interference. Follow the current transceiver guidance and keep communication devices away from searchers as directed.



Companion rescue search and care

Search the debris using the signal, coarse, and fine search skills learned in companion rescue training. If there is a last-seen point, use it and the debris path to help guide the search. Watch for surface clues without assuming a separated item marks the person's exact location.

Use a probe to pinpoint the person and determine burial depth. Leave the probe in place after a confirmed strike and use an organized digging technique to reach the person efficiently. Practice search, probing, and shoveling together before an emergency.

Once you reach the person, clear and assess the airway, provide first aid within your training, and protect them from further cooling. Injuries can be serious even after the person is uncovered. Coordinate emergency assistance and evacuation as conditions and resources allow.

A 2024 Swiss study of people critically buried by avalanches estimated survival at 91 percent at 10 minutes and 31 percent at 30 minutes. These are historical population estimates, not guarantees or a deadline to stop rescue. The lesson is to prepare for immediate, practiced action.
Practice with the partners you actually travel with. Every person should know how to search, probe, shovel, communicate, and help organize a response. Take a hands-on companion rescue course and refresh those skills throughout the season.



Tips for avalanche survival

Cross or climb the slope one at a time to minimize danger with the other members of the party watching each individual from a safe location.

- Look for instability NOT stability
- Take your pulse… Know before you go.
- Communicate & Listen
- Accept that we are only human: Understand yourself and group dynamics.
- Use a system – checklists, procedures and rituals
- Do not go out with only one task in mind… If you plan to climb you will find a reason to climb.
- Remember to conduct snow stability checks and if they are telling you the snow is unstable spend the day playing in the meadows or trees.

If you are caught in an avalanche

- Try to get off of the moving slab
- Hang onto sled unless a violent tumble
- Swim hard and fight, grab trees
- Push one hand towards the surface
- Make an airspace around your mouth
- Relax- your partners have practiced a lot, they were in a safe place & you checked all your beacons at the trailhead

Rescuing a victim

- Yell! Avalanche - Watch that person
- Make a mental effort to stay calm
- **Do not** go for help
- Re-group and make a plan with a leader
- Is it safe to search - Auxiliary slides possible?
- Last Point Seen!
- All beacons to receive
- Identify most likely areas of burial
- Visual clues are critical & time saving

- Probe & scuff search areas of likely burial
- Search evenly spread across the debris field, don't cluster, and communicate
- Make your evacuation & first aid plan



Try to watch the victim as they are carried down the slope, paying particular attention to the point you last saw them. After the avalanche appears to have finished and settled, wait a minute or two and observe the slope carefully to make sure there is no further avalanche danger. If some danger does still exist, post one member of your party in a safe location away from the avalanche path to alert you if another avalanche falls.

Do not go for help, you are the help!



Avalanche quick checks

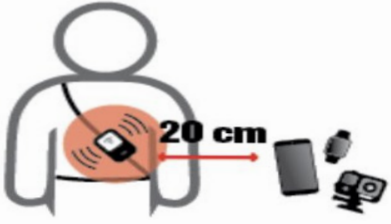
Following is a list of quick checks you can make throughout the day:

- What have the weather conditions been over the past few days? Recent heavy snows?
- Do you observe any wind loading on the slopes?
- Do you have a good sense of the snowpack? Have you performed any snowpit or shear tests?
- Have you noticed many fracture lines, heard "whumping" or cracking sounds, or hollow noises in the snowpack?
- Are you keeping an eye on the orientation and steepness of the slopes?
- Are you lingering in gullies, bowls, or valleys?
- Noticed any recent avalanche activity on other slopes similar to the one you are on?
- If a slope looks suspect, are there alternative routes?
- If there is no alternative to crossing a suspect slope, do so **one rider at a time** to minimize risk.
- When descending or ascending a slope, try to stay as far to the sides of a potential avalanche chute as possible to decrease your chances of being caught if an avalanche runs.
- Be aware of the condition of those in your party. If someone is tired, hungry, or cold they may not be using their best judgement.
- Remain constantly aware of changing weather or temperature conditions, particularly if your outing will last more than a few hours.
- Always carry avalanche rescue equipment on your body in your back pack, beacon (worn under your outer layer), probe, and shovel.

TRANSCEIVER INTERFERENCE
KEEP YOUR DISTANCE!

Electronic devices, metal objects, and magnets of any kind will interfere with your transceiver's signal if they are too close.

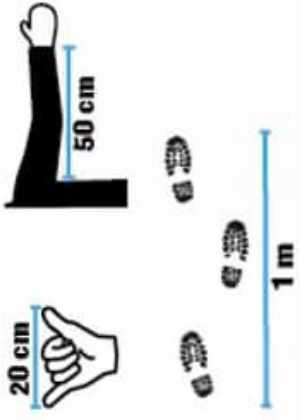
TRANSMITTING



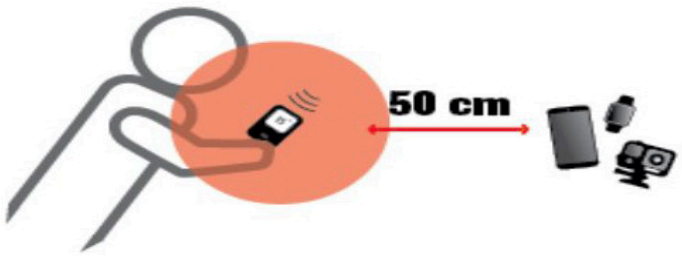
Always wear your transceiver at least *20 cm* away from anything electronic, metallic, or magnetic.

NO:
- Heated jackets
- Foil-lined jackets
- Magnetic jacket closures
- Chest-mounted cameras

HELPFUL MEASUREMENTS



SEARCHING



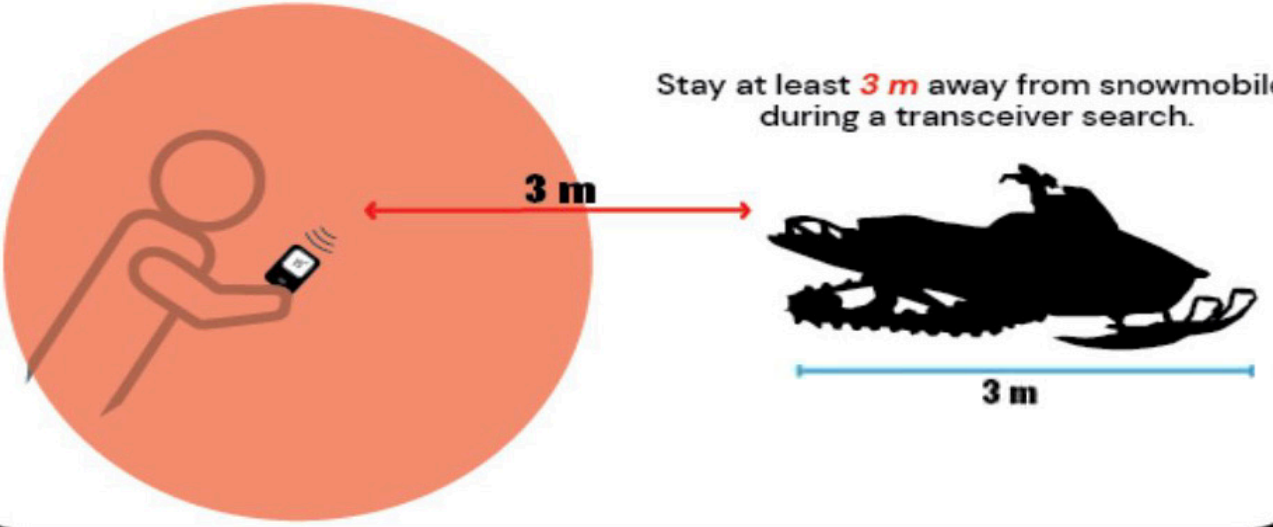
Increase the distance when searching.

Always hold your transceiver at least ***50 cm*** away from all electronics, metals, and magnets.

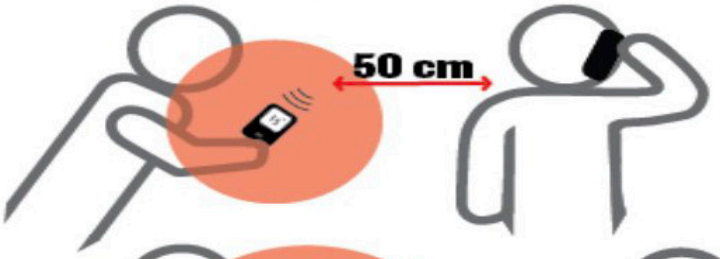
CAUTION

- Heated gloves and electronic watches ***must*** be taken off and stored away before a transceiver search
- Heated socks can interfere with your fine search when you're holding your transceiver close to the snow surface

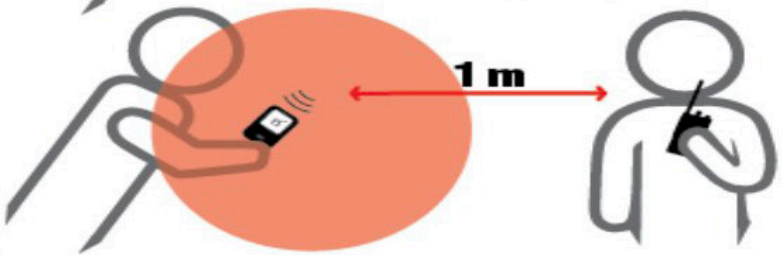
SEARCHING WITH SNOWMOBILES



CALLING FOR HELP



When *using* most communication devices, including analogue and FRS-band VHF radios, stay at least *50 cm* away from a searching transceiver.



When *using* a digital VHF radio, stay at least *1 m* away from a searching transceiver.

Resources

Web

- International Association of Snowmobile Administrators avalanche education repository - www.snowiasa.org
- www.avalanche.org

Printed materials

- Snow Sense - by Jill Fredston & Doug Fesler
- The ABCs of Avalanche Safety - by Sue A. Ferguson & Edward R. LaChapelle
- Sledding in Avalanche Terrain - by Bruce Jamieson & Darcy Svederus
- The Avalanche Handbook - by David McClung & Peter Schaerer
- And many, many others...

Video materials

- Avalanche! - by NOVA
- Winning the Avalanche Game - by The Friends of the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center

5 key safety guidelines when riding in avalanche terrain

GET THE GEAR: Ensure everyone has an avalanche transceiver, shovel, and probe on their person and knows how to use them.

GET THE TRAINING: Take an avalanche course.

GET THE FORECAST: Make a riding plan based on the current avalanche and weather forecast.

GET THE PICTURE: If you see recent avalanche activity unstable snow exists. Riding on or underneath slopes is dangerous.

GET OUT OF HARM'S WAY: One at a time on all avalanche slopes. Don't go to help your stuck friend. Don't group up in runout zones.

Danger Level		Travel Advice	Likelihood of Avalanches	Avalanche Size and Distribution
5 Extreme		Avoid all avalanche terrain.	Natural and human-triggered avalanches certain.	Large to very large avalanches in many areas.
4 High		Very dangerous avalanche conditions. Travel in avalanche terrain <u>not</u> recommended.	Natural avalanches likely; human-triggered avalanches very likely.	Large avalanches in many areas; or very large avalanches in specific areas.
3 Considerable		Dangerous avalanche conditions. Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding and conservative decision-making essential.	Natural avalanches possible; human-triggered avalanches likely.	Small avalanches in many areas; or large avalanches in specific areas; or very large avalanches in isolated areas.
2 Moderate		Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify features of concern.	Natural avalanches unlikely; human-triggered avalanches possible.	Small avalanches in specific areas; or large avalanches in isolated areas.
1 Low		Generally safe avalanche conditions. Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features.	Natural and human-triggered avalanches unlikely.	Small avalanches in isolated areas or extreme terrain.

- Carry an avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe on you at all times.
- Watch the weather and make your plan.
- Leave your plan and a return time with someone. Check the batteries in your beacon.
- The day before - Visit avalanche.org
- At the trail head - Test the send and receive function of all beacons, the beacon is worn under your first layer. Pack your probe and shovel in your backpack. Carry all rescue gear on you at all times.
- On the ride - Never ride alone & ride one at a time on slopes greater than 30 degrees.
- Look for signs of instability. (Warning signs)
- Be willing to change your ride plan if the snowpack dictates.
- Only high-mark or expose one person at a time on a slope. If your partner is stuck watch them from a safe location.
- Recent avalanche activity means slopes are unstable and similar ones should be avoided.

WWW.AVALANCHE.ORG
Subscribe to avalanche center e-mail lists to receive the most current forecasts

Avalanche Centers in or near Idaho
Payette – (208) 634-0409
Panhandle – (208) 765-7323
Sawtooth – (208) 622-8027
Gallatin – (406) 587-6981
Logan – (888) 999-4019
Bridger Teton – (307) 733-2664