

Alpine Rescue Team

Avalanche Awareness

Avalanche Facts:

Someone completely buried in an avalanche has a 90% chance of survival if they're uncovered within the first 15 minutes (absent any life threatening trauma-related injuries); someone buried 30 minutes has approximately a 50% chance of survival. The chances of survival drop dramatically after 30 minutes.

Very few people, caught in an avalanche, have been able to dig themselves out. For someone completely buried, their survival depends solely on the quick actions of the other members in their party. Avalanche beacons, shovels and probe poles and the knowledge of how to use them are essential pieces of equipment for anyone traveling in avalanche terrain.

- Most avalanches CAN be avoided.
- Most avalanches, involving a victim, are started by that person or a companion.
- Most avalanches occur on slopes of 30-to-45 degrees, during or following a major snow event.
- Most victims have some avalanche training and consider themselves skilled in their sport.
- More avalanche fatalities occur in Colorado than any other state (averaging 6 per year).
- Approximately 1/3 of all of the nation's avalanche deaths have occurred in Colorado.

The local county sheriff is responsible for and coordinates ALL backcountry emergency responses including (non ski-area) avalanches.

The **Colorado Avalanche Information Center** provides daily weather and avalanche condition updates: (303) 275-5360 or www.geosurvey.state.co.us/avalanche/

A major snow event is a snowstorm that produces a snowfall rate of 1-inch per hour or greater for several hours or 10-inches or greater in 24 hours. This will generally cause avalanche danger to increase significantly. Strong winds of 15 to 50 mph can elevate avalanche danger dramatically after as little as an hour – even when no new snow is falling.

"If my partner's caught in a slide, should I immediately go for help?"

NO! You are that person's BEST chance for survival. Do everything possible to locate the subject, and then go for help. If you have additional manpower, have someone go for help AND call 9-1-1, while you continue recovery efforts.

Saving Lives Through Rescue and Mountain Safety Education We're Ready, 24/7

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