

North American Public Avalanche Danger Scale

Avalanche danger is determined by the likelihood, size and distribution of avalanches.

| 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. |

Safe backcountry travel requires training and experience. You control your own risk by choosing where, when and how you travel.

Avalanche SAFETY



- > Avalanches are a matter of timing. Some days steep slopes are safe, some days they are not.
- > 90% of avalanche victims die in slides triggered by themselves or a member of their group.
- > A buried victim has an 80% chance of survival after 10 minutes, but survival quickly drops to a 40% chance after 12 minutes.

What can you do?

Always...

Go one at a time

Look for recent avalanches

Carry rescue gear

Identify Avalanche Terrain

So you can ride it one at a time.
So you can watch your partners from a safe location.

What is Avalanche Terrain?

ANY slope steeper than 30 degrees is avalanche terrain ...*Even very small slopes ...Even slopes with trees*

ALSO low angle slopes are avalanche terrain if they have steep slopes above them

YOU can trigger avalanches from the flats in certain conditions



Recognize Red Flags – these are Mother Nature’s warning signs

Recent Avalanches

STOP and LOOK for recent avalanches. These are major warning signs that slopes with a similar aspect and elevation are also unstable. Do not ignore these signs.

Whumpfing or Cracking

Hearing a whumpfing sound or seeing crack shoot through the snow shoot means the snowpack is unstable. When these occur on a steep slope, the result is an avalanche.

Heavy Snowfall

Significant snowfall can make the snowpack unstable. More weight added to the snowpack, makes avalanches more likely.

Blowing Snow

Wind blown snow adds weight to the snowpack even faster than heavy snowfall. Wind blown snow is usually found under ridgelines near cornices.

Rain

Rain adds weight and weakens the snowpack at the same time. Rain on a cold dry snowpack almost always causes avalanches.

Rapid Warming

Rapid warming can make the snowpack unstable, especially when air temperatures are near or above freezing. On warm days, watch for wet snow and small avalanches. These are signs that bigger avalanches are possible.



Carry Rescue Gear

- > A buried rider has only minutes to live.
- > Everyone needs to help with the rescue, and they all need the proper gear.
- > Don't send anyone for help unless you have lots of people

EVERYONE must carry:

- > A beacon to find a buried rider
- > A probe to pinpoint their location
- > A shovel to dig them out



- > An air bag pack is another great item that has saved lives



For more info and online tutorials: www.fsavalanche.org