

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS POINTER

FEBRUARY 2021

Real-Time Avalanche Information

American Avalanche Association in partnership with the National Avalanche Center provides current avalanche forecasts and information through avalanche.org. The information in this Pointer was taken from these sources. The website provides current avalanche conditions in areas across the country. Avalanche.org also provides information on available classes for recreationalists.

Know Your Angles

Avalanches are possible on any slope that is steeper than 30 degrees. They occur most often on slopes ranging from 35-50 degrees. If you are recreating on a slope less than 30 degrees, look uphill to make sure there is not a much steeper slope above you.



Slope Orientation: Avalanches can run on slopes facing any direction, however, most avalanches occur on slopes facing north, east, and northeast. These happen to be the orientations that most ski runs are located on. Colder, deeper snow packs develop on these slopes. If the slope is in shadow most of the day, the snowpack remains cooler. This reduces the melting and bonding that make the snow layers stronger.

Terrain: Winter recreation requires paying special attention to bowls and gullies in the mountain. Snow accumulates deeply and quickly in these areas which increases the risk of avalanche. If it is apparent that an avalanche has already run from one of these areas do not assume that it is now safe. One section may fall leaving the rest of the slope weakened. In this case, it may only take the slightest provocation to cause subsequent avalanches along the same slope.

AVALANCHE DANGERS IN IDAHO

Idaho draws numerous winter recreationists. Snowmobilers, skiers, and snowboarders hit the mountains to enjoy the snow. Snow covered slopes are a part of the experience, but they have hidden dangers. Since 2015, over 120 people have died in avalanches nationwide. Thirteen of those deaths occurred in Idaho. According to the National Snow and Ice Data Center, December to April is when the majority of avalanches take place. Maximize your safety by increasing your avalanche awareness.

AVALANCHE RED FLAGS

These are events and conditions that can increase avalanche risk:

- ❄ **Recent Avalanches:** Check with local experts before you go to an area for any known recent activity.
- ❄ **Warning Signs:** Look for cracking or collapsing snowpack. Listen for a “whumpfung” or hollow sound.
- ❄ **Rain and Snow:** Significant snowfall or rain during the past 24 hours can make snowpack unstable.
- ❄ **Windblown Snow:** Windblown snow can load the leeward side of a mountain when its not snowing.
- ❄ **Rising Temperatures:** Warm temperatures and gravity can cause the snow to creep downhill and become less stable.



Photo Credit: Richard Armstrong,
Nat'l. Snow & Ice Data Center

IDENTIFYING AVALANCHE COUNTRY