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United States Department of Agriculture



AVALANCHE INFORMATION

The maximum avalanche danger occurs during and immediately after storms. Winds of 15 m.p.h. and snow falling at the rate of one inch per hour greatly increases the avalanche hazard. Avalanches are most common on slopes of 30 to 45 degrees.

Avalanches are caused by many factors: terrain, weather and route selection. An avalanche advisory for backcountry and out-of-bounds use is updated daily at the Forest Service Office in Aspen. You may call our 24-hour recording number at (970)920-1664 throughout the ski season. After the ski areas close for the season you can call the Denver based avalanche information line at (303)275-5360. to be more susceptible , anyone can get sick at high altitude. Even the physically fit person is not immune.

AVALANCHE DANGER RATINGS:

LOW: Mostly stable snow exists and avalanches are unlikely except in isolated pockets. Back-country travel is generally safe.

MODERATE: Areas of unstable snow exist and avalanches are possible on steep snow covered open slopes and gullies. Back-country travelers should use caution.

HIGH: Mostly unstable snow exists and avalanches are likely on steep snow covered slopes and gullies. Back-country travel would not be recommended in this situation.

LOW AVALANCHE HAZARD AREAS:

1. Brush Creek Trail (also known as the Government Trail):

Access: Park in the West Buttermilk parking lot and ski towards Snowmass as far as you like. Return to West Buttermilk.

2. Castle Creek:

Access: Drive approximately 10 miles south of Aspen to Ashcroft where the plowing ends. You may ski 1 1/2 miles on the closed road until you enter areas of higher avalanche hazards. Ashcroft SkiTouring trails require payment of fee.

3. Difficult Campground:

Access: Drive east on Highway 82 approximately 3 miles from Aspen to the National Forest boundary sign. Pass through the gate and ski the road into the campground and throughout the valley in which the campground is located.

4. Hunter Valley:

Access: Drive up Red Mountain Road and follow the signs to the Hunter Creek Trail parking lot. The trailhead sign is at the lot. Gentle terrain follows Hunter Creek through meadows.

5. Independence Pass:

Access: Approximately 5 miles east of Aspen on Highway 82 as far as the road is plowed (Tagert Lake). Ski the unplowed highway toward Independence Pass until you reach Lincoln Creek Road.

6. Rio Grande Trail:

Access: Either from behind the Post Office on Puppy Smith Street or from the Slaughterhouse bridge on Cemetery Lane. Ski the old railroad bed along the Roaring Fork River.

7. Snowmass Creek Trail:

Access: Drive to the old town of Snowmass (not Snowmass Village) and go to the end of the plowed portion of Snowmass Creek Road. Ski the road to the Maroon-Snowmass trailhead and follow the trail along the east bank of Snowmass Creek approximately 4 miles.

HIGH AVALANCHE HAZARD AREAS:

- 1. Maroon Creek Road**
- 2. Lincoln Creek Road**
- 3. Highway 82 beyond the Lincoln Creek Road junction**
- 4. Castle Creek Road beyond the Pine Creek Cookhouse**

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

- Call the Weather Bureau for a local forecast.
- Call the Avalanche advisory at the Forest Service Office (970) 920-1664. Change plans if danger exists.
- Tell a responsible friend of your plans and any alternate plans; show them a map of the area. Tell them when you plan to be back and notify them of your return.
- Make sure your skiing group is a self-contained unit able to meet all conditions that may arise inclement weather, forced bivouac, avalanche rescue.
- Remember that no one is immune to adversity and sooner or later it catches up with all of us, so be prepared for that day. If you are prepared, you can meet the situation; if you are not prepared, you are certain to suffer, possibly with your life