



Avalanche Awareness

*More avalanche deaths occur in Colorado – an average of 6 per year – than in any other state.

Since 1980, 1 in 4 US avalanche deaths have occurred in Colorado.
(Alaska follows far behind in second place, accounting for only 1 in 6 US deaths.)

Fact #1

More than 9 in 10 avalanche victims trigger their own avalanche (or a friend in the group triggers the avalanche). Very few avalanche victims are caught by a spontaneous or natural avalanche.

Fact #2

Avalanches travel with the speed and mass of a freight train. A typical human-triggered avalanche involves nearly 900,000 pounds of snow that can fill 13.5 railroad boxcars, and the avalanche travels between 40 and 80 mph.

Fact #3

Time is the enemy of the buried avalanche victim. By 30 minutes only half of buried victims survive and survival chances continue to plummet fast. However, some lucky victims do survive for many hours under the snow.

Fact #4

In Colorado 2 of 3 avalanche victims die from asphyxia (suffocation), almost 1 in 3 die from trauma, and a few, about 1 in 20 die from other causes, namely from hypothermia and drowning.

Fact #5

Be searchable. The best chance for survival depends on the quick actions by companions. Everyone traveling in avalanche terrain should have and know how to use avalanche rescue transceivers, probes, and shovels, and have a way to call for help. Also, winter recreationalists should be equipped with RECCO reflectors, which helps organized rescue teams find people faster. Alpine Rescue Team uses the RECCO® Rescue System.

Fact #6

Avalanche accidents can be avoided, when backcountry travelers know what terrain, weather and snowpack clues to look for, and can recognize their own vulnerabilities.

Fact #7

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

Fact #8

The Colorado Avalanche Information Center provides daily weather and avalanche condition updates: <http://avalanche.state.co.us>.

Fact #9

When an accident happens, attempt calling 9-1-1 and then do everything possible to locate your friend. You are your friend's BEST chance for survival. Calling 911 early gets rescuers headed your way sooner. The Sheriff and Alpine Rescue Team prefer to be called and not needed, then called too late. To postpone a call for help could cost a life.

Where to go for additional information:

- [Colorado Avalanche Information Center](#)
- Avalanche.org

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

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