

SNOWMOBILE – AVALANCH SAFETY 2

Avalanche Rescue

The best defense is to avoid getting caught in an avalanche because you don't have time to go for help.

There is generally only a 15 minute window of opportunity to rescue a buried victim before they die from asphyxia.

There is not enough time to go for help, so you and the other riders in your group are the help.

About 64 percent of riders buried in an avalanche survive because of their partner's ability to perform a rescue.

In instances where a partner leaves the scene to go for help, the buried rider typically dies about 78 percent of the time.

You simply have to stay at the scene and search for your buried partner.

Unfortunately, most snowmobilers venture into the back country untrained and unequipped to rescue a buried friend.

Tools for an avalanche rescue include: brain, beacon, probe, and shovel.

You must carry the last three and engage the brain in order to have a successful rescue. Otherwise, the exercise becomes only a body recovery.

Always carry rescue gear (beacon, probe and shovel) when riding in avalanche country. And better yet, make sure your riding partners have rescue gear.

While some people consider buying an avalanche beacon, probe and shovel too pricey, it's not when compared to dying in an avalanche.

If you're completely buried, a beacon may be the only way you can be found and dug out in that 15-minute window of opportunity for survival.

Avalanche debris sets up like concrete. Unfortunately there are countless stories of people trying to dig out their partner with their hands, helmet, face shield, windshield or whatever else they can find.

This simply does not work because the snow is too hard. Carry a real shovel and better yet, carry it on you in a pack.

A probe is a great tool to help pinpoint the buried person to minimize digging time.

It is also an essential tool if you're looking for someone who failed to wear a beacon because it allows you to quickly spot-probe around the debris field.

Most importantly, get training on the use of rescue gear and practice with it regularly to ensure you know what to do, and can act quickly and instinctively, in the event one of your partners becomes buried in an

avalanche.

If Caught In An Avalanche

- Try to stay on your machine and ride out toward the side.
- Keep your pack on. It gives some flotation.
- If knocked off your sled, push away from it to reduce your chances of being injured and FIGHT HARD to stay on top of the moving snow by "swimming."
- Attempt to roll onto your back; you have a better chance of survival if buried face up.
- As the avalanche slows, thrust your hand straight up. Expand your chest and use your arm to create airspace.
- Try not to panic so that you will use oxygen at a slower rate.

If You Are A Rescuer

- Watch the victim! Establish the last place you saw the victim and mark it.
- If you did not observe the slide, question any witnesses about the number of victims, the location they were last seen, and whether or not the victims were wearing beacons.

- Make sure it is safe to search. The slope that has just avalanched is unlikely to slide again unless it has reloaded or has adjoining paths that have not released funneling into the same area.
- Conduct a thorough initial search of the debris below the area the victims were last seen. Look carefully for clues (e.g., sled, boot, glove, blood). Probe around clues and in likely catchment areas such as flat benches or dips in the terrain, rocks, tree-wells and at the toe of the debris.
- Leave clues (including sleds) in place; they may help establish the victim's line of travel. Most buried snowmobilers are found no more than 200 feet from their sleds, in roughly the same fall line. More often than not, the victims are upslope and within 40 feet of their machines.
- If wearing avalanche beacons, conduct a beacon search (which you should have practiced many times before!) simultaneously with the initial search.
- If the victim is not located by any of these search methods, systematically probe the most likely search area.
- When you locate the victim, dig fast but

carefully. Free the victim's mouth and chest of snow first. Then have first aid gear ready for treatment and be alert for airway problems, hypothermia and injuries.

Avalanche Forecasts

Many regions of the U.S. and Canada have Avalanche Forecast Centers that issue daily avalanche forecasts during the snow season.

This is an important resource to help you make good decisions when riding in avalanche country.

Find the Avalanche Forecast Center nearest to your riding area and make a practice of checking their daily forecast, which will rate the avalanche danger scale.

Avalanche Danger Scale:

LOW

- Natural avalanches VERY UNLIKELY
- Human triggered avalanches UNLIKELY
- Travel is GENERALLY SAFE
- NORMAL CAUTION is advised

MODERATE

- Natural avalanches UNLIKELY
- Human triggered avalanches POSSIBLE
- Use CAUTION in steeper terrain on certain aspects

CONSIDERABLE

- Natural avalanches POSSIBLE
- Human triggered avalanches PROBABLE
- Be INCREASINGLY CAUTIOUS in

steeper terrain

HIGH

- Natural and human triggered avalanches LIKELY
- Travel in avalanche terrain NOT RECOMMENDED

EXTREME

- Natural and human triggered avalanches CERTAIN
- Travel in avalanche terrain should be AVOIDED and confined to low-angle terrain well away from avalanche path run-outs