

HOW TO SURVIVE AN AVALANCHE

1 Struggle to stay on top of the snow by using a freestyle swimming motion.

2 If you are buried, your best chance of survival is if someone saw you get covered.

The snow in an avalanche is like a wet snowball: it is not light and powdery, and once you are buried, it is very difficult to dig your way out.

3 If you are only partially buried, you can dig your way out with your hands or by kicking at the snow.

If you still have a ski pole, poke through the snow in several directions until you see or feel open air, then dig in that direction.

4 If you are completely buried, chances are you will be too injured to help yourself.

However, if you are able, dig a small hole around you and spit in it. The saliva should head downhill, giving you an idea of which direction is up. Dig up, and do it quickly.

Be Aware

- Never go hiking or skiing alone in avalanche territory.
- Carry an avalanche probe—a sturdy, sectional aluminum pole that fits together to create a probe

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six to eight feet in length. Some ski poles are threaded and can be screwed together to form avalanche probes.

- Know where and when avalanches are likely to occur.
- Avalanches occur in areas with new snow; on the leeward side of mountains (the side facing away from the wind); and in the afternoons of sunny days, when the morning sun may have loosened

the snowpack. They occur most often on mountainsides with angles of thirty to forty-five degrees—these are often the most popular slopes for skiing.

- Avalanches can be triggered by numerous factors, including recent snowfall, wind, and sunlight. As new snow accumulates with successive storms, the layers may be of different consistencies and not bond to one another, making the snow highly unstable.
- Loud noises do not cause avalanches except if they cause significant vibrations in the ground or snow.
- The activity with the highest avalanche risk is now snowmobiling. Snowmobiles—sometimes called mountain sleds—are powerful and light, and can get high into mountainous terrain, where avalanches occur.
- Carry a beacon. The beacon broadcasts your position by setting up a magnetic field that can be picked up by the other beacons in your group. If skiing on a dangerous slope, go down one at a time, not as a group, in case a slide occurs.

HOW TO RESCUE OTHERS

If you have witnessed others being buried by an avalanche, contact the ski patrol as soon as possible. Then search first by trees and benches—the places where people are most commonly buried. All searchers should have small, collapsible shovels to help them dig quickly if they find someone.

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