



BE AVALANCHE-WISE



We live in the mountains and avalanches happen in our valley. Over the years, avalanches have blocked roads, buried cars, damaged or destroyed houses and run across yards. Avalanches kill and injure people who are buried or caught in the debris flow.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

When avalanche conditions are dangerous it is important to stay out from beneath steeper, snow covered slopes. DO NOT wait for someone to tell you it is dangerous and that you need to avoid an area or evacuate a home. Learn to recognize conditions and make your own responsible choices.

WHEN ARE CONDITIONS THE MOST DANGEROUS?

- **During and directly after big storms.** Especially when accompanied by strong winds and blowing snow, or snow changing to rain. 10 inches of snow or more is a big storm.
- **During and directly after a couple days of thawing,** with temperatures continuously staying above 32 degrees F.

During dangerous avalanche conditions it is not possible to predict exactly when or where avalanches may occur, but if you see one avalanche happen you can expect there'll be more slides running on similar slopes.

WHERE ARE THE CONDITIONS THE MOST DANGEROUS?

- **Beneath or on steeper slopes.**

This means slopes that are 30 degrees or steeper, similar to the Upper Bowls on Baldy, Blue Grouse, Upper Greyhawk or upper Warm Springs ski trail. Around town the slopes that are most prone to avalanches are Della and Carbonate in Hailey, East Fork of the Wood River, the Back of Dollar Mountain, Trail Creek Road, Warm Springs slopes both above the city homes and above the “dog park”, Warm Springs road by Penny Lake, some slopes above the Lower Board Ranch and slopes and gullies further out Warm Springs road. In addition, several slopes along Highway 75 near Lake Creek and closer to Galena Summit avalanche regularly.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO DURING DANGEROUS CONDITIONS?

Avoid walking, stopping or parking beneath steep snow covered slopes or out the narrow side canyons (this includes walking your dog). Do not let children play on or beneath steep slopes. *If you live beneath steep slopes in a non-avalanche engineered home, daytime or nighttime you should consider leaving the premises until the dangerous conditions improve. Do not invite guests over or allow service people to be at your home if conditions are dangerous.*

WHEN IS IT SAFE?

Typically 24 to 48 hours after the storms and wind have ended or the prolonged thaw has refrozen the snow, is when snow covered slopes stabilize. In isolated cases of very weak layering within the snowpack, a lingering hazard may exist leaving steep slopes susceptible to being triggered by human activity on specific slopes. Read and follow the Sawtooth Avalanche Center daily advisory and weather forecast.

LOCAL RESOURCES:

Sawtooth Avalanche Center website (sawtoothavalanche.com)

Check the daily avalanche and weather forecasts. The Avalanche Center produces forecasts for the large backcountry region surrounding Sun Valley; these forecasts are general in nature and can be useful for around town but they do not precisely forecast for the slopes above homes or local roads. Utilize the Avalanche Center website weather station page for hourly snow, temperature and wind data to help monitor increasingly dangerous conditions.

National Weather Service Avalanche Warnings

(<https://www.weather.gov/safety/winter-avalanche>)

Avalanche Warnings are produced throughout the western US by the NWS in partnership with local and regional avalanche centers, and disseminated as a NWS product. The Sawtooth Avalanche Center issues Avalanche Warnings. The Avalanche Warnings cover a broad region, and at times may or may not specifically apply to the populated areas in the Wood River Valley. However, Warnings are still very useful to help recognize dangerous storms and conditions. Sign up for the Blaine County emergency alert program and check Blaine County Sheriff Facebook Page.

Remember, learn to observe weather conditions and think for yourself. Our local resources can be very helpful but at times there may be dangerous avalanche conditions without an avalanche warning being issued, and sometimes an avalanche warning may be for other parts of our region and not apply to slopes around the Wood River cities.

Recognize conditions that lead to increasing avalanche danger and avoid steep slopes and avalanche run out areas during those times. Practice basic winter safety, always carry a shovel, extra warm clothes and boots in your vehicle.