

Program	Audience	Recommended outcomes	Recommended content	Recommended prerequisites	Recommended format	Recommended performance measures	Recommended Instructor qualifications Student:inst. ratio
Avalanche Awareness	Interested public	Awareness of avalanche hazards	General information about avalanche hazard, how to avoid it, and proper equipment for traveling in avalanche terrain.	None	1 – 2 hr	None	Knowledgeable and entertaining
Introduction to Avalanches	Any winter backcountry user May be adapted for groups like Public Safety, Search & rescue, Snowmobilers, etc.	1) Recognize & avoid obvious avalanche hazard. 2) Understand and apply current avalanche advisory	A brief introduction to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avalanche statistics and human factors • Avalanche terminology • Avalanche terrain • Snow pack and weather factors • Obvious clues and red flags • Trip Planning and Preparation • Avalanche bulletins • Simple decision tools (ALP TRUTH, RYG Light etc.) • Travel protocols • Companion recovery 	None	2-3 hr presentation	None	Member Affiliate AAA or higher
Introduction to Avalanches Field Course	Any winter backcountry user May be adapted for groups like Public Safety, Search & rescue, Snowmobilers, etc.	1) Recognize & avoid avalanche terrain 2) Understand how layered snow contributes to avalanching 3) Understand basic companion rescue	Field examples & hands on training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avalanche terrain and terrain traps • Basic route selection • Snow pack layering • Current snowpack conditions and weather effects (bulletin) • Companion recovery including probing, shoveling, beacon use 	None	7 hrs field	Attendance & participation	Primary Instructor: Member Affiliate AAA or higher Assistants: Sufficient personal experience Maximum 7:1
Companion Rescue Clinic	Any winter backcountry user	1) Wear & operate an avalanche beacon. 2) Perform a mock companion recovery including single and multiple burial search	Hands on training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of beacon skills (burial time-survival statistics) • Beacon operation and search principles • Demonstration and practice of initial, secondary, and pinpoint search • Rescue practice scenarios including group management, probing & shoveling • Overview of first aid and emergency skills needed in actual rescues 	None	4 hrs field	Attendance & participation	Sufficient personal experience. *[Format and teaching tips available] Maximum 8:1

Recommendations for U.S. Avalanche Education

American Avalanche Association

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Level 1: Avalanche Fundamentals	Current and aspiring back-country travel companions	<p>Apply the current avalanche bulletin in tour planning and travel.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Select a safe route and minimize exposure using travel protocols. 2) Recognize instabilities in the snowpack using observations and tests. 3) Interpret and draw elementary pit profiles. (Hand hardness, basic grain type and stability tests). 4) Apply simple decision tools in avalanche terrain. 5) Conduct a mock companion recovery. 	<p>Avalanche types and anatomy</p> <p>Basic slab mechanics</p> <p>Terrain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrain evaluation and route selection • Travel protocols & group communication <p>Snowpack and Weather</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain snowpack development leading to instability or stability • Field observations, tests and judging instability • Use of avalanche & snow pit tools: inclinometer, compass, probe, saw • Introduce elementary pit diagrams with hand hardness profiles, basic grain type symbols and stability tests. Expose to recording field notes. • Avalanche & snow climates <p>Decision-support Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human factors and the need for systematic decision tools • Application & limitations of decision tools • Avalanche bulletins <p>Rescue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companion rescue including scene size up, organization, beacon use, probing, shoveling • Recovery of victims not wearing beacons • Common mistakes in avalanche rescue • Single and multiple beacon search techniques • Role of first aid and emergency response in real avalanche rescues <p>Critique: Recommendations for further skills development, preparation for Level 2 training.</p>	<p>No formal prerequisites</p> <p>Strongly Recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Winter Travel and First Aid Skills 2) Introduction to Avalanches programs 3) Course provider's recommended reading 	<p>24 hours</p> <p>Minimum 60% field</p>	<p>Attendance & participation</p>	<p>Primary or lead instructor: AAA Pro Member</p> <p>Assistants: AAA Member Affiliates</p> <p>Continuing education within previous 4 years</p> <p>Instructors must be excellent role models for the skills they teach.</p> <p>Maximum 7:1</p>
Level 1 Refresher: Avalanche Skills Advancement Workshop (ASAW)	Backcountry travelers with rusty or outdated avalanche skills. Preparatory for L2.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Updated skills and knowledge (review). 2) Assessment of skills preparatory to Level 2 3) Recommendations for further development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent changes in L1 content • Metamorphism and snow processes review • Basic pit diagram review & field book use • Trip plan: snowpack and weather conditions, route plan • Quick rescue scenario • Use and application of student's own avalanche and snow study tools • Route selection, stability assessment, recording field observations, travel protocols, ongoing use of decision making tools. • Summary of stability findings or danger scale assessment <p>Critique: Recommendations for further skills development, preparation for Level 2 training.</p>	<p>Level 1 (For those wishing to take a Level 2, their L1 should have been in the last 5 years)</p>	<p>3 hrs class</p> <p>8 hrs field</p>	<p>Attendance & participation</p> <p>Coaching</p>	<p>Primary or lead instructor: AAA professional member.</p> <p>Current instructor of Level 2 adhering to AAA guidelines</p> <p>Maximum 6:1</p>

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Level 2: Avalanche Processes & Leadership	Aspiring backcountry leaders Backcountry companions desiring greater skills and knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Plan group travel and systematically manage hazards in avalanche terrain. 2) Observe and record field observations. 3) Perform and document a test profile. 4) Forecast instability and danger rating based on snowpack and weather conditions and trends. 5) Demonstrate effective communication addressing human factors. 6) Conduct mock multiple-burial companion recovery. 	<p>Tour Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather and snowpack history • Trip considerations (abilities, goals, constraints) • Decision tool review • Applied map skills (slope angle, alpha angle, route planning, decision points) <p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metamorphism (FC, MX, SH, DH, MF) and instability • Skier triggering, avalanche release and assessing instability • Spatial variability <p>Observations and Forecasts: snowpack, weather, and terrain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards and recording (SWAG, field book) • Stability assessment and forecast practice • Decision making traps and communication <p>Field Tours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route selection • Travel protocols, group management and communication • Stability assessment via observations and test results • Full & test profile (pit) practice <p>Rescue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group and complex rescue leadership • Practice scenarios <p>Critique, review, and examine next steps in education for individual students</p>	<p>Level 1 or Level 1 Refresher in last 5 years</p> <p>Level 1 cannot be taken in the same season as Level 2</p> <p>Course provider's recommended reading</p>	<p>32 hours</p> <p>Minimum 60% field</p>	<p>Instructor critique of field performance: route selection, stability assessment, group management and rescue skills.</p> <p>Written exam is optional.</p>	<p>Primary or lead instructor: should be an AAA Certified Instructor or all of the following: Has taught 3 or more L2s 2 letters recommendation to AAA education committee Completed a L3, CAA L2 or AVPro Minimum of 4 winters of professional leadership in avalanche terrain Continuing education within previous 4 years Assistants: AAA professional member Continuing education within previous 4 years Instructors must provide timely and effective coaching. Maximum 6:1</p>
AV Pro: Advanced professional avalanche training	Current or aspiring avalanche professionals	See AAA website	See AAA website	Level 2 or Nat'l Avalanche School Phase 1 & 2 or equivalent	80 hours	See AAA website	<p>Primary Instructors: AAA Certified Instructors Guest instructors may have varying backgrounds</p>
Level 3:	Advanced recreation-	Determined by provider for a focused topic.	Focused topics determined by provider, may include:	Level 2 or equivalent,	See provider	See provider	See provider

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Advanced avalanche education	ists, current or aspiring professionals		Guiding, forecasting, ski area operations, highway, mountain meteorology, etc.	Link to AMGA, CAA, etc.			

The purpose of the AAA Guidelines for U.S. Avalanche Education (“Guidelines”) is to provide a general benchmark for skill progressions between different levels of avalanche education, for the public’s benefit. AAA believes that avalanche education can be more thoughtfully, consistently, and responsibly conducted and can achieve more constructive outcomes for students when course providers and avalanche instructors in the United States strive to embrace common guidelines and practices.

In developing and issuing these Guidelines, AAA does not intend to act as - or become - a regulatory body for the avalanche industry. Compliance with the AAA Guidelines does not guarantee that a course provider’s courses or programs will be safe, or that participation in that course or program will be free from harm. In choosing to voluntarily engage in avalanche courses or programs or recreate in outdoor, backcountry and/or wilderness settings, individuals must understand that they accept and assume the inherent risks of these activities.

AAA does not oversee, control or warrant the character or quality of any individual or entity’s avalanche programs, including those of any listed course providers, and is not responsible for the content of their specific courses or programs. Those interested in taking avalanche courses from course providers listed on AAA’s website or otherwise, should independently investigate and assess these course providers and their specific courses and programs.

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