



LEVEL 2 BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Alaska Avalanche School is a non-profit organization created for the purpose of promoting public safety in and around the mountain environment through education, research, publishing, and consulting. You have our commitment that we'll provide you with the highest quality of training possible. What you learn during the workshop will depend upon how hard you work during and prior to the course. We'll provide you with the opportunity, the tools, and the encouragement. The rest is up to you. Please read the following information carefully.

DETAILS:

Cost of the Course: \$495.00 Per Person

Course Duration: 4 Full Days

Tuition Includes: Instruction, floor space within the Hatcher Pass Visitor Center for sleeping the night before the course begins, and the 1st night of the course, and instructional handouts.

Tuition Does Not Include: Round trip transportation to and from the class-site, accommodations for the 2nd & 3rd night of the course, "The Avalanche Handbook" by McClung and Schaerer and "Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain" by Tremper, food and water for the duration of the course, all personal gear and clothing (see the Equipment List for more information).

Required Reading: "Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain" by Bruce Tremper

Recommended Reading: "The Avalanche Handbook" by McClung and Schaerer.

COURSE CURRICULUM:

The purpose of this workshop is to enhance your skills in avalanche hazard evaluation, forecasting, and decision-making. Classroom sessions will focus on the development of unstable snowpacks including long lasting and deep slab instabilities, and some of the newer concepts in snow science. In the field we'll concentrate on snow stability evaluation techniques, detailed snowpack analysis, and documentation. We'd like to seek out recent avalanches so that we can investigate the contributory causes of fracture, but if there are no crown faces to be found, we'll seek out a variety of snowpack conditions. The training will be intensive. This course consists of 40 hours of classroom and field training.

Program curriculum consists of:

- Group rescue techniques
- Beacon use
- Beacon Park practice (EasySearcher) for multiple beacon searches
- Terrain analysis
- Snow stability evaluation
- Decision making
- Route selection
- Safe travel procedures
- Documentation of Pits
- Forecasting
- Snowpack Analysis

COURSE SCHEDULE:

The Night Before the Course Begins: We encourage participants to travel to the Hatcher Pass Visitor Center on the night before the course begins so that you won't be late the first morning of the course. The Visitor Center will be open as of 8 pm the night before the course begins for those wishing to come up early. If you come in late this night, just find a space on the floor of the main level and don't snore *too* loudly. Remember, driving time from downtown Anchorage to the Hatcher Pass Lodge is usually around 1.5 hours *if* the roads are in good shape. Don't forget to factor in time to travel from the Lodge parking lot to the Visitor Center.

First Day: The pre-registration check-in will take place the first morning of the course from 8:00 – 8:30 am at the Independence Mine State Historical Park Visitor Center in Hatcher Pass. The course will start with the indoor class lectures and then continue that day in the field.

Second Day: we will continue the course at the Hatcher Pass Visitor Center. After the morning lecture and afternoon field session there will be a break in the course to travel back to the Anchorage area. You are responsible for your accommodations this night.

Third Day: Plan to rendezvous at the National Forest Ranger Station in Girdwood in the morning to spend the day in the Chugach or Kenai Mountains. This will give you the opportunity to study two different snow-packs during the course. Since we'll be continuing in Girdwood & Turnagain on the last day of the course we highly recommend that you stay in Girdwood this night.

Fourth Day: Plan to be in Girdwood and Turnagain Arm again. The formal portion of the training will end when we reach the parking lot (by 5:30 pm). However, we encourage you to keep this evening free so that we can have an informal wrap-up/discussion session at a nearby restaurant.

PRE-REQUISITES:

At least intermediate backcountry travel skills. Participation in a prior 3 day AAS Level 1 Course or equivalent and at least a year of experience since your Level 1 Course.

PRE-COURSE WORK: We expect a high level of commitment from Level II participants. In order to make the workshop work for you and for others, please complete the following assignments BEFORE the workshop.

1) Re-read any avalanche materials you have, especially *Snow Sense*, and *Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain*. Also recommended is the *Avalanche Handbook*. Most importantly, drawing from your previous experience and reading there must be some things that are not clear to you. What are they? Jot down questions to which you would like answers. During the workshop we'll work on answering these questions and hopefully raise a few more. We expect every participant to come with written questions.

2) If you haven't practiced your rescue skills lately, what are you waiting for? Review your plan as a victim and plan as a rescuer, and practice beacon searches BEFORE the course.

3) Come to the course with a concise written snow stability synopsis of the conditions you expect to find in Hatcher Pass. If you're on a roll, please do the same for Turnagain Pass. *Helpful hint* -- useful web sites include:

www.arh.noaa.gov (National Weather Service – Alaska Region, includes satellite images, weather synopsis, current observations, and public forecasts)

www.aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/ (River Forecast Center – Snow pillow sites throughout Alaska, including Hatcher Pass and Turnagain Pass. Data includes temperature and water equivalent. You can access this information off the NWS (hydrology) site above). These sites are in protected places, and do not always reflect local wind events.

www.akrr.com/community/hourly_rpt.htm (*NEW* -- Hourly weather and snow data from Indian Pass, Alyeska, Max's Mt., Portage, Whittier, Turnagain Pass, Granite Creek, Summit Pass, Cooper Lake, Moose Pass, Grandview, and Tunnel)

www.avalanche.org (Westwide Avalanche Network, includes link to Chugach National Forest)

www.dot.state.ak.us/iways/roadweather (Stations along Alaska's road system)

www.mountainweather.com/alaska.htm (Compilation of key weather links)

4) If you have a computer download snowpilot from www.snowpilot.org. SnowPilot is a FREE software program that allows you to collect snow pit and avalanche occurrence data onto your PC, Mac or PDA. This data is then uploaded to a database on the web where others can view it and researchers can grab the raw data. If you have a laptop please bring this with the snowpilot program to the first and second day of the course.

5) Get out and dig some pits! Draw between 5 and 10 pit profiles of your findings and bring them with you to the class. We want folks to have some personal experience documenting the snowpack.

6) Complete the pre-test included with this letter and bring to the first day of class.

RISK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT / WAIVER FORM:

While the Alaska Avalanche School's 30 year track record in safety has been exceptional, a reflection of the times is that each field course participant must sign a detailed waiver of liability. Signing the AAS waiver form means that you

acknowledge the inherent risks associated with the activities you will be undertaking, accept responsibility for your actions, and waive any claim for damages against the Alaska Avalanche School and its staff for accidents suffered while participating in the workshop. AAS will send waiver forms to participants prior to the course. **Please read, and sign the form and bring to the first day of the course.**

If you are a minor you must have the Waiver signed by your legal guardian before you arrive at the course. If you do not wish to sign the waiver, your tuition will be refunded less the \$60 processing fee, (as long as you notify us at least 30 days prior to the start of the course) and you will not be permitted to attend the workshop. Please read the registration and cancellation policies on the AAS registration form for more information and details regarding our policies.

COURSES HELD IN HATCHER PASS:

The first two days of this course will be held at the Independence Mine State Historical Park Visitor Center located at 3,200 feet on the Palmer side of Hatcher Pass in the Talkeetna Mountains.

Directions: To get to Hatcher Pass, head east from Palmer on the Glenn Highway and then turn left (north) onto Fishhook Road (this intersection is approximately 1 mile east of Palmer and is clearly signed). *Important note: The road over Hatcher Pass from Willow is closed in the winter.* The Visitor Center is located at approximately 19 miles from the Glenn Highway. This is roughly 5 miles past the Mother Lode Lodge (where there is a big switchback in the road) and 1 mile past the Hatcher Pass Lodge (A-Frames). The road will only be plowed to Hatcher Pass Lodge. Travel by ski or snowshoe to the Visitor Center generally takes about 30-45 minutes. You will need to ferry your equipment and gear to the Visitor Center and if you have a plastic sled, bring it!

Note:* It is possible that if a storm closes the lower road prior to the course, we may have to cancel the course or change our location. If possible, plan on driving a 4-wheel drive and/or throw a set of chains into your vehicle. If you're interested in carpooling, just give us a call and we'll try to give you some names and phone numbers of participants coming from the same area.

Parking: Since January 1, 2005, there has been an Alaska State Park parking fee for Hatcher Pass. This fee has been waived for workshop participants. **Please place this letter on the left hand side of your dashboard as proof of involvement with this workshop.**

COURSES HELD AT THE CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST RANGER STATION IN GIRDWOOD & TURNAGAIN ARM:

The third and fourth days of the course will start in Girdwood at the Chugach National Forest Ranger Station. Field portions of this course will be held in the Turnagain Arm at a location chosen each morning.

Directions: To get to the Chugach National Forest Ranger Station, take the Seward Highway to the Alyeska Highway. Once on the Alyeska Highway travel 300 yards and take the first left. There is a U.S. Forest Service sign at the turn. The majority of the class time will be spent in the main building to the South of the compound. Field portions of this course will be held in the Turnagain Arm. If possible, plan on driving a 4-wheel drive vehicle.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN HATCHER PASS:

Please keep your dogs at home during the course!

Visitor Center: There is free sleeping bag space allowed on the main floor of the Visitor Center starting on the night before the first day of the course starting around 8:00 pm. Bring a light to mid-weight sleeping bag and pad. Feel free to put your bed where ever you would like on the main floor but be aware that the central living space will need to be cleared for the indoor class sessions. This is a heated building and does have running water (no shower facilities). There is a coffee maker, microwave, and hot water is available for tea, hot chocolate, or instant meals. There is no cook stove or kitchen available. Electricity is provided via an on-site generator.

Camping: There is no outside camping allowed at the Visitor Center.

Private Rooms: Those wishing private rooms and who don't mind spending the extra time and effort commuting to the Visitor Center can make arrangements for lodging at Hatcher Pass Lodge by calling (907) 745-5897.

Because we will be meeting at a different location for the third and fourth days of the course, accommodations are not provided the second & third nights of the course. This is the responsibility of the student but for accommodation

recommendations please see the Accommodations info for Girdwood below.

ACCOMMODATIONS IN GIRDWOOD:

Since this course is intense, and consists of long days we strongly encourage participants from Anchorage or places other than Girdwood NOT to commute. If need be beg a friend in Girdwood for floor space! Below are a few accommodation options.

Bunkhouse at the Ranger Station: There is a heated Ranger's bunkhouse located at the Chugach National Forest Ranger Station in Girdwood that is available to students for a small fee. There is limited space so if you're interested in reserving a bed please let us know as soon as possible. There is a fully functioning kitchen and bathroom facilities available for students who reserve space.

Camping: There is no outside camping allowed at the Visitor Center.

Alyeska Hostel: Another economical accommodation option is the Alyeska Hostel in Girdwood, which has bunks, and showers available for a reasonable fee. Call 907-783-2222 for more information or to make reservations.

Other: There are many other accommodation options in Girdwood such as the Alyeska Prince Hotel: 907-754-2111, or you can check with Alyeska Accommodations: 907-783-2000.

FOOD:

Students are responsible for all of their food and water for the duration of the course. Bring enough food to feed yourself for four full days. Lunches will be in the field so plan your menu accordingly. You might also want to bring some snack food to keep your stomach in check between the end of each day's field session and when we break for dinner.

FOOD IN HATCHER PASS:

We will have a **potluck dinner** on the first night of the course so bring your BEST, MOST TASTY DISH (no freeze-dried allowed) to share with others. If everyone puts some effort into their dish we can feast like kings! Crock-pot dishes work out well as do pans of food that just need to be heated up. If you are staying at the Lodge, bring your potluck dish up with you on the first morning.

If you're planning to cook while in Hatcher Pass, bring a camp stove and keep in mind that it must be used outside the building because of fire hazard. The Independence Mine Visitor Center does not have kitchen facilities we can use so it is easiest to pre-cook as much of your food as possible. Bring your own pots, pans, plates, eating utensils, etcetera.

Alaska State Parks and Independence Mine does not allow alcoholic beverages inside the building.

FOOD IN GIRDWOOD:

Again, accommodations are the responsibility of the student on the 3rd and 4th days of the course. Come to class with food prepared for the entire day.

PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS AND EQUIPMENT:

Plan to bring all the necessary clothing and equipment you require to stay outside all day in foul weather while traveling uphill and down through variable terrain and changing snow conditions. For more information on participant equipment requirements please review the course equipment handout.

TO REGISTER FOR A COURSE:

If you have not already registered for a course and wish to, please call the AAS office to check availability. You can either register by phone or print off the registration form from the AAS Website and send it into the AAS office via post, or fax.

AAS CANCELLATION, REFUND, AND TRANSFER POLICIES:

We highly encourage all participants to review the Cancellation, Refund, and Transfer Policies found on the 2nd page of the AAS Registration form prior to enrollment.

Cancellation Insurance: If for any reason you anticipate a cancellation please consider cancellation insurance. A few recommendations include:

TravelEx: www.travelex-insurance.com

Travel Guard: www.travelguard.com

MISCELLANEOUS:

Student tuition alone does not cover the total course cost. Funding for these programs is derived from individual donations, in-kind contributions, and program receipts from educational workshops. If you desire to contribute to the school we graciously accept donations of monetary value as well as gear that can be put towards our rental program.

Our goal at the Alaska Avalanche School is to provide you with the best possible opportunity for learning about avalanche hazard evaluation in the backcountry.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 907-345-0878 or email: AlaskaAvalanche@mac.com.

We look forward to seeing you in the mountains!