

Greetings from the Utah Avalanche Center:



What's New

Chad Brackelsberg joins UAC as new Executive Director

Chad brings more than 20 years of corporate experience in technology consulting and program/project management, has been a volunteer observer for the UAC for 8 years, holds a Level 3 avalanche certification, and has worked with the local



Utah outdoor community for the past 10 years. Chad is active in the UT outdoor community and is an avid backcountry skier, ski mountaineering racer, ultrarunner, and mountain biker. Chad and his wife Emily have been organizing the Wasatch Powder Keg ski mountaineering race for 10 years and he is a founding member of Utah Ski Mountaineering a local nonprofit geared at growing the sport of ski mountaineering and organizing races. Chad has been on the board of the US Ski Mountaineering Association the past 6 years and has acted as coach of the US National Ski Mountaineering Team at the Ski Mountaineering World Championships since 2013.

Paul Diegel moves into Special Projects Director Role

Paul Diegel has transitioned from Executive Director of



the non-profit Utah Avalanche Center (formerly Friends of the Utah Avalanche Center) to focus on the Know Before You Go (KBYG) avalanche awareness program. Paul joined the UAC in 2001 as a volunteer and became the Executive Director in 2007. Paul restructured the FUAC, using his prior business experience and engineering and business education to build on the past success of the organization. Since Paul began, backcountry activity in Utah has grown by at least 8x and technology and social media have transformed the way we work and communicate. Under Paul's leadership and partnership with Forest Service UAC Directors Bruce Tremper and Mark Staples, the UAC team developed technology, marketing, finance, operations, communications, and strategy skills to keep up with this growth, increasing avalanche awareness and education and contributing to the declining yearly fatality rate both in Utah and across North America. Non-profit sources now provide 2/3 of the funding required to run state-wide avalanche operations.



The KBYG awareness program has become the worldwide standard for creating awareness of avalanche hazards and providing a pathway to education. Paul's new focus will be to continue developing new awareness and educational products to help people stay on top of the snow. As he eases into retirement, you'll likely catch him out in the mountains a bit more.

Meet the Forecaster

Mark Staples

A Q&A with Mark Staples. Mark is the Director of the US Forest Service Utah Avalanche Center and responsible for mountain avalanche and weather forecasting for the state of Utah.

What is your personal background?

- I grew up in a rural county in Virginia where I would roam free through the forest all summer. I went to the University of Virginia to study Civil Engineering, moved to Colorado, back to Virginia, then Montana and finally Utah.



How did you get into avalanche forecasting?

- The first time I dug a snowpit, I became fascinated with snow and avalanches and knew I wanted to be an avalanche forecaster. It seems cliché, but I just knew it. I became a professional ski patroller at Big Sky, got a Masters degree in engineering studying snow and avalanches, got a job at the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center, and finally moved to Utah to work at the UAC. Since then my fascination with snow hasn't ended and my love for the job has only deepened.

How did you start working at the UAC?

- It was the opportunity of a lifetime. After forecasting in Montana and working on national projects with other avalanche centers, I was looking for a way to apply my knowledge and skills on a larger scale. The UAC offered me a chance to do that with a huge population center and a great community of engaged backcountry users.

What was your greatest learning moment about avalanches and what was it?

- It's hard to say because I learn something everyday about both snow and how we make decisions as humans. If I had to pick one event, it would be getting caught in a 4-6 foot deep avalanche on April 1st that broke on depth hoar from back in December. I learned to change my time scale for assessing stability. Sometimes stability can change day-to-day. Other times you have to view entire season through a different lens and potentially waiting for another season to ride certain lines. I also learned the value of a good partner.

What would you tell a 25 year old version of yourself?

- I'd say the same thing someone once told me. When you're in the mountains doing anything, don't expect to be successful with your objectives more than half the time. Count on turning back at least 50% of the time. This changes how you view your objectives and probably saved my life.

What's one piece of advice you have about avalanches?

- Play a mind game with yourself at every slope. Assume the worst happens and you're talking with a friend or loved one who says "so, let me get this straight....." If you have a good set of reasons to ride it, then you're probably ok. Force yourself to answer that question every time.

What do you like doing besides playing in the snow?

- Exploring wild places. Mostly rock climbing, but any sport like running, biking, fishing, hiking that takes me into places where I feel small.

Tech Tips

Pre Season Tune-Up

Avalanches never happen when we're expecting them, so it's worth spending a few minutes this fall making sure our gear will work when our lives depend on it.

- Make sure your avalanche transceiver is a modern digital model with three antennas. Ideally it is less than 5 years old. Would you trust your life with a 5 year old smartphone?
- Make sure you have fresh batteries. Check the battery terminals for corrosion. Most transceivers need regular Alkaline batteries. Rechargeable or Lithium batteries will not allow the beacon to work properly.
- Do a quick check of your probe and shovel. I like cleaning the moveable parts with a little bit of silicone based lubricant.
- Inflate your air bag backpack. If it has a compressed gas, cylinder, don't hesitate to use it and start the season with a freshly filled canister. If battery powered, test the pack and make sure the batteries are fully charged.

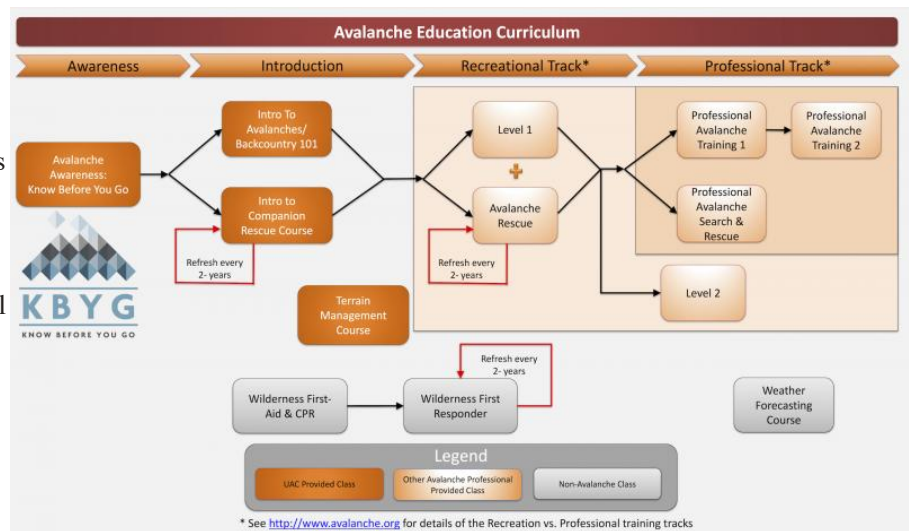
Take time to practice using your gear this fall and later when there's snow on the ground. Consider taking a short rescue class for the first time or as a refresher. Better yet, get your partners to take a class. Go to <https://utahavalanchecenter.org/education> for a list of available classes.

Education

Education Updates

You may have heard about the new [American Avalanche Association](#) Recreation vs. Professional Education Track. Do these changes have you confused? The UAC has incorporated the new guidelines into our education curriculum which will be rolled out onto the new UAC Education webpage soon.

The foundational classes have not changed. These consist of the UAC offered classes including [Know Before You Go](#), Backcountry 101, Intro to Companion Rescue, and Terrain Management.



After you have developed your foundation, you are ready to enter the AAA curriculum. This starts with a full day Avalanche Rescue class and a 2-3 day Level 1 class. Avalanche Rescue will build on the skills you learned in Intro to Companion Rescue and Level 1 is your first step into really digging into snow and developing backcountry safety skills.

After your Level 1, you have a choice to make. If you think a snow safety job is in your future, you should head to the newly-formed Professional Avalanche Education track where you'll learn more about snow science, critical decision-making, weather forecasting and effects, protecting groups and infrastructure, stability assessment, communication, documentation, and public interaction. If you are in the backcountry for recreation but aspire to travel to unfamiliar areas and snow and weather patterns, don't have access to a local forecast center to summarize multiple factors into a concise advisory, or just want to geek out on the science and really be prepared for complex conditions, the Recreational Track Level 2 is your next step.

As with any education, it does not end with just taking a class, refreshing your skills on a regular basis is the cornerstone to your education. Refresh your rescue courses just like you would your first aid courses (you have taken a first aid class, correct?). There are several good books on avalanche safety, with [Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain](#) and [Snow Sense](#) being a couple of the staples. Attending the annual [Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop](#) provides professional-level continuing education at a bargain price. Getting out with other trained and experienced users, paying attention to the terrain, snow, and weather, and talking about what you see, helps pull the pieces together into effective habits. Checking your local advisory daily along with observations will help you understand where your local snowpack has been, where it is headed and what the pros are seeing and thinking.

For more information checkout: [UtahAvalancheCenter.org](#), [KBYG.org](#), and [Avalanche.org](#) and for a list of classes, see the UAC Education pages for [classes offered by the UAC](#) and [classes offered by other providers](#) in our region.

Giving Back to the UAC



Support the UAC By Shopping At Smith's

Remember the adage, “There’s no such thing as a free lunch”? Well, as a non-profit we know that all too well. We depend on grants, industry support, and private donations to do the work necessary to Keep You On Top. Attending our annual fundraising parties and social events are a great way to contribute, but did you know there are numerous other ways you can give to the UAC with no extra effort on your part?

Here’s an easy one ...

Do you shop at Smith’s? If so, then all you have to do is link your Smith’s Rewards card to the UAC and voila! Smith’s gives us a percentage of what you spend. Win win, right? Who knew that buying milk and eggs could help spread the avalanche gospel?!

[Click here and sign into your Smith's Rewards account to link your Smith's Rewards card to the UAC.](#)

[Click here to learn about other ways to give.](#)



The Details

Upcoming Events

- [Boondockers 14](#)
 - Saturday, Oct. 21 | 6:00 PM | The Depot
 - [10th Annual Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop \(Motorized User Clinic\)](#)
 - Saturday, Nov. 4 | 8:00 - 9:40 AM | Snowbird
 - [10th Annual Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop \(Open Session\)](#)
 - Saturday, Nov. 4 | 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Snowbird
 - [Live PC Give PC Fundraiser](#)
 - Friday, Nov. 10 | All Day
 - **Ogden Fundraising Party**
 - Thursday, Nov 30 | 6:00- 9:00 PM
 - **Logan Fundraising Party**
 - Thursday, Dec 7 | 6:00 - 9:00 PM
-

Upcoming Classes

[Know Before You Go Free Avalanche Talks](#)

- Milo Sports, Salt Lake City | Thursday, Nov 9
- [Utah State University, Logan | Wednesday, Nov 29 | 7:00 PM](#)
- Milo Sports, Orem | Thursday, Nov 16
- REI, Salt Lake City | Wednesday, Nov 30 | 6:30 PM
- REI, Salt Lake City | Wednesday, Nov 29 | 6:30 PM
- REI, Salt Lake City | Monday, Dec 11 | 6:30 PM
- REI, Sandy | Tuesday, Dec 19 | 6:30 PM

[Snowshoe 101 Class](#)

- Thursday, Nov 30 | 6:00 PM | Brighton Fire Station
- Saturday, Dec 2 | All Day | Brighton

[Backcountry 101 Class](#)

- Thursday, Dec 7 | 6:00 PM | Red Butte Garden
- Saturday, Dec 9 | All Day | Brighton Resort

Companion Rescue Class

- Fri, Dec 8

[Backcountry 101 Class](#)

- Thursday, Dec 14 | 6:00 PM | Red Butte Garden
- Saturday, Dec 16 | All Day | Solitude Resort

Companion Rescue Class

- Friday, Dec 15

Motorized 101 Class

- Wednesday, Dec 27 | Thousand Springs Ranch
- Friday, Dec 29 | Thousand Springs Ranch

Visit the [UAC Class Page](#) for a full list of classes included those offered in 2018.

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www.utahavalanchecenter.org



The Utah Avalanche Center is a cooperative effort between the Forest Service Utah Avalanche Center and the non-profit Utah Avalanche Center

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