



Happy Holidays!

From all of us at the Utah Avalanche Center

December 2017

What's New

Know Before You Go

If you have not seen the UAC's latest educational video, [To Hell in a Heartbeat](#), it is a must see reenactment of a near-miraculous avalanche rescue near Little Water Peak on the Millcreek ridgeline. The video puts you in the middle of a rescue and conveys some of the chaos and anguish of having a buried partner. The video was released on November 21st and has more than 2 million views!

Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop Recap

The 10th Annual USAW was a great success with a record number of attendees - almost 900! Despite the higher than expected attendance and slightly cramped quarters, participants left the weekend feeling energized by new knowledge and insight into the world of avalanches. We want to say thank you to all the sponsors, presenters and attendees for contributing their time and expertise and to everyone who filled out the post-workshop survey: this information will help us improve USAW. Responses to our post-event survey indicated that attendees like the themes and the top 4 talks were:

1. Birthday Chutes Avalanche Recap
2. UDOT Highway Avalanche Safety Program
3. Where's Your Partner?
4. Winter Review 2016-2017

Save the date for USAW 2018 on November 03.



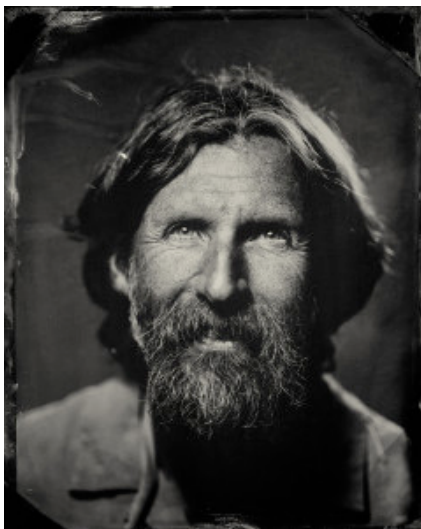
End of Year Donation Request

2018 is almost here. Please consider making an end of year donation to the Utah Avalanche Center. The UAC is a 501(c)(3) so all donations are fully tax deductible. A little donation goes a long way.

- \$25 helps save a life by supporting the UAC's services
- \$50 pays for UAC website hosting for 1 day during the forecast season
- \$100 pays for a Know Before You Go lecture at a local school
- \$250 covers the cost of 1 avalanche forecast
- \$500 adopts a trail head "Are You Beeping" sign with your name on it (3 year commitment required)

Meet the Forecaster

Drew Hardesty



What is your personal background?

I grew up in the hills and horse country of Kentucky. I accepted a Navy ROTC scholarship to the University of Colorado in Boulder with the plan to get a degree in political philosophy, go to flight school, retire from the US Navy and enter politics. Something happened on the way to realizing that ideal – powder skiing and alpine climbing. Still – after college – I accepted a commission in the US Navy and worked as an intelligence officer, often with a team of 6-10 "*specialists*", we'll call them – and travelled from Japan to Singapore, Bahrain to Egypt, Jordan to Thailand. Most of the conflicts at that time centered around Iraq and Somalia. Annual Leave from the military found me skiing in Hokkaido and climbing in Thailand. I remember in 1989 or 1990 – my team and I were on an aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean and were having a conversation with a career officer, telling him I was getting out of the military and about my dreams for the future. He was exasperated – "What!? You're getting out? You've got a great job! Career! See the world! You've lost your mind. – look at you....reading some magazine that no

one's ever heard of – What are you thinking?" I laugh now thinking back to that story. I was reading *Rock and Ice*.

How did you start working at the UAC?

For me – the art of forecasting... it was like finding that other person out there with whom you will spend the rest of your life – it was like, "Oh, there you are."

In the fall of 1999, I applied for an opening at the Utah Avalanche Center; meeting with Bruce Tremper, Evelyn Lees, Tom Kimbrough, and the late Seth Shaw. The job was offered to someone else. As luck would have it, a position opened at the UAC office in Logan, and I quickly snapped it up. The individual offered the SLC job only lasted a year before moving on to California and I transferred to SLC the following year. In retrospect, I'm grateful for the opportunity to have cut my teeth out of the limelight of the high-visibility Wasatch Range and in the more low-key Cache Valley. It added more "breadth" of knowledge with yet another piece of topography and climate to the SLC office.

How has the science of avalanche forecasting changed over the years?

In regards to the forecast/advisory product itself, I feel that we've advanced in leaps and bounds over the years in no small part due to technology. When I began forecasting, we recorded the advisory on a multi-channel phone line called the InterAlia. You had to record the advisory before too many people called the hotline (364-1581 anyone?) or else you – as the forecaster recording the advisory – were locked out. I laugh just thinking of it now, particularly in contrast to the photos, videos, Instagram images, Twitter updates and so on today – it's enough to make your head spin. To be sure it's one thing to talk about an avalanche being triggered on Gobbler's Knob, it's something else to have an image, much less a video of the thing. We came to realize at the UAC that we didn't have an avalanche problem, we had a marketing problem – and we continue to maximize and build upon our mainstream and social media channels in this fast-paced 24-hour a day media world.

What changes have you noticed in the backcountry in the Wasatch? What about other areas in the west?

The backcountry's no secret anymore. By numbers crunched by SIA (Snowsports Industries of America), there were over 5 million who considered themselves "backcountry travelers" last year. Sometimes I feel like all 5 million of them can be in Grizzly Gulch or on the Cardiac Ridge. And like anything, when there's a finite resource and a growing population, tensions flare and public safety can be compromised.

Recently you've been credited with starting a dialogue on backcountry "ethics." What does this mean, and why is this topic coming up now?

In regards to backcountry ethics, my feeling is that we – as backcountry ambassadors – should look *forward* to shape and define a culture of social stewardship; where "freedom" in the bc is tempered by "responsibility". The Backcountry Social Contract draws upon the philosophy of 17th century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes who argued that through a social contract – we are in fact **more free** – we being bc parties, the cars traveling up the open roads, towns and municipalities – **that we are free from harm**. These ideals – stewardship, social responsibility – are what we should aspire toward. The dirty underbelly, of course, is that should we not embrace these ideals, it then becomes more of an access and liability issue. Backcountry closures, backcountry permit systems and personal liability in the form of negligent homicide – these are what lie down the road if we aren't pro-active. Just ask the folks at Rogers Pass and Kachina Peaks. Just ask the snowboarder in Missoula Montana.

In this way, I've presented on this Backcountry Social Contract in numerous venues and publications with distribution in the works for DOT avalanche programs, avalanche forecast centers, avalanche education

providers and so on. A mock-up of my Backcountry Rider's Responsibility Code is below, built on the concepts of Knowledge, Awareness, and Wisdom.

**If there is one recommendation you could make to a person new to the backcountry- what would it be?
What about a veteran tourer?**

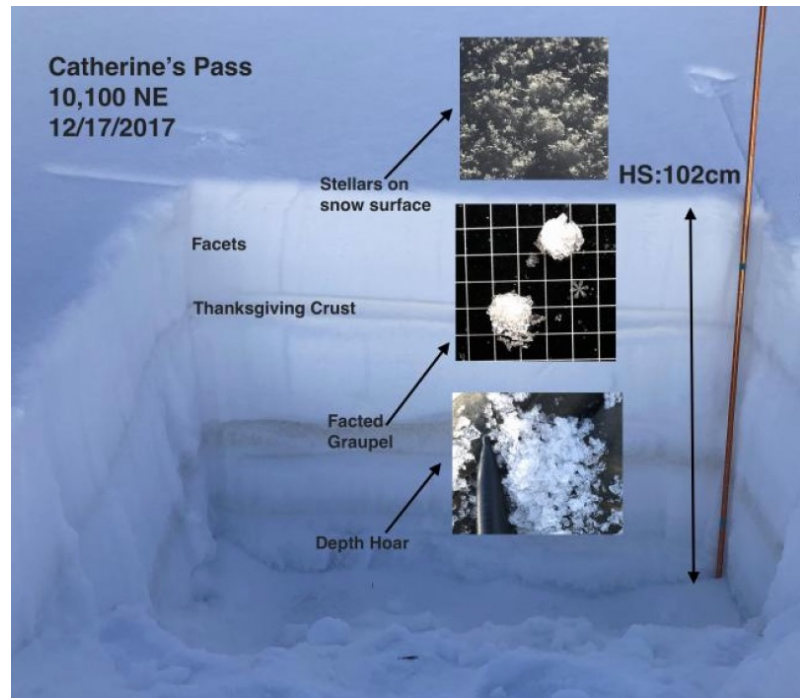
To the veteran, I'd encourage them to welcome the new folks and point out what it's like to be in the Wasatch backcountry community – what it means to be a part of the bc community (see Backcountry Social Contract, above). To the rookie, I'd encourage them to tap in to the UAC advisory and other products so they can be armed with info to make good decisions and smart choices in the mountains.

Tech Tips

Dangers of a Thin Snowpack

Ever wonder what the impact of a thin snow pack has on avalanche danger? A thin snowpack may seem forgiving, but experience tells us otherwise. Snow has a nasty habit of recrystallizing (faceting) in a high temperature gradient environment. That is, when the snow pack is thin and there is a big temperature difference between the top and bottom of the snow pack. Faceted, sugary snow is fragile and won't support much load placed on top of it. This season we had several small storms since October with long periods of cold, dry weather in between, the exact conditions that has led our current snowpack to become highly faceted. New snow will fall onto this very unstable base, creating unpredictable and dangerous avalanche conditions. You can expect these avalanches to be large, deadly, and unmanageable. Regardless of how much safety gear you carry, trauma kills roughly 25% of all avalanche victims and in a shallow snowpack, terrain features like sharp rocks, trees, and cliff bands amplify these consequences.

The bottom line: Even though it is late December, we have a thin, weak snowpack that will require travelers to keep a high guard and exercise extreme caution. For more information on faceted snow packs, [see this great blog post by Eric Trenbeath](#).



Get Up to Date UAC Notifications

Are you staying up to date with avalanche conditions as they change? You can get important updates from the UAC via text message directly to your phone with two simple steps:

1. Text 40404
2. In the message section, type "Follow uacwasatch"

That's it! As the UAC posts changing conditions, you will get notified.

Want to see photos from what is going on in the backcountry on Instagram? Search **#utavy** for updates.

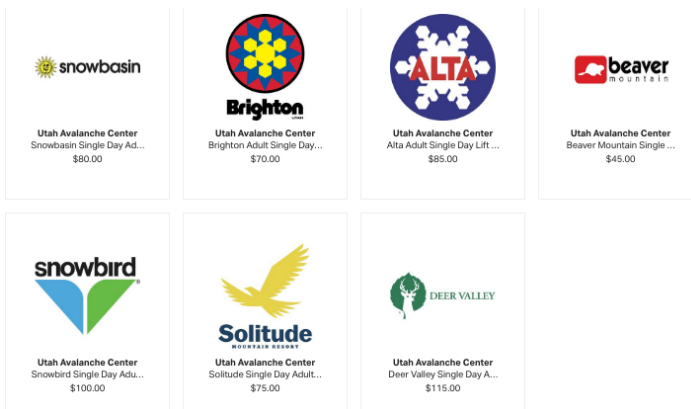
Giving Back to the UAC

Do Your Holiday Shopping and Support the UAC

'Tis the season of giving! Thank you so much for your continued support of our efforts to keep people safe in the backcountry. Whether you've attended the annual Black Diamond Party or taken one of our avalanche classes, you've helped save lives. There's another easy way to support the UAC this holiday season. When you shop for gifts at smile.amazon.com, they generously give back a portion of your purchase to us.

Shop at smile.amazon.com for all your holiday presents and you'll be continuing to support avalanche awareness and education in Utah.

How does it work? On your first visit to AmazonSmile, you'll need to select **Utah Avalanche Center** as your choice to receive donations from your eligible purchases. After that, just go to smile.amazon.com and shop, shop, shop!



Looking for a great stocking stuffer for Christmas? Discount lift tickets for Alta, Snowbird, Brighton, Solitude, Deer Valley, Snowbasin, Powder Mountain and Beaver Mountain are now available, donated by the resorts to benefit the Utah Avalanche Center. [Details and order information here.](#) These make a great holiday gift and all proceeds go towards paying for avalanche forecasting and education!

Discount tickets for Park City Resort are available

from [PC Sports](https://www.pcsports.com) on Main Street of Park City.

Education

Backcountry 101 Class Details

Skiing and snowboarding in the backcountry is safer and more fun when you understand avalanches and know when to go big and when to dial it back. Don't be that partner who can't make informed decisions or be counted on during a rescue. Spend an evening in the classroom and a day on the snow with the pros to learn how to get out in the backcountry, have fun and come home ready to do it again. Each one of our Backcountry 101 courses is led by a UAC avalanche forecaster. Our instructor team is made up of local guides, ski patrollers, and professional alpine riders with years of experience teaching avalanche education.



If you have never taken an avalanche class or are new to the backcountry, consider one of the UAC's Backcountry 101 classes. These classes are available to snowshoers, snowmobilers, snowbikers, skiers, and splitboarders.

The Details

Upcoming Events

[Aspen Extreme at Brewvies Cinema Pub](#): Wednesday, Jan. 17 | 7:00 p.m.

Where were you in the 80's? Pretty much where you were now, but with less grey hair (or maybe just more hair)? Looking forward to grade school? A distant dream? Well, for one night we're bringing it back. Long narrow skis, mule kicks, and no weekend Little Cottonwood traffic. Join us for [Aspen Extreme](#) at [Brewvies](#) as a Utah Avalanche Center fundraiser. If you saw it when it came out, you know you want to see it again. If you didn't, you owe it to yourself and will get credit for it in American History 101. There will be an award for the best one-piece suit. And snowboarders will be allowed (unlike ski resorts in the 80's)!

Upcoming Classes

[Motorized Avalanche 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Wednesday, Dec. 27 | TBD | Thousand Peaks Ranch

Thursday, Dec. 28 | TBD | Thousand Peaks Ranch

[Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class for Snowshoers](#)

Thursday, Jan 4 | 5:30 p.m. | REI Mill Creek

Saturday, Jan 6 | 8:00 a.m. | Brighton Fire Station

[Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Thursday, Jan. 4 | 6:00 p.m. | Red Butte Gardens

Saturday, Jan. 6 | 8:00 a.m. | Solitude Resort

[Motorized Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Thursday, Jan. 4 | 6:00 p.m. | Logan Public Library

Saturday, Jan. 6 | 8:00 a.m. | Logan - exact location TBD

[Companion Rescue Fundamentals](#)

Friday, Jan. 5 | 5:30 p.m. | Brighton Resort

[Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Thursday, Jan. 11 | 6:00 p.m. | Red Butte Gardens

Saturday, Jan. 13 | 8:00 a.m. | Brighton Resort

[Motorized Avalanche 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Thursday, Jan. 11 | 6:00 p.m. | Red Butte Gardens

Saturday, Jan. 13 | 8:00 a.m. | Thousand Peaks Ranch

[Companion Rescue Fundamentals](#)

Friday, Jan. 12 | 5:30 p.m. | Brighton Resort

[Women's Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Thursday, Jan. 18 | 6:00 p.m. | Red Butte Gardens

Saturday, Jan. 20 | 8:00 a.m. | Solitude Resort

[Motorized Avalanche 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Friday, Jan. 19 | 6:00 p.m. | Skyline Region - exact location TBD

Saturday, Jan. 20 | 8:00 a.m. | Skyline Region - exact location TBD

[Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Thursday, Jan. 25 | 6:00 p.m. | Logan Forest Service Ranger Station

Saturday, Jan. 27 | 8:00 a.m. | TBD

[Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Thursday, Feb. 1 | 6:00 p.m. | Red Butte Gardens

Saturday, Feb. 3 | 8:00 a.m. | Solitude Resort

[Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Friday, Feb. 2 | 6:00 p.m. | Moab - Grand Country Emergency Ops Center

Saturday, Feb. 3 | 9:00 a.m. | Moab - Geyser Pass Trailhead

[Motorized Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Friday, Feb. 9 | 6:00 p.m. | Moab - Grand Country Emergency Ops Center

Saturday, Feb. 10 | 9:00 a.m. | Moab - exact location TBD

[Motorized Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class](#)

Thursday, Feb. 15 | TBD | Thousand Peaks Ranch

Saturday, Feb. 17 | TBD | Thousand Peaks Ranch

[Backcountry 101 Avalanche Class for Snowshoers](#)

Thursday, Mar. 8 | 6:00 p.m. | REI Mill Creek

Saturday, Mar. 10 | 8:00 a.m. | Brighton Fire Station

Visit the [UAC page](#) to see a full list of classes by the UAC and by other providers

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