

The Powder Cloud



Newsletter of the Utah Avalanche Center

December 2020

Support the UAC

What's New



Trailhead Avalanche Awareness Program

What's that bright red tent about? With more and more riders heading into the backcountry, there is an increasing number of users who may not be familiar with avalanche risks or the services the UAC provides. The UAC hopes to mitigate some of that risk by getting critical information to new users before they even hit the trail. Our new Trailhead Avalanche Awareness Program offers free avalanche awareness information, basic rescue practice, avalanche forecast interpretation, and resources available for further education. We'll be at popular trailheads across the state throughout the winter.

Our staff will offer:

- In-person updates about current avalanche conditions
- An understanding of avalanche rescue equipment and how to use it
- Information about traveling safely in and around avalanche terrain
- Information about opportunities to increase avalanche safety education
- Free transceiver batteries and informational handouts

The UAC is working with local partners such as ski resorts, Utah Snowmobile Association, Wasatch Backcountry Alliance, Black Diamond, Backcountry, Ortovox, Honey Stinger, Skratch Labs, Blue Ice, The North Face, and local retailers to enhance our presence and connections to different user groups. Potential high-use trailheads include Noblett's and Soapstone Basin in the Uintas, Spruce's, Grizzly Gulch and White Pine in the central Wasatch, and Beaver Creek and Monte Cristo in the northern Wasatch. In future years, we plan to expand to trailheads in the Skyline and Moab regions as well as in other highly trafficked areas.

Meet the Staff

Trent Meisenheimer

What is your personal background?

I grew up in SLC and started skiing at Alta when I was two. I switched to the dark side when I was 12 and started snowboarding and switched to Brighton to jib rails and hit jumps. My dad bought me a split board when I was 15 and started taking me into the backcountry; at first, I was not too fond of it - it didn't make sense; why would you spend hours walking uphill to take a 30 second run downhill.



How did you get into avalanche forecasting?

I started submitting UAC backcountry observations and took my first avalanche class with the Canadian Avalanche Association in 2007. I started teaching Level 1 courses and doing KBYG talks with Craig Gordon, and reading everything I could get my hands on; accident reports, research papers, books, etc. I went back to Canada in 2010 to complete my CAA Level Two professional operators course and became a professional member of the CAA.

How did you start working at the UAC?

After completing my level two class (which took a month), I called Bruce Tremper and asked for a forecasting job, not understanding how forecast jobs even worked. He told me "good luck, you're on the list with every other BC skier in the world" and referred me to Craig Gordon to help with the KBYG program. From there, I began giving 50-100 talks a year for the UAC and started getting on the snow with Craig. Soon after, I became Craig's field partner, and we began creating what we called "Avalanche TV" using a GoPro camera. I spent the next four years helping Craig in the Uintas and making educational videos for the UAC. Paul Diegel (former ED of the UAC) was instrumental in helping me grow within the UAC as he would fundraise for and organize the videos we produced. In 2015, I was tasked with re-creating the KBYG video. When Mark Staples took over the director position when Bruce Tremper retired I was offered a position in the SLC office in 2016/2017.

What was your greatest learning moment about avalanches?

I think my greatest learning moment was remotely triggering an avalanche in the Uintas from over 1,000' away. We collapsed the slope and it sounded like a bomb went off. Then the crack extended from the tip of my board and the whole slope avalanched 6-10' deep and over 1,000' wide. That's when it all clicked... That's how avalanches work!



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

Be patient - the mountains are not going anywhere; you have many years to ride the lines you want. Get better with your inclinometer and know what 30° slopes look like.

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

Never trust faceted snow... If there are faceted grains in the snowpack, it's time to dial it back and wait for them to go away. It's not worth playing the game with such an unpredictable outcome. I choose to ride slopes less than 30° in steepness or slopes that do not have weak faceted snow. I never mess with slabs over weak faceted snow. It comes back to being patient in the mountains.

What do you like doing besides playing in the snow?

I like to climb, bike, and whitewater kayak. I also really like math. I have a wonderful wife, Libbey, and two dogs, and I love spending time with them doing whatever we want to do. With Covid, it's mostly cooking dinner and going on trail runs.

Education

UAC Podcast

Did you know that the Utah Avalanche Center hosts a podcast? Hosted by UAC forecaster Drew Hardesty and produced by KUER's Benjamin Bombard, the podcast is all things avalanche: accident reports, the art of forecasting, decision-making, and more. You'll find lively and spirited conversations with mountain guides, ski patrollers, avalanche educators, meteorologists, economists, even marketing experts. This is a great way to get more avalanche-related content to supplement your life-long avalanche education. Most shows last anywhere from 40-60 minutes. For fun, you'll also find a few blog-casts thrown in for additional content. Blog-casts are readings of short essays on risk and the avalanche phenomenon. We think you'll enjoy them all.



31 episodes

The podcast that helps keep you on top of the snow rather than buried beneath it.

The UAC podcast is now in its fourth season with over 30 episodes and 250,000 downloads.

You can find the Utah Avalanche Center podcast or wherever you get your favorite podcasts.

[We kick off Season 4 with a conversation with American Avalanche Institute owner Sarah Carpenter.](#) She talks about the gift of education and why a systematic approach can help us navigate through the complex and sometimes chaotic landscape of the backcountry. [The second episode is a conversation on risk, public safety messaging, and resilience](#) with not an avy pro, but with Utah state epidemiologist Dr. Angela Dunn. Dr. Dunn has been at the forefront with the fight against Covid-19 in Utah and knows a bit about the bottom line, vulnerability, and exposure. Tune in!

Tech Tips



Avalanche and Forecasting Surveys

This season the UAC has implemented two voluntary surveys. One is emailed to anyone who triggers an avalanche and submits an observation about it. The observation documents objective information like the type of avalanche, the elevation, the aspect, the type of trigger, etc. The goal of the avalanche survey is to capture some subjective information that describes the role the forecast played in events leading up to triggering the slide.

The second survey will occur at different times during the season asking participants about a specific forecast. Initially we will use archived forecasts with the goal of surveying people about a "live" forecast in the near future. There are two goals for this survey. The first is to give our forecasters real-time data and feedback on what people

are remembering from the forecast. The second goal is to provide an educational tool. Reading a forecast, answering questions about it, and then receiving feedback on the answers could be a powerful way for new users to gain proficiency.

If you see either of these surveys, please consider responding. Your participation will help us improve our avalanche forecasts. Look for a presentation of results at the Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop as well in future newsletters.

Giving Back to the UAC



Supporting the UAC

We would like to send a huge THANK YOU to everyone who has supported our fundraising efforts. With winter really just starting to pick up, we have a busy and uncertain season ahead of us and we hope you'll consider [making a donation](#) before December 31 if you haven't done so already. The Utah Avalanche Center is a collaboration between the US Forest Service and our nonprofit. Two-thirds of the funding to operate the UAC is raised by the nonprofit which enables us to offer free and affordable avalanche forecasting, education, and awareness.

Do you or a loved one rely on your local avalanche forecast to keep you safe in the backcountry? Do you read the forecast emails or call the dawn patrol hotline? Have you taken a class, attended a free Know Before You Go (KBYG) presentation, or completed any of the free KBYG eLearning courses? How about watching for our regular updates and videos on social media or using our mobile app? Donations from individuals like you and businesses of all sizes contribute to the success of all of these services. As we all navigate the impacts of COVID-19 together we are especially grateful for how you are supporting one another, supporting the UAC, and taking care of yourselves. We hope safely spending time in the backcountry is part of your self care routine. You can also get a tax benefit by supporting the UAC's year-end campaign, and as part of the CARES Act you should be able to deduct \$300 in charitable donations even if you do not itemize deductions on your taxes. Contact your tax or financial advisor for more information.

The Details

Upcoming Classes

- [2 Jan: Avalanche Rescue Clinic](#)
- [4 & 6 Jan: Backcountry 101](#)
- [11 & 12 Jan: Backcountry 101](#)
- [13 Jan: Avalanche Rescue Clinic](#)
- [14 & 15 Jan: Backcountry 101](#)
- [19 & 21 Jan: Youth Backcountry 101](#)
- [28 & 29 Jan: Women's Backcountry 101](#)
- [1 & 2 Feb: Splitboard Backcountry 101](#)
- [3 Feb: Avalanche Rescue Clinic](#)
- [4 & 5 Feb: Snowshoe Backcountry 101](#)
- [11 & 12 Feb: Backcountry 101](#)

[More Class Info](#)

Upcoming Events

- No upcoming events

[More Event Info](#)

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