



## The Powder Cloud

### December 2024



### Snowpack Update

Most of the mountain ranges within the coverage zone of Utah Avalanche Center are hovering around 70% of the average for snow water equivalent, and it has been a slow start compared to the last two seasons. Total snow depths throughout the state are fifteen to thirty inches. The one outlier is the Moab region, which had a wet November and is over 100% of normal.

With a relatively thin snowpack and extended clear weather during the early part of December, the mountains of Utah formed a series of weak faceted layers that are just starting to be covered with new and wind-drifted snow. This past weekend was the first test of our weak snowpack and we have had **seventeen backcountry avalanches** reported to the Utah Avalanche Center throughout the state since Saturday, December 14th. Riders are getting into the backcountry and making the most of the thin conditions. To date, we've had no major accidents or close calls.

[Find the Forecast](#)

## Education Corner

The **17th Annual Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop** was December 7th. The evening was full of phenomenal talks, from risk management to first aid. Here are a couple of highlights from the workshop:



## **Ian McCammon and Kelly McNeil: Risk Management Trends in US Backcountry**

Ian McCammon and Kelly McNeil dive into how [backcountry travel and risk management](#) have changed over the last 50 years. They updated the [Safety Messages](#) for backcountry usage.

### **1. Carry Rescue Gear**

*Conduct gear and transceiver checks at the trailhead and carry spare rescue equipment*

### **2. Travel with a Partner**

*If you travel alone, choose safe terrain, let someone know your plan, and wear a transceiver*

### **3. Understand the Forecast**

*Have a plan for the day, and don't go into terrain you "closed" for the day, many avalanche victims were lured onto slopes they planned to avoid*

### **4. Recognize Avalanche Terrain**

*Bad terrain choices lead to bad injuries. Don't overlook terrain traps*

### **5. Expose One Person at a Time**

*Many trained victims failed to take this precaution*

### **6. Perform a Companion Rescue**

*Trauma is now about 50% of avalanche victim fatalities. Prepare for companion trauma by learning backcountry first aid*

[Read the Full Paper](#)



## McKinley Talty: Letting Our Guard Down

McKinley discusses the importance of checking in with your partners and having a discussion about the terrain you are entering. **In March 2024, fourteen people were caught in avalanches across Utah**, accounting for 40% of all catch-and-carry avalanches this season. McKinley uses this weather pattern as an excellent example of two mindset traps.

**Decision fatigue** is a real threat to backcountry recreationists as the season progresses. Research has shown that the quality of human decisions decreases after making a lot of decisions in a short timeframe.

Another mindset trap is being **overly aggressive when faced with frustration**. In poker, this is known as Tilt. When frustrated emotions interfere, we tend to make decisions that we know are bad to come out ahead of the rest.

What's the best way to beat these heuristic traps and remain safe in the backcountry? Developing a **system for your backcountry procedures** and sticking to it throughout the season will help catch small lapses in judgment that can go unnoticed in busy everyday life. To dive deeper into this topic, check out this [blog post](#) from last spring.

[Find the Full Blog Post](#)



## UAC Merch

Looking for the perfect gift? There's something for every backcountry enthusiast, from the [UAC Dad Hat](#) to the [UAC Skida Flat Brim](#) and the classic [UAC x Flylow Mesh-Back Cap](#).

[Get New Merch](#)

## Membership Update

Did you know you can support the Utah Avalanche Center by becoming a [member](#)? With membership levels ranging from just \$10 to \$100 per month, there's an option for everyone to join.

Spread the spirit of giving and become a [Utah Avalanche Center member today!](#)



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## Sponsorship Highlight: BCA

The Utah Avalanche Center is proud to have Backcountry Access (BCA) as a flagship sponsor! Each year BCA develops products for all types of riders to get into the backcountry and back home safely each day.

Check out some great products this season such as their new ultralight, versatile [Stash Pro UL Pack](#), or [BC Link Mini compact radio](#). Thank you to BCA for another great season of partnership!



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