



The Powder Cloud

Newsletter of the Utah Avalanche Center

Spring 2021

Support the UAC

Spring Campaign 2021



Thank You!

As a nonprofit organization, we rely on a variety of funding sources to operate. These include grants, fundraising events, classes, federal, state, and county support, and most importantly, donations from businesses and individuals (You!). Our recent spring campaign was nothing short of amazing. You helped us raise over \$138,000 to fund avalanche forecasting, awareness, and education programming. [Check out our thank you video.](#)

The success of the Spring Campaign allows us to meet the needs of the rapidly growing Utah backcountry community. Despite the below average snowfall this year, our education and awareness programs reached a record number of users and, as the population in Utah continues to grow, we expect no slow down in the demand for avalanche information. We are busy planning for next winter with more education opportunities and trailhead awareness events and we'll be ready to go with more in-person activities when state health officials give the green light.

It may be a cliché, but we really couldn't do what we do without your support! Thank you for supporting our mission and caring that everyone comes home safely at the end of the day.

2020-21 Season roundup:

- **Forecasts: 1,134 avalanche forecasts statewide**
- **Education: 60 classes - 1300 students**
- **Trailhead awareness events: 17 events - 1500 contacts**

Social Media

Beyond @utavy

Like most public information agencies, the UAC uses social media to help disseminate avalanche forecasting, education, and awareness information. Our main Instagram channel, @utavy, has over 68,000 followers! But did you know that our outlying regions have their own IG accounts? If you are venturing outside of the Central Wasatch, follow these accounts for updated, local avalanche information:



Logan: @utavy_logan

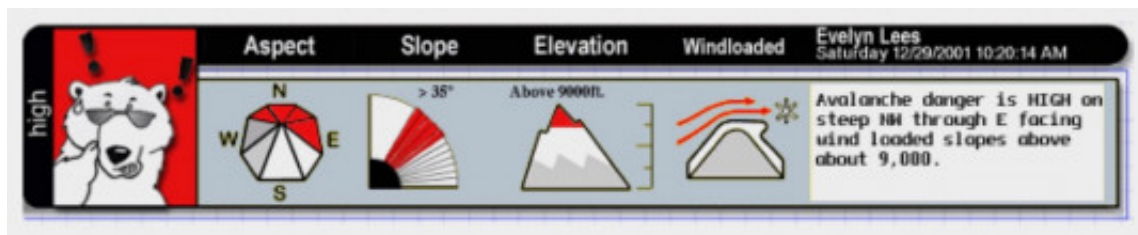
Moab: @utavy_moab

Skyline: @skyline_avalanche

Uintas: @utavy_uintas

Ogden: @utavy_ogden

History Highlight



Powder the Polar Bear

Leading up to the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Games the Utah Avalanche Center made some changes to the avalanche forecast. To handle the expected increase in demand for services, the center created a one-page, icon-based advisory. Complete with the "Powder the Polar Bear" danger rating and infographics showing aspect, elevation, slope angle, and avalanche problem, the successful, cutting-edge format was the first graphical avalanche forecast in the world. It also became the foundation for the current forecast product not only at the UAC but at many avalanche centers across the country.

Tech Tips



As we move into summer and pursue outdoor activities not on snow, it's time to start thinking about storing your avalanche rescue equipment. Here are a few quick tips to ensure your gear will be ready to go when the snow flies next season:

Avalanche transceiver -

- Remove batteries and check for corrosion (if present, clean with Q-tip and rubbing alcohol)
- Check for any damage that may have happened over the winter.
- Check the manufacturer's website for software updates

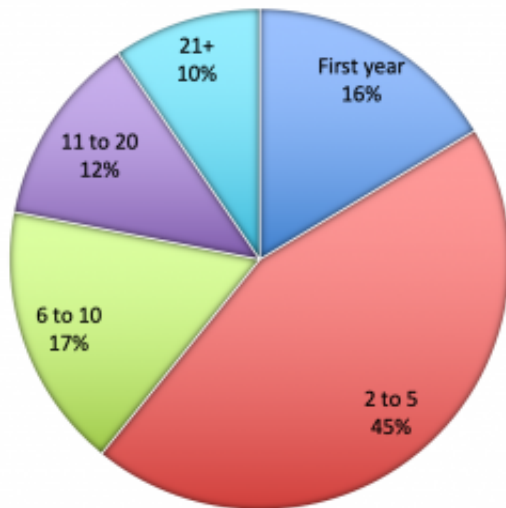
Avalanche probe and shovel -

- Deploy your probe and check for any wear or damage to the cable and clip. Probes are cheap to replace if necessary.
- Make sure your pop-pin on your shovel handle is intact and functional, wipe down your handle and blade.

Store your beacon, shovel, and probe together in a cool, dry place so they are ready to go when you head out for your first backcountry winter adventure.

Learning

Forecast Quiz: Years of Backcountry Experience



Avalanche Forecast Quizzes

This winter we did an experiment – we put quizzes in a handful of avalanche forecasts. Getting information, like in an avalanche forecast, and then being quizzed on what you just learned, is a good way to reinforce what you just learned and recognize what you may have missed. It's also useful for us to learn how well the message we intend to send is actually perceived and how we can improve our delivery. And throwing in a question that requires you to combine the forecast with some avalanche understanding to make a hypothetical decision and providing feedback seems like a good way to show how the pros think.

We asked which avalanche Red Flags you might expect to encounter that day, what the Danger Level was for several different elevations and aspects, what Avalanche Problems were in play, if you read some observations and got what you were looking for from the forecast, and how you use the forecast in your decision-making.

About 11% of those reading the forecast took the quiz. You left a bunch of great comments and ideas for improving the content and delivery of our forecasts. We also had some good email discussions with a few of you to explain and clarify our reasoning.

We did eight quizzes this winter based on the day's forecast. [Check this out](#) if you missed them and want to see an example. Getting feedback from our readers is incredibly important for us to continue to improve our forecasts. We want to make sure our message is clearly understood. Accurately describing the current conditions is paramount to our daily forecasts and this feedback process helps us understand what we are doing well and what we need to improve.

Thanks to all who participated. [Check out the blog for more info.](#)

Critic's corner - Books and movies for a rainy day



Touching the Void

Some say it's just a book about two guys climbing a mountain. That's true. But it's literally the most epic mountain survival story ever. The obstacles faced by Joe Simpson, the author, and his partner, Simon Yates, are unfathomable. The harsh reality of their situation in the remote mountains of Peru forces the reader to reflect on their own perception of challenge and choice. This is a story that will leave you in awe of the power of one's will to live. There's a movie as well worth watching after you've read the book.



The Barkley Marathons: The Race That Eats Its Young

For whatever reason, more and more people are finding their way into ultra athletics - races that test the limits of human endurance, both physically and mentally. Since the publication of Christopher McDougall's "Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen," participation in ultra marathons has nearly doubled. (Worthy read.) The unconventional race set in the Tennessee hills, masterminded by an equally quirky Lazarus Lake, has more unknowns than knowns but manages to attract elite athletes from all over the world. Thousands have tried but only 15 have actually finished the maniacal course. A fun and entertaining flick - it's always fun to watch people suffer from the comfort of your couch. :)

UAC Happenings



Though the season has barely ended, the UAC staff is hard at work planning for next fall and winter. We are expanding our awareness programs, adding more education classes, and moving into a new office space, complete with a donor-sponsored education center. This past year was challenging but the backcountry community's strong support for our mission inspires us to keep working hard so that everyone can have fun and stay safe in the backcountry.

Stay Connected

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