



DONATE NOW

March 2020

We would like to send our sincere thanks to all who donated to our year-end appeal, to our monthly donors, and to everyone who donated their time, money, and goods any time in 2019. Your support makes the UAC's work possible!

What's New

The Dugway

February 7. Charles Dickens' Birthday. This year the day proved infamous not for the author, but for the storm it delivered to much of northern Utah. Schools were canceled, businesses were closed and Little Cottonwood Canyon was closed for over 2 days. 21 avalanches hit Little Cottonwood Canyon in a 54 hour period, but Little Cottonwood Canyon was not the only road impacted. Logan Canyon was also closed for almost a full day during the storm.

If you've ever driven Highway 89 from Logan to Bear Lake you may have noticed the karst topography that dominates the scenery. Caves, cliffs, sinkholes, and springs abound in the limestone-filled canyon making it richly detailed and somewhat daunting looking. There are classic, steep, cliffed areas, large open hanging bowls, and many steep cutbanks that line the scenic byway. The road serves as the main access to Beaver Mountain and 4-5 major trailheads. It's a beautiful canyon in all seasons but does pose some threat of avalanche when there's snow on the ground.



Historically, Logan Canyon has seen some massive avalanches that traveled over 3000' vertical and covered the road with 10-20' of debris for great distances (1971). But compared to places like Little Cottonwood Canyon, Logan Canyon generally has a far smaller avalanche presence. The paths that affect the road are well known and they tend to run only under certain conditions - usually wet and warm storms.

The Dugway is a prominent man-made road cut that brings the highway through a complex area carved by the Logan River. The road travels for about ¼ mile under a large northwest to southwest-facing slope (6400' at the top) with little in the way of anchors to hold the snow in place. It is notorious for avalanching in January and/or February when we tend to get rain and/or warm temperatures.

On Friday, February 7 temperatures were forecasted to be very warm and had been for the week before. The low elevation snowpack had become unconsolidated and you'd posthole to the ground without skis on. It rained and/or snowed wet heavy snow that day and by early afternoon, the Dugway had had enough and began to avalanche. There were about 3-4 separate D2 (large enough to bury or kill a person) loose wet slides that came down within 30 minutes forcing the closure of the road.

The biggest challenge when Logan Canyon is hit by an avalanche is the public reaction. Many people get frustrated that they can't get home or, vice versa, up to recreate. Some people will drive through barriers and put themselves and others at risk. And a few will even walk to the avalanche to "check it out." In the past, we've had people drive right up to the debris and start shoveling(!) not knowing they were exposed to secondary slides.

The UAC works closely with UDOT in Logan Canyon to continually improve communication so that the public is well-informed and knows what to do in case of an avalanche. People are mostly ok with waiting, knowing that we are working hard to keep the canyon safe. On February 7, the hard-working UDOT Summit Shed crew were able to minimize the impact to the public and get the road open in just a few hours

Meet the Forecaster

Paige Pagnucco

Paige lives in Logan forecasting part-time for the UAC for the Logan and Ogden regions. In addition to forecasting, Paige helps the UAC with our grant writing, teaching avalanche classes, and leading summer education and awareness projects.

What is your personal background?

I grew up back east just north of New York City. I was a competitive horseback rider for most of my youth and only skied as a family activity once or twice a year. My parents learned to ski as adults so it was super fun for us to progress as a family. We frequented areas like Sugarbush, Glen Ellen, Mad River Glen, and Butternut where icy conditions were the norm. I began ski racing at Skidmore College and for 4 years competed (and had fun!) NCAA Division 2 all over New England. I completed my BA in Government and promptly moved to Utah "to ski for a year."

How did you get into avalanche forecasting?

I worked at Park City Mountain Resort as a pro patroller for 8 years where I was a team leader, route leader, and rescue dog handler. Early on I became very interested in the snowpack and snow science. I clearly remember the first giant avalanche I triggered - our snow safety director, Dewi Butler, had just lit into myself and Peter Gutowski for our lousy shot placement when the shots went off and the slope ripped out to the ground, 6-8' deep by a couple of hundred feet across. I was hooked. I loved early control mornings as well as teaching classes about the snow. I still consider myself a student



of forecasting as I am continually learning each year through my own experience as well as from my fellow (amazing) UAC forecasters.

How did you start working at the UAC?

I began working with the UAC in 2004 performing fundraising, outreach, and education in the Logan region. The program was just beginning to formalize in rural areas and there was a need for more public contact. Over the past 15 years, the program has become much more solidified in the community with support from both motorized and non-motorized recreationists, local businesses, as well as the snow and avalanche industry. My work has expanded to include forecasting, grant writing, program management, etc. Like all of the UAC team, I am happy to take on any task to further our mission.

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

Luckily for me, I have never been caught in an avalanche. One moment that stands out though occurred in January 2014 - a father and his two sons were riding near Logan Peak (without rescue gear during HIGH danger) when they unintentionally triggered a very large avalanche that ended up burying one of the sons. The father and his other son frantically searched the massive debris field for about 15 minutes before the dad had the sense to head to the bottom where he luckily saw the tips of his buried sons red-gloved fingers just barely showing through the snow. (The son had forgotten his gloves that day and had borrowed a pair of red ones from his dad.) Without shovels, they used their bare hands and sticks to dig and were able to revive him. The dad was so shaken by the experience that he called me numerous times to talk about what had happened. The lesson to me was that as an avalanche professional I must always be sure that my audience understands the danger rating and how it specifically relates to the terrain. I spend more time now discussing terrain management and safe travel protocols.



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

Don't try to do it all. Be the best you can be but if you make a mistake, learn from it and move on.

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

Avoidance is everything. If the danger dictates that a slope is unsafe then find somewhere that is safe. You are in the mountains by choice so make good choices. There are far more important things in life than skiing or riding a particular slope. ALWAYS be willing to adjust your plan.

What do you like doing besides playing in the snow?

I have three teenagers which might sound terrible but it's not. I'm incredibly lucky that they are all amazing adventure partners. Whether it's ice climbing, ski touring, or even ripping the groomers, my kids are always game to have fun. In the summer we are biking, hiking, climbing, or paddleboarding. Or maybe just doing nothing.

Avalanche Red Flags

The avalanche red flags are 5 easy-to-remember signs of unstable snow and the potential for avalanches. Watching for these simple clues is a crucial skill for traveling safely in avalanche terrain, and if you notice any of these red flags, you may have to adjust - or abandon - your intended travel plans for that day. As we approach spring, the red flags can get complicated as you may encounter all 5 red flags in a single day. What are the red flags?



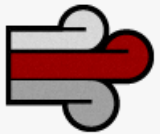
Recent Avalanches: Are you seeing avalanches? If so, are they occurring on similar aspects, elevations, and slope angles that you intend to travel on?



Cracking or Collapsing in Snowpack: These both are signs of unstable snow (strong snow on top of weak snow). Cracking and collapsing are basically avalanches, but aren't on slopes steep enough to slide.



Heavy Snowfall or Rain: Snowfall rates of 1" per hour or more or any rain on the snowpack is quickly adding load (weight) to the snowpack and creating the potential for avalanches.



Wind Drifted Snow: Wind can move snow 10x faster than snow falling from the sky. Pay attention to which aspects are wind-loaded, learn to recognize the signs of wind loaded slopes, and avoid these slopes.



Rapidly Rising Temperatures: Are you suddenly realizing how warm the day got? Are you sinking deeper into the snow above your boot tops? Are you seeing rollerballs? These are all signs of rapidly warming snow and that it is time to move to a shadier aspect or head back to the trailhead.

ISSW 2020 Abstract Submissions Wanted

The [ISSW abstract submission page](#) went live recently and will remain open until April 27. That means you've got some time to get your presentation ideas together, but you should get going on it soon. The conference is especially excited to hear from front-line workers, providing a great venue for you to share your experience and ideas with avalanche professionals from around the world.

If you have never, or rarely, presented in public before, ISSW is a great opportunity to broaden your horizons, with a friendly audience very interested in what you have to say. [This page](#) explains the process of submitting an abstract. And feel free to email us (issw2020@icsevents.com) if you're looking for assistance or have questions.

So get those thinking caps on and get working on an abstract! It's an experience that is well worth the effort. Here are the key dates you won't want to miss:

- April 27 – abstract submission deadline
- June 5 – review results released
- June 26 – presenting authors must be registered

- August 24 – full papers due
- Oct 4 – 9 – ISSW 2020, Fernie, BC

Tech Tips

Why should you submit an observation and how do you do it?

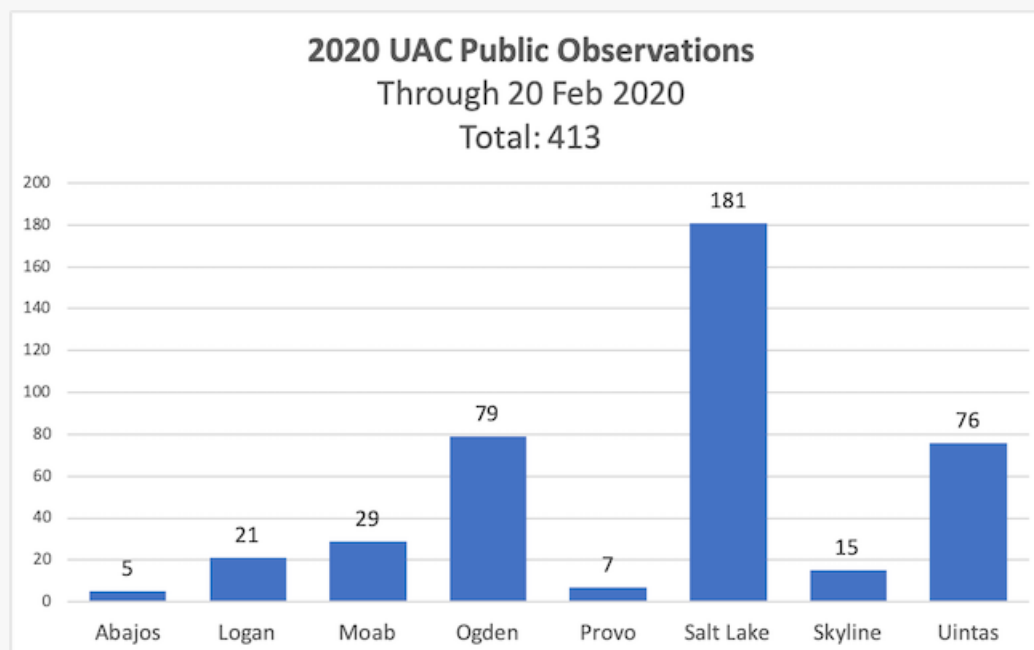
There are many barriers to why people don't submit observations. Am I using the right language? What if I'm wrong about something? Someone else has probably sent this in already? I don't know if my information is helpful for the forecasters. By the time I get home from my day, I've forgotten about it.

We encourage users to submit observations. The observations we receive are crucial pieces of information that the forecast team uses each morning when developing the daily forecast. The UAC staff is small so we can only be in a few places each day. Your observation from a place our staff is unable to be helps provide them the full picture of what is happening in the range.

Here are a few items we hope will make you feel comfortable submitting an observation:

1. You don't need to wait until you get home. You can submit an observation, including photos, directly from your phone using the [UAC Mobile IOS application](#) or your mobile device internet browser.
2. Don't worry about language - forecasters screen all observations before they are posted, both anonymous and identified
3. You don't have to dig a snow pit to submit an ob (although those are helpful too). A picture of wind loading or cracking is just as helpful. If you do dig a pit, you don't need to create a fancy pit profile, you can simply annotate a photo.
4. If you see an avalanche somewhere, report it! Duplicates will get screened out and your photo may be the best one yet.
5. The more you submit, the easier it becomes and the more you learn about backcountry conditions.

Check out the number of public observations by region so far this season. If just 5-10 more people in each region started submitting observations, these numbers could change dramatically!



Giving Back to the UAC

Avalanche Awareness Auction

Are you aware? Yes! Then go ahead and start the bidding at the [UAC Avalanche Awareness Auction](#).

Maybe? Let us share more! The Utah Avalanche Center is very aware that we have an amazing community of supporters. Thank you to everyone who has gotten involved recently by attending classes and events, making donations, purchasing products, and donating products. All of this helps us fulfill our mission by raising avalanche awareness.

As a tax-deductible nonprofit that partners with the Forest Service to deliver the services you rely on to stay safe in the backcountry, we rely upon many income sources to keep these programs running - through the most awe-inspiring and dangerous avalanche hazard days to the green light days. So here's another chance to get involved.

Now through March 10th you can show your support AND treat yourself or someone awesome in your life to something new! That's right, **it's our first mid-winter [Avy Awareness Auction](#) where we have 80+ items on the auction block.** that have been generously donated by UAC partners. From ski passes to a spa certificate, airbags to earrings, and goggles to tasty treats, we have something for you. And every dollar supports our efforts to spread Avy Awareness and keeping you on top of the Greatest Snow On Earth!

What are you waiting for?? Get the bidding started and then head into the mountains for some snow-filled fun. We'll see you there!

Wondering when you'll get the gear you win? Beginning Friday, March 13 you'll have two weeks to pick up your items from our friends at Lone Pine Gear Exchange (2835 E 3300 S, Salt Lake City). You can even come by from 5-7 PM on the 13th to pick up your item(s), chat with UAC team members, enjoy a RoHa beer, and stock up on UAC stickers! If you need your item(s) shipped, we just ask you to cover the shipping costs.

UAC Logo'ed TRUCK Gloves

Support the Utah Avalanche Center AND go Pro with this special edition of TRUCK's M1 Pro glove. With the M1 Pro you don't have to compromise warmth for dexterity. The soft goatskin leather is tough as nails but requires no break-in period. And the 40g Thinsulate combined with a 200g weight polar fleece lining keeps you toasty on those single-digit mornings. Keep a pair in your pack for the top of the skin track, put them on for your time in the snow pit, or show them off in the tram line. The red UAC logo embroidery looks beautiful and shows your proud support. All proceeds are donated to the folks keeping us on top!



The Details

Upcoming Classes

The UAC classes are completed for the 2019-2020 season. If you are still looking for an avalanche class, see a full list of upcoming [classes from other providers](#).

Upcoming Events

For a full list of events, see the [UAC Event Page](#)

- 05 March, 7:00 PM: Science of Avalanches by Trent Meisenheimer, Salt Lake City
- 12 March, 6:30 PM: State of the Snowpack by Craig Gordon, Backcountry HQ, Park City
- 25 March, 7:00 PM: Season in Review by Greg Gagne, Rocksteady Yoga, Holladay

Update Your Information

Have you moved, changed your phone number or email address? [Please use this link to update your UAC profile and communication preferences](#) so we can send you the information you want, where you want it. If you'd like to make changes to how your donations are acknowledged, such as having them come from you and your spouse, please [contact Hannah Whitney](#).

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