

The Powder Cloud



Newsletter of the Utah Avalanche Center

November 2020

Support the UAC

What's New

The New Reality

In response to the global pandemic, the UAC team has been hard at work since last spring adjusting our programming to meet Covid-19 guidelines and preparing for the potential large increase in backcountry users. The classroom portion of our education classes will be held virtually but the field days will thankfully remain on the snow. We now have FREE online awareness courses that guide you through the five essential concepts of staying safe in avalanche terrain at KBYG.org. We have also adapted all of our awareness programs to be delivered in virtual formats.



We are rolling out a new Trailhead Avalanche Awareness Program to reach users before they even head into avalanche terrain. At these events, we'll go over the avalanche forecast, practice with rescue equipment, talk about education resources, offer general awareness information, and provide replacement transceiver batteries. We'll be moving around the state with our pop up tent and partnering with Ortovox, Backcountry, Honey Stinger, Alta, Snowbird, USA, Blue Ice, The North Face, Scott Sports, Camp Chef, A.C.E., Black Diamond, Karl Malone Polaris and others to make sure that everyone heading into the backcountry has the information they need to make safe decisions and avoid avalanches. By taking a quick survey at these events you'll be entered into a drawing for a BCA rescue package, Smith goggles, or a UAC hoodie.



We Are All In This Together

When the ski areas in Utah closed last March, our mountains saw an incredible influx of backcountry users. Shops sold out of backcountry gear, closed ski areas experienced a surge of uphill travelers, and trailhead parking lots were beyond packed. During this time we saw a steep rise in human-triggered avalanches. All told, between mid-March and the end of April, there were over 100 human-triggered avalanches across the state with four of those being close call accidents.

As the 2020-21 winter season approaches, we are expecting what could be the busiest backcountry season ever. The UAC's forecasting, awareness and education programs are more important than ever to keeping people safe. Educating new backcountry users about avalanches is the best way to reduce accidents and fatalities.

Utah's backcountry community is filled with like-minded people all looking for the same thing – feelings of solitude, excitement, and accomplishment. We all share the same passion for the mountains regardless of how we travel, and we are all committed to safety. As we move forward in these uncertain times, let's stay focused on making good choices. Let's look out for one another. Let's help each other stay out of harm's way. The UAC wants everyone to enjoy the Greatest Snow on Earth™ and come home safely at the end of the day. As winter approaches, join us as we collectively take a deep breath, remember how lucky we are, and choose to have each others' backs.

Meet the Staff

2020-21 UAC Interns!

The center could not do what we do each winter without the help of our awesome interns. Meet our 3 extremely talented, motivated, and enthusiastic go-getters:





Francine Mullen

Francine is a North Idaho native but has been living in Bozeman, MT for 3 years up until landing in Salt Lake City to work with the Utah Avalanche Center. She is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science with a Minor in Geospatial Analysis. Skiing and playing in Bozeman's backcountry have deepened her love for such special spaces. Through her time in Bozeman, she has found a passion for avalanche education, community outreach, and snow! Through the Utah Avalanche Center's internship program, she hopes to explore the inner workings of a non-profit organization as well as gain valuable experience within the forecasting and snow science side of the industry.

Joey Manship

Joey grew up in Bozeman, Montana skiing and snowmobiling in the surrounding area. He then moved to Salt Lake City and earned a Bachelors in Marketing from Westminster College, graduating in 2017. Since then he has been diving into the outdoor industry of skiing and backcountry travel working to become an avalanche professional and educator. Joey is excited to help with the mission of forecasting, education and awareness through non-profit work and avalanche education to help educate the new generation of backcountry users.





McKinley Talty

McKinley grew up in the Hudson Valley of New York, learning to snowboard on the icy hills of the Catskill Mountains. Throughout his childhood, McKinley developed a passion for snow while working in ski shops, racing boardercross and riding the local hill whenever he could. In 2013, he found his way west and began exploring the mountains around Moab, Steamboat Springs, and finally Bozeman where he graduated from Montana State University with a B.S. degree in Snow Science. McKinley is beyond excited to be a part of the UAC team this season and hopes to not only absorb the immense amount of knowledge present within the organization, but to also offer his skills and experience in a beneficial way to both the UAC and the Utah community. When he's not on his splitboard, you can find McKinley out riding his mountain bike, casting his fly rod, or working on his small GIS business.

Education

KBYG eLearning Launches

Online learning has been growing rapidly for the past 2 decades and has been widely adopted for everything from corporate learning to college classes to continuing education. With the emergence of COVID-19 and its ensuing restrictions, everyone is embracing online learning. To help bring life-saving information to the masses, the UAC is launching an [online eLearning platform](#) for Know Before You Go avalanche awareness. The program includes five courses based on the 5 KBYG points: Get the Gear, Get the Training, Get the Forecast, Get the Picture, and Get out of Harm's Way.



Our goal is to provide the ever increasing number of backcountry users with easy to access avalanche knowledge. The program is in-depth enough to provide basic avalanche awareness but not overly time consuming. As always, we still encourage everyone to take an on-snow class to truly understand and learn the complexity of safely recreating in the mountains. As we continue to embrace online avalanche

learning, we hope to collaborate with others and continue to expand the KBYG eLearning program to include more topics in the future.



13th Annual Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop

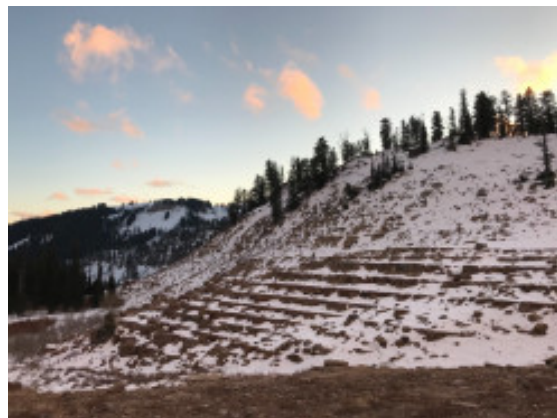
The days are getting shorter, the mountains are turning white, and the calendar now shows November. This all adds up to time for the 13th Annual Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop (USAW). We are very excited this year to deliver USAW in a virtual format. This opens the educational opportunities that USAW provides to people across Utah and the entire west. USAW will run over 3 evenings, November 10-12 from 6:30-9:00 each evening. We have 3 great themes of presentations this year: “The Ingredients Behind the Science and Avalanches”, “Distraction and Consequences”, and “We’re All in this Together”.

USAW is a great opportunity to learn from avalanche forecasters, patrollers, snow scientists, mountain guides, other backcountry riders, and more. With the season rapidly approaching, USAW will help you dust off the cobwebs and help get you avy savvy. If you can’t make USAW during the scheduled times, the presentations will be recorded and we will email access to the recordings to all registered attendees. Get the full agenda and purchase tickets on the [UAC Event Page](#).

Tech Tips

Season Wreckers: Don’t Let the Unseen Ruin Your Winter

There is not enough snow for a risk of avalanches on most slopes, but shallow, early season snow conditions can still be quite dangerous. There have been 2 tragic early season backcountry fatalities this fall.



Shallowly buried rocks are to blame for the tragic death of a Bozeman woman who died while skiing a steep chute in the Montana backcountry ([read about the accident](#)). A British Columbia snowboarder was killed by head trauma in a “freak backcountry

accident” while skiing on his splitboard in relatively flat, rolling terrain. He was found with his helmet on his backpack ([read about the accident](#)).

As snow starts to accumulate in the Utah backcountry, it’s a good idea to tone it down because it’s pretty easy to get hurt in the early season. Do not be overcome by powder fever. We know, it’s been a long time and you’re chomping at the bit, but it’s absolutely the worst time to ruin your whole season. Here are a couple tips:

- Avoid going too fast, maintain control, and be conservative.
- Stick to smooth, grassy, low-angled slopes.
- Stay off steep slopes. Even a very small, early season avalanche can be very dangerous if you are caught carried over rocks or raked through bushes and stumps.



Beacon, Shovel, Probe: Find, Inspect, Practice.

As snow starts falling, It’s time to inspect your avalanche rescue gear before heading out into the mountains. To prevent last-minute panic, here is a brief checklist to ensure your first day runs smoothly.

Beacon/Transceiver

- Dig out your beacon and put in fresh batteries. If you notice corrosion on the contacts, clean with a Q-tip and rubbing alcohol.
- Turn the beacon on, check all the switches and screens, and make sure that it both receives and transmits a signal. Complete a range check.
- Check if the firmware and software need to be updated. We recommend a modern beacon (newer than 5 yrs. old) with 3 antennas.
- Check your specific model for any malfunctions or recalls.

Probe

- Assemble probe and inspect the cable for any damage or wear.
- Make sure the locking mechanism is present and works.
- Probes come in different sizes with a recommended minimum length of 270cm.

Shovel

- Assemble your shovel, check for any cracking in the shaft, handle, and blade.
- Check the blade is still sharp, file if necessary. Avalanche debris is solid and challenging to dig through, make sure you have a metal shovel blade.
- Wipe down and clean the shaft and locking mechanism.

Putting it all together

- Practice, Practice, Practice!
- Run through companion rescue drills with your backcountry partners.
- Work on strategic shoveling in snow banks or your driveway. Find a local beacon park to hone your beacon skills.

NOTE: There has been substantial activity on social media and other platforms regarding the PIEPS DSP Pro and PIEPS DSP Sport transceivers. The most objective independent report on the situation that we've been able to find can be found on [Avalanche Beacon Reviews](#). Take a look at this site before taking any action based on social media posts you may have seen. If you have any concerns about the safety of a PIEPS/Black Diamond beacon that you own, please contact them directly at dsp@pieps.com. (note from Dan Kaveney, Executive Director, American Avalanche Association)

Giving Back to the UAC

Remember the UAC During the Holiday Giving Season!

Did you know you can raise money for the UAC by shopping for everyday items or holiday gifts? By selecting the UAC as your charity of choice on AmazonSmile and Smith's Inspiring Donations we can receive hundreds or even thousands of dollars a year that doesn't come out of your pocket. All it costs you is a few minutes to get it set up...aka set it and forget it!



Select the UAC through [AmazonSmile](#) by signing in with your Amazon credentials at smile.amazon.com and search for **The Utah Avalanche Center**. Each time you shop, simply navigate to smile.amazon.com. Even easier, you can install a browser extension that will automatically direct you to smile.amazon.com. You can even track how much your purchases have earned to support avalanche forecasting, education, and awareness! If you shop using the Amazon app, be sure to update your app settings to include all mobile shopping purchases as part of your AmazonSmile account. See instructions for both of these steps [here](#).

Select the UAC through [Smith's Inspiring Donations](#) by signing into your Smith's digital account. Unsure of your account information or don't have an account yet? Just reset your password or ask for a Smith's card the next time you shop and set up a new account. Follow [these instructions](#) to add **Friends of the Utah Avalanche Center, Inc** as your charity of choice and then pat yourself on the back for being philanthropic every time you shop!

The Details

Upcoming Classes

- [02 Dec: Avalanche Rescue Clinic - SLC](#)
- [3 & 5 Dec: Backcountry 101 - SLC](#)
- [04 Dec: Avalanche Rescue Clinic - SLC](#)
- [7 & 8 Dec: Avalanche Rescue Clinic - Park City](#)
- [9 & 11 Dec: Avalanche Rescue Clinic - SLC](#)
- [10 Dec: Avalanche Rescue Clinic - Ogden](#)
- [12 Dec: Avalanche Rescue Clinic - Ogden](#)
- [14 Dec: Avalanche Rescue Clinic - SLC](#)
- [16 & 18 Dec: Backcountry 101 - SLC](#)
- [16 & 18 Dec: Women's Backcountry 101 - SLC](#)
- [21 & 22 Dec: Youth Backcountry 101 - SLC](#)
- [02 Jan: Avalanche Rescue Clinic - SLC](#)
- [4 & 6 Jan: Backcountry 101 - SLC](#)
- [8 & 9 Jan: Backcountry 101 - Ogden](#)
- [19 & 21 Jan: Youth Backcountry 101 - SLC](#)
- [28 & 29 Jan: Women's Backcountry 101 - SLC](#)
- [21 & 22 Dec: Youth Backcountry 101 - Powder Mountain](#)

[More Class Info](#)

Upcoming Events

- [10 Nov: Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop Day 1](#)
- [11 Nov: Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop Day 2](#)
- [12 Nov: Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop Day 3](#)
- [06-12 Dec: 2nd Annual Avalanche Awareness Week](#)

[More Event Info](#)

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