

# Snowmobile Safety

## AVALANCHE SAFETY TIPS

*In mountain areas always assess avalanche danger and carry an electronic tracking device.*

### Be Prepared:

- ♦ Create a trip (difficulty, length, danger exposure) that takes into consideration current conditions, people's interests and skills, terrain and other hazards.
- ♦ Ensure group members have proper avalanche safety training.
- ♦ Carry survival equipment in a backpack including: shovel, probe and spare batteries and wear your transmitter.
- ♦ Call the Public Avalanche Bulletin for latest conditions: 1-800-667-1105 or [www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca).
- ♦ Test the transceiver's transmit and receive functions at home.
- ♦ Ensure all transceivers are on transmit before leaving the trucks for the ride.

### Route Selection. It's Up to You - Know Before You Go:

- ♦ Travel low angle slopes, heavily treed areas, ridges and broad valley bottoms to avoid avalanche paths.
- ♦ If you choose to ride an avalanche slope, minimize your risk.
- ♦ Avoid slopes with excess wind loaded snow.
- ♦ Learn the significance of wind, sun, shade and terrain shape on avalanche danger.
- ♦ Be aware of escape routes and safe stopping areas.
- ♦ Avoid terrain traps or terrain features that can:

#### increase the depth of burial

- Gullies
- Steep transition areas (sharp changes in the slope angle)
- Sharp valleys
- Creek beds
- Walls or ridges crossing the natural path

#### decrease the chance for escape

- Gullies
- Crevasses
- Open water

#### increase the chance of injury

- Cliffs
- Rocks and trees in avalanche path

### Keep in contact:

- ♦ Always ride in a group.
- ♦ Maintain constant visual contact at all time.
- ♦ Cross suspect slopes one at a time.
- ♦ Use a hand signal for "avalanche path...spread out".
- ♦ Listen to concerns of all group members.

### Travel Habits

- ♦ Park in safe areas, pointed to safer areas (escape route).
- ♦ Kill switch up.
- ♦ Allow the snow to settle after a storm.
- ♦ Test (track up) small slopes with low consequences.
- ♦ Test slopes using wide, fast passes before placing yourself in committing terrain.
- ♦ Make sure that only one machine is on the slope at any time, even if your buddy is stuck.
- ♦ DO NOT LET YOUR GUARD DOWN, slopes can avalanche even after multiple passes.

### **If you're caught in an avalanche, try to:**

- ♦ Call out, draw attention to yourself.
- ♦ React fast, attempt to ride out of the slide.
- ♦ If no longer in control, separate yourself from your snowmobile.
- ♦ FIGHT HARD with swimming motions, trying to stay on top of the snow.
- ♦ Grab trees, rocks, etc. to avoid being tumbled down the slope.
- ♦ Keep your mouth closed and your teeth clenched.

### **When the avalanche slows, try to:**

- ♦ Use your hands to create airspace in front of your face.
- ♦ Wiggle to make airspace around your body.
- ♦ Thrust an arm to the surface.
- ♦ Once the avalanche stops the snow sets up like concrete.

### **When the avalanche stops, try to:**

- ♦ Remain calm.
- ♦ Control your breathing to conserve your oxygen, relax.
- ♦ Shout only when rescuers are very near (sound does not travel well within the snow pack).

### **Searching for a Victim**

The most experienced person should:

- ♦ Take a moment to organize the search party.
- ♦ Consider the possibility of another avalanche before attempting a rescue. Set an escape route and post a lookout if necessary.
- ♦ Mark the last seen point of the victim(s).

### **Search with Beacons:**

- ♦ Ensure all rescuers' beacons are switched to receive.
- ♦ Spread out at 30 metre intervals to cover the debris.
- ♦ Look for surface clues: a hand, hat, glove, etc.
- ♦ Don't litter the slope with rescuers' belongings.
- ♦ Search around and downhill of any clues.
- ♦ When a signal is picked up assign one or two to locate it while others continue the search.
- ♦ Pinpoint the signal to a small radius, then probe to find the victim.
- ♦ Without removing the p-robe, quickly dig out the victim.
- ♦ Turn the victim's beacon to receive if others are still buried.

Avalanche forecast information reports are available by calling 1-800-667-1105  
[www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca)

If you have any suggestions on traffic safety issues that are of interest to you and your community, or for more information, please contact:

Office of Traffic Safety  
Alberta Infrastructure & Transportation  
Main Floor, Twin Atria, 4999 - 98 Ave.  
Edmonton, AB T6B 2X3  
Ph: (780) 422-8839  
Fax: (780) 422-3682  
Website: [www.saferoads.com](http://www.saferoads.com)

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