

The Powder Cloud



Newsletter of the Utah Avalanche Center

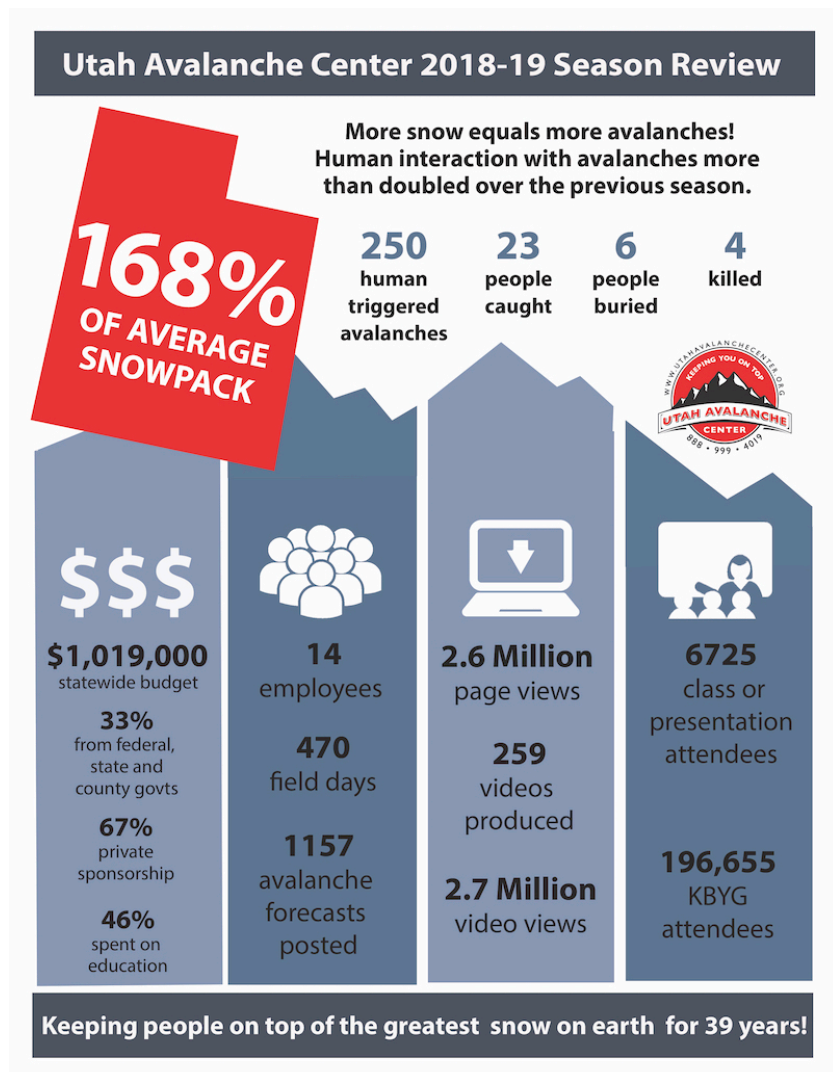
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June 2019

What's New

2018-2019 Annual Report

The 2018-2019 Annual Report has been published. Check out the report for a full recap of the past season. Find the [full report on the UAC website](#).



Meet the Forecaster

Brett Kobernick

Brett is the UAC forecaster for the Manti-Skyline region, is the UAC webmaster, and a part-time inventor.

What is your personal background?

I grew up on a cherry farm in Michigan. After I graduated high school, I moved west to become a ski bum.



How did you get into avalanche forecasting?

Quite by accident. I was working with Voile Equipment on the Splitboard project in the early 90s. After the project gained some attention, I was asked by Peter Lev if I would be interested in getting trained to be a guide to take backcountry snowboarders out for his guiding company Exum Utah (now Utah Mountain Adventures). After gaining some experience guiding, I was asked by my friend Dean Cummings to

come and guide clients with his helicopter ski guide company H2O Guides in Valdez, AK. During these years I was introduced to Bruce Tremper and the other staff at the UAC. They asked if I would help

instruct their 3-day avalanche classes which I did for a number of years. They also asked if I would submit observations about what I was seeing in the backcountry. This went on for a number of years. In 2004 there was some turnover in the forecasting staff. Bruce Tremper and Evelyn Lees strongly suggested that I apply for a forecasting position which I did and I was offered the job.

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

Wow, so many. I don't think any single one is the most significant moment. Learning about "faceted" snow is one of the big ones, but this actually compromises many many smaller learning moments. Grasping how weather creates different avalanche conditions was also a huge one. I took a serious ride in an avalanche a number of years ago which was super scary but so enlightening on so many different levels. I feel like I walked away from that one with knowledge and perspective that I did not previously have.

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

Be confident. It's amazing how much stuff you can pull off if you're confident. I've gained a lot of confidence but I think I could've used more when I was younger.

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

You absolutely need to have patience when recreating in avalanche terrain. You can't always go hit the big stuff every weekend. You need to wait until conditions allow.

What do you like doing besides playing in the snow?

Motorcycles and bicycles are my two big non-winter interests. I really like to do long multi-day off-road motorcycle camping trips. I also enjoy fabricating machinery and equipment. I find it pretty fulfilling to build something and then actually put it to use afterward.



Education

Avalanche Rescue Course

Have you taken an Introduction to Companion Rescue? Do you practice your rescue skills regularly? Are you confident that if your party was involved in an accident you could perform a successful rescue? Even if you answer "Yes" to all of these questions, the UAC recommends you take the Avalanche Rescue Course at least every other year.

The Avalanche Rescue Course (ARC) is a one-day intended to be retaken on a regular basis in order to keep abreast of best practices in rescue techniques and gear. New participants will learn the basics of companion rescue, while return participants will expand their skill set with advanced topics and realistic scenario practice to help improve their skills after the course.

Each participant will receive professional review and coaching of their rescue skills and will receive a rescue card acknowledging completion date at course end.

ARC is a prerequisite for the Recreation Level 2 and Pro 1 courses. We recommend that all backcountry travelers keep their skills current by taking an Avalanche Rescue Course regularly.

At the end of the ARC the student should be able to:

- Describe what to do if they or a member of their party is caught in an avalanche.
- Identify and be able to use the gear necessary for avalanche rescue.
- Set up a realistic scenario in order to practice an avalanche rescue response.
- Improve their response skills and times during and after the course with feedback from instructors and peers.
- Develop a plan for continued practice.

All students will have the opportunity to get feedback from an instructor on their rescue skills and timed practice with a realistic scenario.

Students who have previously taken a Level 1 or an Avalanche Rescue Course will find value in having a professional help them set up a realistic scenario, practice skills in a realistic setting, receive

feedback from an instructor, keep up with current best practices, and have an opportunity to practice advanced rescue skills.

If you have any questions about the Avalanche Rescue Course, please [contact the UAC Education Team](#).

Tech Tips

Uphill Travel Fatalities

A large number of people died while going uphill the winter of 2016/17. The risk of accidents while descending is often a focus of backcountry travel and avalanche training and education. However, the risk while proceeding uphill is less known. This study investigated the incidence of avalanche fatalities while backcountry tourers were ascending.

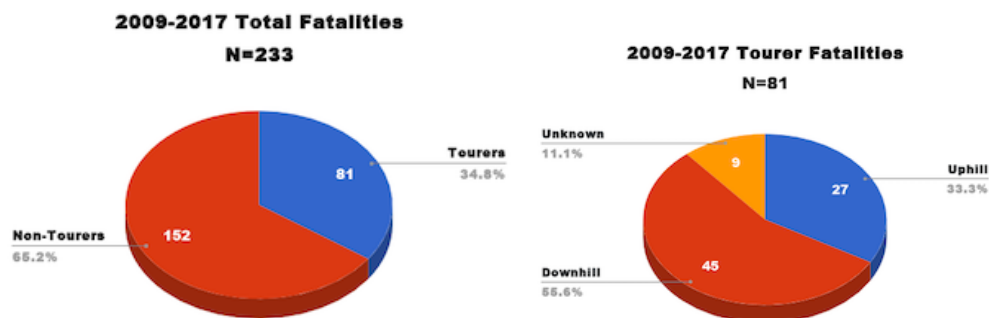
We analyzed data (source: Avalanche.org) for winter seasons 2009-2010 through November 2017, focusing on the avalanche fatalities of backcountry tourers and recreationists going uphill.

“Tourers” included backcountry skiers, snowboarders, snowshoers and hikers, including those who used motorized means for a limited portion of their ascent. We excluded motorized users including snowmobilers, heliskiers/snowboarders, most climbers, most side-country skiers/snowboarders, and patrollers/forecasters caught in

accidents while doing avalanche mitigation work via mechanized access.

We also defined a category called "Unknown", which included backcountry tourers or recreationists for whom the available information was insufficient for determining whether they were ascending or descending at the time of the accident.

Of the 233 total fatalities from winter 2009-2010 through November 2017, we determined that 81 fatalities (35%) fit our criteria as backcountry tourers or recreationists.



Of the 81 fatalities, 27 (33%) were proceeding uphill, and 45 (56%) were going downhill at the time of the incident. The remaining 9 (11%) were classified as "Unknown". Cornice accidents were particularly challenging when trying to determine if the accident "occurred before descent." Many cornice fatalities ended up in the "Unknown" category.

Conclusion:

We don't want to discourage true solo travel because it can be very rewarding, but travelers must acknowledge there is simply no room for error. We want to emphasize how we travel alone or with partners using fundamental concepts for safe or low-risk travel. As we

[discussed in the last newsletter](#), 44% of fatalities involved someone either solo or effectively alone. 33% of fatalities occurred on the ascent. These results suggest that backcountry travelers should spend more time considering “where’s your partner” and “how are you ascending”.

Thanks to Christina Raspolini and Linda George for helping sort through the accident reports, doing all the heavy lifting and detail work.

Giving Back to the UAC

What is the difference between the nonprofit UAC and Forest Service UAC?

The UAC is a partnership between the nonprofit UAC and Forest Service UAC. Why does this partnership exist? In 1990, the Forest Service UAC was being affected by the year to year government budget fluctuations. The nonprofit Friends of the Utah Avalanche Center was formed to provide stability to the UAC and protect it against these budget fluctuations. This year, over 50% of the UAC expenses were to provide the forecasting across the 8 forecast regions of Utah. Federal, state and county funding to the Forest Service UAC only accounts for one-third of the costs necessary to operate the UAC. The nonprofit UAC is responsible for the remaining funding necessary to operate the center. This funding comes primarily

from individual donations, business sponsorships, and fundraising events.

The donations that you make are crucial for the UAC to continue to provide our forecasting, awareness and education programs across the state of Utah.

See the [2018-2019 Annual Report](#) for a summary of the UAC financials.

Thank you to all of you who help make this possible.

If you are interested in learning more about supporting the UAC, please [contact us](#).

The Details

Upcoming Classes

We are working to finalize the 2019-2020 class schedule. A full list of classes and Know Before You Go presentations will be posted on the [UAC Education Page](#) in July.

Upcoming Events

Join the UAC to kick-off the season with the **26th Annual Black Diamond Fall Fundraiser** to be held on **Thursday, September 12**

from 6:00-10:00 PM! If you have been to that event you know that it is a great evening of food, drink, music, gear, celebration, and friends and a good showing at the party tends to lead to a great winter. Tickets will be on sale in July on the [UAC Events Page](#). We will once again be using the GiveSmart silent auction platform so even if you cannot attend the fundraiser, you will still be able to bid (or set up automatic bidding) on items. All proceeds from this event help pay for the avalanche forecasting and education you need to make wise decisions in the backcountry.

The **12th Annual Utah Snow and Avalanche Workshop** will be held on **Friday and Saturday, November 1 and 2** at Mountain America Expo Center. The Friday Pro-Only session will address workplace, resort, and infrastructure issues and the Open Session will be on Saturday and will include a motorized specific breakout session. Registration includes lunch and happy hour for all attendees. Intended to serve as continuing avalanche education, this will be a great opportunity for everyone to gain some advanced avalanche knowledge and brush up their skills and insight. Mark your calendar and keep your eyes open for additional details, a list of presentations, and ticket sales details.

The Utah Legislature passed H.B. 380 designating the first week of December each year as Avalanche Awareness Week. Stay tuned for details on the **1st Annual Avalanche Awareness Week** to be held **December 1-7** and join the UAC, avalanche educators, outdoor manufacturers, and others across the state to promote avalanche awareness, education, and safety.

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

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.1111

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The Utah Avalanche Center is a cooperative effort between the Forest Service
Utah Avalanche Center and the non-profit Utah Avalanche Center