

Staying alive in avalanche terrain

By Outside

Over the past few years, we've seen a sea change in terms of people's attitudes, perception, and behavior about recreating in avalanche-prone terrain, especially skiing in the backcountry.

There are more of us out there than ever before, using increasingly fancy and sophisticated gear. But despite these advances, and a shift in how and what avalanche safety professionals teach, we're not collectively making better decisions out there. Backcountry ski gear manufacturers, ski resorts, and avalanche forecasters and educators are acutely aware of the issue – and have just recently started taking industry-wide initiatives to help people make smarter choices in avalanche-prone terrain.

Here, we take a look at how the surge in popularity of backcountry users has altered the landscape, how to safely navigate slide-prone mountains, the tools and skills required to dig out someone buried by an avalanche, the advent of avalanche airbags, the human factors that can affect people's judgement in the field, whether or not you should be concerned about inbounds avalanches at ski resorts, the tools professionals use to manage the snowpack, and a potentially game-changing new piece of avalanche safety gear.

The information we've gathered here is by no means everything you need to know to be an educated, safety-minded, and well-equipped backcountry user, but it's a good place to start.

Read the whole story