
FACTSHEET

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Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Emergency Management BC

Avalanche awareness

British Columbia is known for its beautiful backcountry, and the best way to enjoy it is in a safe and responsible manner. Residents and visitors to the province are urged to learn more about the necessary outdoor safety tools and techniques that could save a life. Outdoor enthusiasts can help themselves and others by being informed and staying avalanche-safe.

Our government is encouraging those who venture into B.C.'s backcountry to understand the risks involved and take all necessary precautions.

Facts:

Here are some key backcountry tips this avalanche season:

- Take a recognized avalanche skills training course (offered through the Canadian Avalanche Association). A list of instructors and courses can be found at: www.avalanche.ca/training.
- Planning ahead is a must. Before you head outdoors, be sure to leave a trip-plan with a responsible individual and stick to it. For a printable copy of a trip-plan and to learn more about being safe when getting outdoors, visit: www.adventuresmart.ca.
- Everyone in a backcountry party needs to be equipped with a shovel, probe and transceiver. More information on safety equipment is available at: <http://ow.ly/5VXm30883PK>.
- Snowpack stability changes constantly throughout the winter. Backcountry users need to check avalanche bulletins regularly to keep informed of conditions in their area. Get the most recent bulletin and weather forecasts at: www.avalanche.ca.

Staying Warm

Avoid hypothermia by remembering the acronym COLD:

- **Cover:** Wear a scarf, hat or toque, mittens or gloves, and even a balaclava if necessary.
- **Overexertion:** Avoid activities that will make you sweat a lot. The combination of wet clothing and cold weather can cause you to lose body heat more quickly.
- **Layers:** Wear loose-fitting, layered, and lightweight clothing. Wool or silk are great choices. Outer clothing made of tightly woven, water-repellent material is best for wind protection.
- **Dry:** Get out of wet clothing as soon as possible. Be especially careful to keep your hands and feet dry as it is easy for snow to get into mittens and boots.

You should also know the signs of hypothermia. These include constant shivering, confusion, poor decision making (such as trying to remove warm clothes), drowsiness, and shallow breathing. Frostbite is another concern in cold weather. Signs of frostbite include hands, feet or

face turning red, purple then black. More information is available from the Canadian Red Cross: <http://ow.ly/8jBa308831O>.

Weather Awareness

When planning a trip, it is important to start monitoring conditions well before you leave. Here are some tips on how to obtain your pre-trip weather information and when to check in for changes:

- Four to seven days prior to departure: Call the weather experts with Environment and Climate Change Canada's Weather Consultation Service at 1-888-292-2222. For a small fee, you can consult directly with a meteorologist. Explain where you are going and at what elevations you will be traveling. If the forecast is stormy, think about alternate plans, postponing or cancelling altogether.
- Three to four days prior to departure: Check for Special Weather Statements and alerts. These are the least urgent alerts issued by Environment Canada and are intended to advise of unusual, inconvenient or potentially hazardous conditions over the longer term (beyond 24 hours).
- 24 hours prior to departure: Check for Weather Warnings. These are urgent advisories that severe weather is either occurring or will occur. Even if there are no warnings, it's a good idea to call the Weather Consultation Service again to reiterate the specifics of your trip and amend your plans if necessary.
- Weather information is also available at: www.avalanche.ca/weather.

Contact:

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