



Feb. 20, 2009
PR# 09-024

Snowpack Conditions Pose Avalanche Threat in Southcentral

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) - In light of the avalanche dangers presented this weekend, the Alaska State Troopers would like to caution outdoor recreationists. The Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center has noted that natural avalanches are a possibility and human-triggered avalanches are probable.

Before heading out into the backcountry for snowmachining, skiing or snowshoeing, AST encourages that you file a trip plan with detailed information regarding where you will be recreating and what time you will return. Give your trip plan to someone who will call to report you missing when you do not check in or return on time. A Wilderness Trip Plan form can be found online at:

<http://www.dps.state.ak.us/pio/docs/WildernessTripPlan.pdf>

Also, AST encourages recreationists to travel in groups, to have provisions and safety gear with them and to be aware of the conditions in the area you recreate. Recommended safety gear includes cell phone and communication equipment, avalanche transceivers, probes and shovels.

Following information provided by Chugach National Forest Avalanche:

Primary avalanche concerns

-On Alpine slopes above 3000 feet there is currently denser wind slab snow on top of lighter snow on slippery bed surfaces. The size of these slabs has grown considerably and crowns up to 4 feet are reported!

- Teetering on top of a weak rain crust layer below 3000 feet is denser snow on top of lighter density snow. (Avalanches have been common and widespread on this lower elevation instability. There is a layer of faceted snow on top of this rain crust. Be very careful in Placer Valley, Seattle Creek, and Girdwood Valley)

****Bottom Line****

Extra Caution is advised this weekend. There are areas with considerable avalanche hazards in place. Human-triggered avalanche activity is expected all weekend. Managing your terrain is vital to avoiding such occurrences. Clear, bluebird skies will give false confidence that nothing can go wrong. This thought process could get you killed. Choosing terrain less than 30 degrees, with smooth run outs and escape routes is essential to ensure safety.

This backcountry advisory applies to the Turnagain Arm Area south of Anchorage and does not apply to operating ski areas or transportation corridors.

Please report all avalanche activity to the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center.

You can report activity by leaving a voice message at 754-2369 or email them by going to www.cnfaic.org.

To view the avalanche forecast in full, go to:

<http://www.cnfaic.org>