



2017/18 Guideline - Avalanche Warning, Watch, and Special Bulletin

Purpose of document: Promote consistency among US Avalanche Centers in how and when Avalanche Warnings are issued with some variations to account for unique populations in unique settings. Give the public a clear understanding of what an Avalanche Warning means. This document is not meant to encourage centers to issue warnings, watches, or other products if they do not already do so, but to provide a common framework if they choose to issue such products. Additionally, centers are encouraged to develop more specific criteria.

Purpose of Avalanche Warnings: The purpose is to save lives by alerting the public when avalanches are certain or very likely in many areas and when unusually dangerous avalanche conditions exist.

Agencies involved: Avalanche Warnings are communicated to the public and media, in part, through the National Weather Service. NWS coding is: AVW – Avalanche Warning, AVA – Avalanche Watch, SAB – Special Avalanche Bulletin.

Media involvement: Local and regional media help communicate Avalanche Warnings to the public. The specific warning message should be transmitted to them directly or via the NWS. Communicate a consistent message to the public through several different channels.

Basic Content:

1. Area covered by the Warning using common place names.
2. Duration of the Warning, including time of issuance and expiration.
3. Reason(s) for the Warning.
4. Instructions on how to obtain more information.
5. Text that is simple, clear, and concise using plain language, absent of jargon.

Please refer to Appendix H for the Avalanche Warning Template

Criteria for issuing Avalanche Warnings:

1. Avalanche Warnings are ALWAYS issued when the avalanche danger is EXTREME.
2. Avalanche Warnings are issued when the avalanche danger is HIGH in many areas. Many areas can mean very large geographic areas. Many areas can also mean several aspects and/or elevations in a specific geographic area. Avalanche Warnings are typically NOT issued when the danger is HIGH in specific or isolated areas.
3. Avalanche Warnings can be issued when non-recreationalists or people who would not otherwise access the avalanche advisory are expected to be impacted.



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Additional criteria for Type 2 Avalanche Centers:

1. Type 2 Avalanche Centers do not issue avalanche advisories 7 days a week, but weather and snowpack conditions are typically monitored at regular intervals.
2. Type 2 Avalanche Centers may issue and terminate avalanche warnings if resources allow full-time staffing and monitoring of the changing avalanche conditions for the duration of the warning.
3. When Avalanche Warnings are issued by a Type 2 Avalanche Center, the most recent snow, avalanche, and weather summary should be updated or a new one issued. This summary should contain additional information beyond what is contained in the warning message.

Areas covered by warnings:

US Avalanche Centers have defined areas in which they issue danger ratings, usually the Supported Backcountry Area. Avalanche Warnings are only issued for all or part of these areas in places where Centers have current snowpack data and observations.

Areas outside of the Supported Backcountry Area:

Avalanche Warnings are typically not issued for areas outside of the Supported Backcountry Area. In special situations, Centers may choose additional areas in which they will issue Avalanche Warnings. When Centers choose to do so, they should have a continuous record of data that ensures consistency and repeatability in issuing avalanche warnings for these outlying areas.

Timeframe for Avalanche Warnings:

1. Avalanche Warnings are issued with a clear start and end time.
2. Avalanche Warnings are updated or allowed to expire after 24 hours.
3. Avalanche Warnings can be reissued after a 24 hour period and can be reissued as many times as needed.

Other products - Avalanche Centers may also issue Avalanche Watches and/or Special Avalanche Bulletins. These are OPTIONAL products:

Avalanche Watches: The purpose of an Avalanche Watch is to warn the public that Avalanche Warning criteria are likely to be met in 24-48 hours.

Special Avalanche Bulletins: Special Avalanche Bulletins are impact-based products. These are issued by some avalanche centers when significant public use is expected and dangerous avalanche conditions exist, but the avalanche conditions do not meet the level necessary to issue an Avalanche Warning.



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Avalanche Warning Platform - This platform is hosted on the avalanche.org server and provides:

1. National (comprehensive) AVW database.
2. National/Embedded Map population.
3. Local AVW archive.
4. Standardized AVW format.

Each avalanche center has an independent and password protected account at <https://avalanche.org/watches-warnings/>. Although operations can decide to develop inhouse warning transmission capabilities, those capabilities must populate the AVW database through the Aalanche.org API. Please contact the NAC for additional information, or to set up a new account.



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APPENDIX G
AVALANCHE WARNING TEMPLATE

Black = Static Text

Green = change once to match location

Red = change to match individual warning

BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE WARNING

IMMEDIATE BROADCAST REQUESTED

600 AM MST WED JAN 13 2016

THE BRIDGER TETON NATIONAL FOREST AVALANCHE CENTER IN JACKSON HAS
ISSUED / CONTINUED / CANCELLED A BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE WARNING.

* TIMING...**IN EFFECT FROM 6 AM MST THIS MORNING TO 6 AM MST TOMORROW.**

* AFFECTED AREA...**TETON RANGE IN IDAHO...BIG HOLE RANGE ...SNAKE RIVER RANGE...CARIBOU RANGE...WEBSTER RANGE... AND PREUSS RANGE.**

* AVALANCHE DANGER... **THE AVALANCHE DANGER FOR THE WARNING AREA WILL RISE TO HIGH TODAY AND POSSIBLY EXTREME BY TOMORROW.**

* REASON/IMPACTS...**RECENT HEAVY SNOW COMBINED WITH WIND WILL LIKELY CREATE WIDESPREAD AREAS OF UNSTABLE SNOW.**

* PRECAUTIONARY / PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...**VERY DANGEROUS AVALANCHE CONDITIONS. TRAVEL IN AVALANCHE TERRAIN IS NOT RECOMMENDED. AVALANCHES MAY RUN LONG DISTANCES AND CAN RUN INTO MATURE FORESTS, VALLEY FLOORS, OR FLAT TERRAIN.**

CONSULT WWW.JHAVALANCHE.ORG OR WWW.AVALANCHE.ORG FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION.

SIMILAR AVALANCHE DANGER MAY EXIST AT LOCATIONS OUTSIDE THE COVERAGE AREA OF THIS OR ANY AVALANCHE CENTER.

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