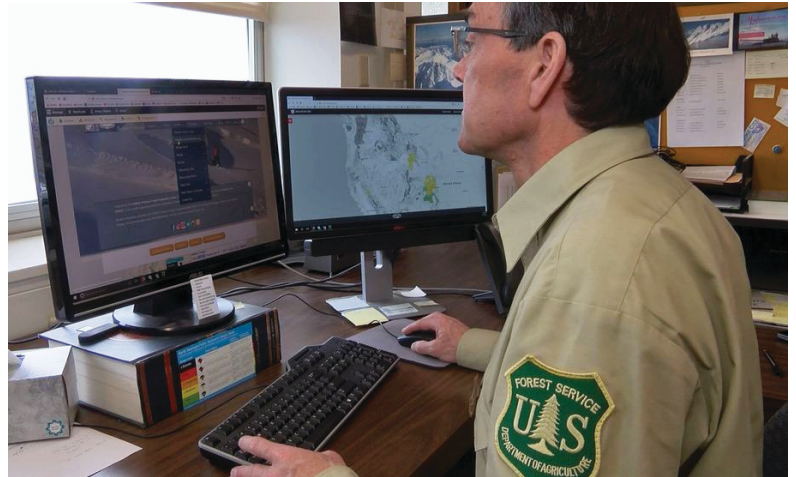




**The Forest Service manages 13 Avalanche Centers spread across the regions. These programs save lives by collecting and disseminating avalanche information. Although backcountry use has increased more than twentyfold since 2000, the avalanche fatality rate has dropped dramatically.**

## What is an Avalanche Center?

Avalanche Centers are field and community-based programs that reduce public avalanche risk. Each center, staffed by experts, tracks snowpack and weather conditions and provides actionable information about the day's avalanche danger. Centers publish daily forecasts so that backcountry users can make informed safety decisions in avalanche-prone areas.



## What is the public benefit?

Anyone who is exposed to avalanches benefits from an avalanche forecast. Whether riding snowmobiles in the backcountry, skiing in or out of bounds at a ski area, or driving through an avalanche-threatened transportation corridor—access to good avalanche information allows the public to make informed decisions on their safety. Agency field operations, search and rescue groups, ski area personnel, and transportation departments also benefit from Avalanche Center services.

## How are they funded?

Each Avalanche Center operates as a public-private partnership, with around half of the operating cost covered through partnerships with community-supported Friends groups, grants, and/or state and local government. The programs are not mandated—local communities ask for this service and value it enough that they both support and pay for it.



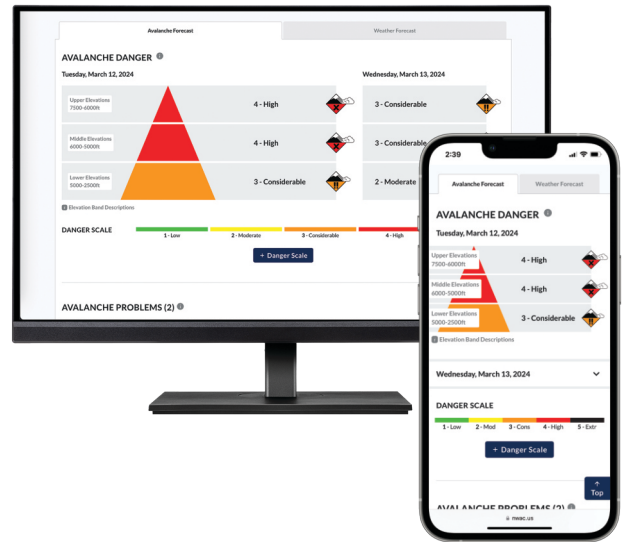


# USDA FOREST SERVICE AVALANCHE CENTERS

## How does the program work?

Day-to-day operations are managed locally. The National Avalanche Center works as an umbrella organization and provides the Centers with guidance, support, and training.

Much of this work is completed through the management of the Avalanche Forecast Platform (AFP), a suite of web applications used daily by both forecasters and the public. Go to [Avalanche.org](https://Avalanche.org) to view the public-facing side of the AFP.



## Does the program work?

Yes! The National Avalanche Center recently published a peer-reviewed article that demonstrates that although the number of backcountry users has increased by at least a factor of eight in the last 20 years, the number of avalanche fatalities during that time has remained unchanged—averaging 28 deaths per year. Thus, the avalanche fatality rate (number of fatalities divided by the number of users) has dropped significantly. If our fatality rate had remained constant, we would be seeing more than 200 avalanche fatalities annually.

## Can we do it better?

Absolutely. Avalanche Centers work within limited budgets and have a long-standing “do more with less” culture. While highly efficient, the centers operate on the edge of their resources and have little buffer against staffing or budget shortfalls. For the program to continue to succeed, Centers need improved access to hiring. Further, developing a national funding plan will ensure consistent and stable services.

## USDA Forest Service Avalanche Centers Winter 2024/25 By the Numbers

