

Chugach Mountain Institute

Avalanche Rescue

Course Description:

For backcountry travelers, aspiring outdoor professionals, incident response workers (SAR, EMS, LEO), and anyone else that wants to better understand avalanche rescue and develop the ability to perform it effectively. This course exceeds American Avalanche Association guidelines for Avalanche Rescue. It consists of one in-person day of 8+ hours instruction (5+ hours instruction will be in the field). The small group instruction (5:1 max student:instructor ratio) by a Masters-level outdoor educator is differentiated according to individual and group needs. You must understand basic avalanche awareness, be familiar with backcountry travel, and be able to function outdoors in potentially inclement weather for at least five hours.

Learning Objectives:

- Ability to recognize avalanche terrain and be prepared with appropriate equipment to travel through it and conduct a rescue if necessary
- Plan and communicate effectively as a group member and leader as it relates to movement in avalanche terrain while conducting a rescue
 - Prioritize actions and delegate roles in the event of an accident
- Conduct trailhead check-ins before backcountry travel in avalanche terrain
- Understand safe travel protocols for conducting a rescue in avalanche terrain
- Understand how to react to an avalanche as both victim and rescuer
- Effectively execute avalanche search and rescue for one and two person burials
- Understand methods and strategies for locating avalanche burial victims without beacon
- Understand emergency medical response relevant to avalanche victims and resources to acquire appropriate medical training (this course doesn't provide medical training)
- Understand EMS response relative to various avalanche accident scenarios

Course Content

Avalanche Rescue Principles:

- Victim demographics and statistics
- Survival rates (trauma and asphyxiation) and how burial time affects mortality
- Avalanche avoidance
- Avalanche victim response
- Avalanche rescuer response
- Current trends in avalanche rescue research

Avalanche Rescue Equipment & Use:

- Beacon search (signal, coarse, fine), probing, and strategic shoveling technique
- Other avalanche safety gear: helmet, airbag, Avalung, Recco, SAR dogs, probe lines

Avalanche Rescue Response:

- Assessing safety on the scene of a rescue
- Group management: leadership, communication, delegation of tasks based on available resources
- Last seen areas and visual clues to reduce (and possibly eliminate) beacon search area
- EMS response considerations and how to activate with available resources
- Avalanche rescue scenarios: practice search and rescue
- Common rescue mistakes and how to avoid them
- Special considerations: deep burials, multiple burials
- Reporting accidents: database for reporting and its importance

Avalanche Victim Care:

- Typical trauma, environmental, and medical problems
- Wilderness medical training options

Avalanche Rescue Support:

- Evacuation urgency and means
 - Importance of understanding resources in different areas, response times, and preparation for the evacuation