

ADOPT A TERRAIN MINDSET

1.) CHECK IT OUT

Observe but avoid today's avalanche problem

- We have low familiarity and/or confidence in either the terrain or our team—and/or we have high confidence that the conditions are dangerous.
- Our goal today is to increase our confidence through careful, targeted observations without exposing ourselves to avalanche risk.
- We agree to select a zone that offers several options to eliminate exposure to avalanche terrain. Our choices include low-angle and primarily forested terrain. We plan to avoid big overhead slopes, and, on days with higher avalanche hazards, we also agree to avoid or minimize the risk of travel through runout zones.

2.) KEEP IT MELLOW

Limit exposure by avoiding steeper slopes, wind-loaded start zones, and trigger zones

- We have moderate confidence in both our assessment of the hazard and our team's skills and knowledge. And we can identify the avalanche problems and uncertainties that may cause issues.
- We will create a plan with a range of options that allow us to gather relevant information while maintaining a margin for error. We are hyper-aware that today's good decision-making is paramount to avoiding avalanches big enough to injure, bury, or kill.
- We know that managing exposure requires experience. We plan to select a zone where options exist to reduce exposure and then proceed with careful route-finding. When the avalanche problems are difficult to target, we will choose slopes with angles less than 30 degrees and avoid overhead hazards and terrain traps. Also, we plan to employ travel techniques such as spacing, timing, and strategic regrouping that further reduces risk.

3.) STEP IT UP

Consider steeper options mindfully during periods when human and naturally triggered avalanches are not expected or reported

- We have relatively high confidence in our assessment of the terrain, conditions, and team members, and we have the training and experience to make good terrain decisions in this familiar situation.

- This mindset assumes a low chance of avalanches with no persistent slab or windslab problems. We are aware that these factors, combined with a forecast for good visibility are fundamental to managing avalanche risk on steep, open terrain, and on complex terrain with multiple avalanche slopes and terrain traps. We know this type of terrain may have limited options to reduce exposure once committed.
- Our team members are in agreement that it is appropriate today to venture out into more exposed avalanche terrain. We are mindful of the potential consequences that come with increased exposure, and we are prepared to back off and/or use alternative terrain options

4.) TIME IT EARLY

Prior to incoming storms or during spring-like conditions, travel when the hazard is low

- We anticipate low hazards early but that conditions will significantly deteriorate during the day.
- Our plan considers that rain or radiation/warm temperatures—and alternatively incoming snowfall and wind—can quickly increase the hazard and result in unstable snow.
- We recognize that it can be complex to predict the interaction between weather and mountain slopes, and we aim to build in a margin for error by starting early and returning early, putting us out of harm's way with time to spare

Credit:

Colin Zacharias and Powder Cloud

<https://thepowdercloud.com/learn/avalanche-education/terrain-tips-no-4-know-where-not-to-go/>