

About the AVPro – Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why should I take this course – how is it different from a Level 3?

A: This course fills a unique niche for the US. It builds upon the snow physics and avalanche mechanics taught in level 1 and level 2 courses. Snow, weather, and avalanche observation techniques are refined and taught to the standard presented in the SWAG. As yet there are no guidelines for Level 3 courses in the US, but a common theme for most of those courses is an emphasis on operational forecasting and guiding techniques. The AVPro course will emphasize the skills that are necessary to make good stability assessments, bring companion rescue skills to a high standard and address formal rescue procedures as well. Part of the course will be spent looking at the avalanche control procedures of the local ski areas and highways.

In short, this course will fully prepare its participants for involvement in the avalanche industry and set them up well to move into operational forecasting in the future.

Q: Will this course just be a long level 2 review?

A: While elements of level 1 and 2 courses will be revisited and examined, the AVPro course will build upon the baseline knowledge from those courses. Documentation and standards are emphasized to different degrees on Level 1 and level 2 courses around the US, they will be mastered on the AVPro course. Snow science will be viewed in light of recent research, avalanche mechanics will be applied to stability analysis techniques, and new topics will be addressed that are not common to most level 1 and level 2 courses. These topics include (but are not limited to): Common mistakes made by avalanche professionals, repeated mistakes in avalanche rescue, decision making support strategies, decision traps and heuristics, dealing with the media, avalanche control routes and safety protocols, shot selection and placement, accident scene documentation, and many others. A complete class list will be available on the AAA website before the course.

Q: Will the AVPro course certify me?

A: Upon successful completion of the course, the participants will be certified AVPro graduates. It will take a few years for ALL of avalanche industry to recognize what this means. A detailed course summary will be written at the end of the course and participants will be given a written evaluation.

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Q: How does this course relate to the Canadian Avalanche Association Industry Training (CAAIT) Level 1 course?

A: This course will be comparable to the CAAIT Level 1 course in several ways. First it is pass/fail – there are standards to be taught and subsequently mastered. Second, it will provide intensive training for snow, weather, and avalanche observations and their documentation. Third, it will solidify rescue skills and test to a high standard.

The differences include training in avalanche control procedures for ski areas and highways, emphasis on human factors that directly relate to practitioner safety, and more scenario/case study based learning.

Q: How will I be evaluated?

A: The instructors will keep notes throughout the course on the participant's performance in a number of areas. The participants will be advised in a timely manner of areas that need more work or improvement. Some skills will be examined specifically during dedicated time slots, while others are on an ongoing basis. Specifics are available on the Performance Standards and Evaluation document.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: Contact the course coordinator: Sarah Carpenter
sarahlovesnow@yahoo.com or at (208) 787-4235