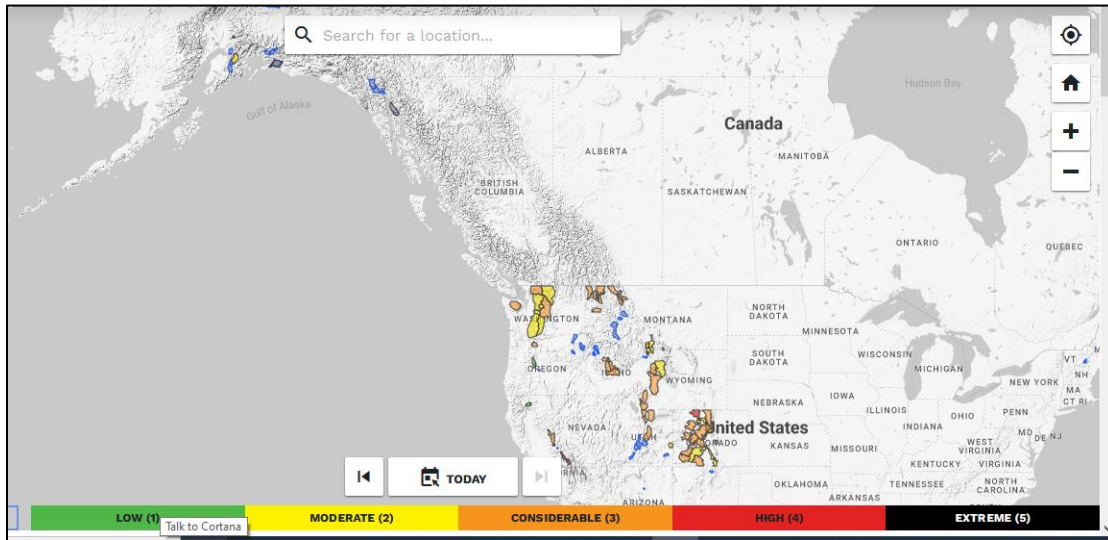


12/3/2022

This morning's post is about national and regional avalanche centers along with related topics., Let's start out by all getting "on the same page" and go to the URL: [www.avalanche.org](http://www.avalanche.org).

Avalanche.org is home to the National Avalanche Center's interactive website and is a website operated by both the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the American Avalanche Association (A3). It is a great website to begin our discussion about centers located across the United States as well as the website itself.



[www.avalanche.org](http://www.avalanche.org)

In looking at the map on [avalanche.org](http://avalanche.org) you'll notice a bunch of colors on it. This map is interactive and allows the user to adjust the detail of the map area as well as click on the colored areas to access avalanche information related to that geographic area. If you zoom in, out, and pan around this map, clicking on colors, you'll notice there is a wide array of centers located throughout the western United States, a center in New Hampshire on the east coast, and also a few centers in Alaska.

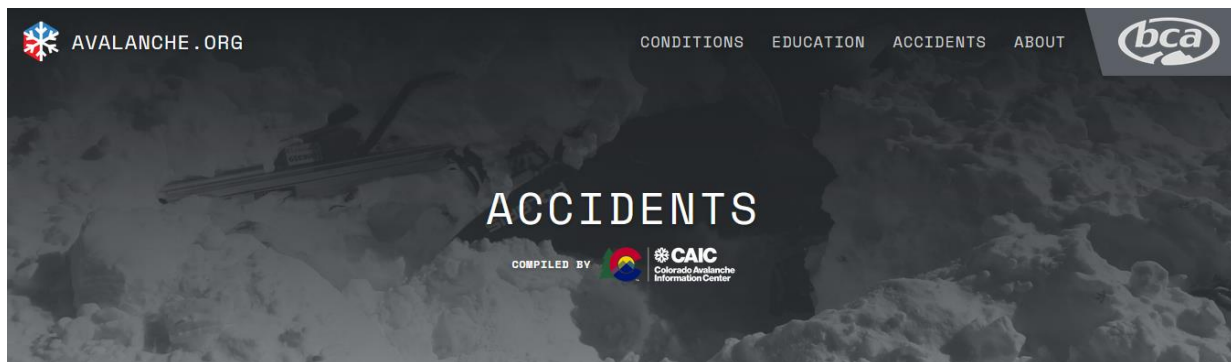
You'll also notice this map is specifically related to the United States. It is not an informational source for areas in Canada or outside North America. At this time, a lot of the colored areas are not active in regards to providing avalanche information yet. This component of the map will change soon as centers become active for the upcoming season. The colors represented on the map correlate with a specific center's forecast area avalanche danger rating for a specific time period.

The other obvious theme of [avalanche.org](http://avalanche.org) is the amount of information related to avalanche safety located on the website. Check it out. A main component, certainly worth viewing this the embedded video on the website explaining the North American Avalanche Danger Scale and how it is applied in avalanche forecasts for individual avalanche center danger ratings.

There are also links to both the NAC and A3 on the website.

- The NAC acts as an umbrella entity for all regional avalanche centers around the Country while also providing support for USFS-partnership avalanche mitigation programs.
- A3 is the go-to for those interested in avalanche education options and avalanche-related employment announcements. It is also the portal for the A3 “Membership Directory” for both supporting, affiliate, and professional members.
  - Joining A3 is easy and provides membership options based on interest and involvement in the avalanche safety community.
  - Tax- deductible donations can also be submitted on the A3 website with funds raised going towards public-based avalanche safety products and services.

Finally, I would like to point out the link-bar at the top of the page and specifically the link “Accidents.” Clicking on this link will allow you to access seasonal avalanche-related information as well as historic statistical data related to avalanche accidents dating back to 2006. The Accident database is a very powerful component of the website and a component of the website provided by the Colorado Avalanche Information Center (CAIC).



It is important to mention that all of these centers accessible on avalanche.org, along with the NAC and A3 are, in part, publicly supported by donations and in-kind contributions. Yes, there is certainly government funding through tax dollars, but this funding alone is a just part of the financial-backing required to keep avalanche safety information current and accessible to the public in the most accessible format(s).

A partnership between USFS Centers and a supporting non-profit organization is the common theme for most regional avalanche centers in the US. Simply, the USFS Center are providing products and services to assist users on public lands with education and decision-making tools (forecasts) while the non-profit entity fortifies the Center with monetary support and perhaps additional products and services. The details of partnership arrangements vary between each individual regional center..



With that said, I'd like to focus on the workings of my regional avalanche center the Flathead Avalanche Center (FAC) located in northwest Montana, To access avalanche safety-related information products and services online, you have two main choices...

You can either click on the FACs .region, located on the interactive map (previously discussed) at [www.avalanche.org](http://www.avalanche.org) or you can go directly to the website: [www.flatheadavalanche.org](http://www.flatheadavalanche.org) .

FAC, and many other avalanche centers in the US, are entities of the USFS, and receive oversight from the NAC. FAC operates as a component of the Flathead National Forest (FNF) and is responsible for providing avalanche related information, forecasts, and education to the public on behalf of FNF. Avalanche forecasts (forecasts) are provided seven (7) days a week by FAC and when posted, are valid for 24 hours from the time of posting. Forecasts, along with avalanche danger scale ratings are pertinent only to areas within FAC's specified region and applicable only to areas outside the boundaries of developed ski areas.

To get forecasts out to the public on a tight timeline requires a dedicated staff of professional forecasters, employees of the USFS, along with monetary and infrastructure support provided by FACs non-profit partner, Friends of the Flathead Avalanche Center (FOFAC).



Donations/ contributions submitted to FOFAC are utilized to assist FAC in providing forecasts to the public, which started today 12/3/22, and to fortify the conveyance of avalanche-safety related information to the public. This information is provided through public avalanche-related safety presentations, avalanche awareness events, classroom/ field-based avalanche courses, and an annual avalanche safety workshop.

The annual workshop, the Northern Rockies Avalanche Safety Workshop (NRSAW), is a one-day event that is organized through the efforts of both FOFAC and FAC volunteers and staff. The gathering takes place in the fall (November) and provides an opportunity for avalanche professionals and those who recreate in the mountains to gather and collaborate. NRSAW is also a significant fundraising event for FOFAC.



Main topics covered at NRSAW vary year to year and are presented by pre-determined speakers. It is a great way to start the season and if you have the opportunity to join us for the next season's NRSAW, please do.

And if you like the idea of NRSAW and might not be able to attend, no worries because there are numerous fall workshops offered around the United States. Just check in with specific regional Centers for details and figure out which workshop(s) your headed too next season.

That's it for now. Take care, and be safe.