



Slide rules

Avalanche training

It's avalanche season in Lake Tahoe, and the North American Ski Training Center (NASTC) wants to make sure skiers are prepared with avalanche training.

The American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education (AIARE) has been developing standardized curriculum for avalanche training, for students ranging from recreational enthusiasts to ski resort professionals.

NASTC offers courses in everything from novice skiing to rock climbing to back country and avalanche training, and starting this month, they'll be offering AIARE Avalanche training Level 1 and Level 2.

"Each year more skiers are venturing into the backcountry, lured by the opening up of resort boundary lines and the promise of pristine powder fields and underpopulated terrain," reads a NASTC blog post. "However, with more access, the risk has never been greater, and the need to know basic safety protocols, rescue techniques, avalanche hazard awareness and management are essential to survival and having a great time out there."

In 2018, AIAIRE created both a recreational and professional path for avalanche education providers, which is how NASTC became partnered with the program. NASTC has been offering educational training for 15 years and was able to offer the two levels of AIARE training easily.

Level 1 Avalanche training is based out of Truckee and is geared towards strong intermediate to expert skiers. The AIARE curriculum is a three-day seminar designed to give students an understanding of how avalanches are formed, hone observation skills, teach how to dig a snow pit, and more.

There are three basic types of avalanches—dry slabs of snow, wet avalanches and powder avalanches. Dry slab avalanches typically travel 60 to 80 miles per hour. Wet avalanches usually travel much slower, around 20 miles per hour. Powder avalanches have been known to move at 190 miles per hour.

The course begins promptly at 8 a.m. at the Cedar House Sport Hotel—10918 Brockway Road, Truckee—with an indoor orientation and classroom work. The first two days will be spent in the classroom until lunch, and afternoons will be in the field. Day three will begin with one hour in the classroom and the rest of the day in the field. There will be a chance to change into warmer clothes before heading outdoors.

The course runs each day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a break for lunch.

The dates for Level 1 are Dec. 13-15; Jan. 18-20; Jan. 31-Feb. 2; Feb. 15-17. The price for Level 1 is \$495.

Level 2 Avalanche training is also based out of Truckee. The AIARE course is a three-day program that provides "avid backcountry skiers" the opportunity to enhance their avalanche preparedness. This is an advanced safety course for the general public. The focus for Level 2 is on analyzing snow stability and avalanche hazards. The book *Snowpack, Weather and Avalanches: An Observational guideline* is required reading for the course.

The dates for Level 2 are Dec. 8-10 and March 8-10. The price for Level 2 training is also \$495.

NASTC also offers one-day avalanche rescue courses in Levels 1 and 2, which are standalone courses separate from the avalanche training courses and are meant to be retaken on a regular basis in order to keep up to date with the best industry practices, according to NASTC.

New participants will learn the basics of rescue, and returning students will expand their skills with realistic scenario practices.

Dates for the Level 1 and Level 2 Avalanche Rescue Day courses are Dec. 7 and March 7 for Level 1, and Dec. 8-10 and March 8-10 for Level 2. □

To learn more about avalanche training courses and NASTC, visit skinastc.com

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