

Heliguides 1 Avalanche Course Information

Note

Our heliguides courses are specialized professional-oriented avalanche training courses parallel to but outside the American Avalanche Association (AAA) Level 1 to 3 course progression. Alaskan heliskiing requires more rigorous training than the usual course progression allows for.

The Heliguides 1 is a 42 hour course that begins at the introductory level like a conventional Level 1 but goes into far more depth, covering much of the material in most Level 2s. It is equivalent to a AAA Level 1.5. Cost including textbooks is \$450.

The Heliguides 2 is a 51 hour course oriented to preparing serious working guides. It qualifies them to take an AMGA-recognized Level 3 the following year if they want to go for AMGA guide certification. It is equivalent to a AAA Level 3, plus the AMGA-prerequisite SWAG module. It costs \$750, including the SWAG text and fieldbook.

If you have taken an American Avalanche Association AvPro course or a Canadian Avalanche Association Level 1 or 2 course, you can use that in place of the Heliguides 1. Sorry but no other courses count. Our courses are specific to heliguiding in Alaska; they include material that is not even in the AAA or CAA professional courses.. No others are thorough enough.

We allow former guide-schoolers to sit in on classroom field sessions, and to help on field sessions. Otherwise, if you sit in you pay - no exceptions!

We keep current handouts posted on the education > course handouts pages of the Alaska Avalanche Specialists website, akavalanches.com. Be sure to read all the Topic Handouts before the course. The handouts comprise a detailed text geared to our course.

You will need your own field gear including snowshoes, touring skis with skins, or splitboard with skins (NO POSTHOLING!), and snow study tools. We will bring Bruce Tremper's *Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain*, our fieldbooks, and clinometer cards.

This outline is a framework, not a fixed schedule. We work with constantly-changing weather conditions and field and logistical circumstances. We will juggle the components and timing to provide you the best course possible for the conditions we have.

We schedule these courses with one extra day for flying weather allowance. Be sure to set aside the extra day in case we need it.

The most essential course requirement is to show up and participate! Be there on time and ready to go no later than 7:45 am (6:45 pm for evening sessions); you have not completed the course and will not get your card if you are not there. We will announce new times when we must make changes. It is your responsibility to pay attention for changes and updates.

Alaska Avalanche Specialists contacts: 907-523-8900, or aascom@mac.com.

Day 1

Evening Classroom

- Videos
- Introductions
- Course Overview
- Terrain

Day 2

Morning Classroom

- Snowpack I - Mechanics and Weather
- Rescue

Rescue Field Session

- Travel - Either local or skin/snowshoe day.
- Probing
- Single beacon search
- Multiple beacon search
- Practice and Scenarios

Evening Classroom

- Snowpack II - Metamorphism, How Snow Changes
- Practical - Terrain Classification

Day 3

Morning Classroom

- Snowpack III - Stability Evaluation
- Practical - Tiltboard

Snow Day 1 Field Session

- Travel - Skin/snowshoe day; practicing up and down-guiding.
- Field snow study
 - Stability 1 Observations
 - Stability 2 Slope and Traveling Tests
 - Stability 3 Snowpits, note-taking for classroom session

Evening Classroom

- Human Factor I - Risk Management
- Practical - Writing Field Observations; Mark gear for AK Block tests.

Day 4

Morning Classroom

- Human Factor II - Decision-making
- Practical - Case Histories

Snow Day 2 Field Session

- Travel - Heli dropoff and ride out if weather permits, skin/snowshoe if not.
- Field snow study practical - coached stability evaluation fieldwork and note-taking

Evening Classroom

- Glaciers and Ice Avalanches
- Practical - Coached Small Group Field Observations Writeup

Day 5

Morning Classroom

- Steeps and Sluff Management
- Practical - Decision-making

Putting It All Together Field Session

Travel - Heli runs if weather permits, heli dropoff and ride out or skin/snowshoe if not.
Practical - small group route-finding, stability evaluation, risk management, decision-making.

After Field Session

Course Wrapup; no evening classroom session.