

North America Outdoor Institute

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Governor Parnell proclaims November Avalanche Awareness Education Month

November 1, 2009. Alaska offers endless opportunities for winter recreation and backcountry travel. But with those opportunities come potential dangers. For more than a decade, Alaska has lead the nation in per-capita avalanche related deaths.

Governor Parnell declares November Avalanche Awareness Education Month and encourages all Alaskans to take the time to get informed before heading for the hills with your snowmachines, skis, snowboards, snowshoes, X-C skis, dog sleds or driving any vehicle over a mountain pass.

The North America Outdoor Institute, H2O Guides, the Alaska Avalanche School and the Chugach National Forest Service have a full schedule of classes available this winter to help you get the training needed to make informed decisions about when and where to recreate.

Courses range from free awareness programs for the beginner or those looking for a refresher to intensive multi-day mechanized access and mountain rescue training. Whatever your skill level, budget or interests, you'll find something to meet your needs and recreation desires.

A good day on the slopes can turn tragic in an instant. Learning to be aware and avoid potential dangers often makes the difference between a great day and one that leaves a wound you or your family will never heal from. Alaskan headlines are plagued with stories that warn about snowmobilers lost in glacier crevasses, skiers buried under tons of snow and snowboarders caught in terrain traps. The majority of these accidents could have been avoided or prevented with some basic preparedness, practical awareness skills and a few simple changes in plans or protocols.

You can ride and play on the slopes in Alaska many days without a problem. But if you don't know when it's a day you should go bowling instead of heading to Hatcher, Thompson or Turnagain Pass, you could be at risk.

Take time this month to attend a training program offered around the state to find out what you can do to avoid becoming a statistic. Learn more at www.NAOIAK.org or call 907-376-2898.

Make this winter one to remember with great memories. Learn how you can Be Snow Smart.

November Education programs available:

Nov 6: Be Snow Smart Avalanche awareness at REI from 6-8 p.m. \$10 donation suggested
Nov 7, 8: NAOI & CNFAIC Avalanche awareness information at West High /Free
Nov 11, 18, 25: Fireside Chats with Chugach Avalanche Information Center at Girdwood / Free
Nov 21: NAOI "Be Snow Smart" Avalanche field workshop – Hatcher Pass – 10 am to 4 pm - \$45
Dec 12: NAOI - Wasilla Safe and Sound Christmas Fair – Menard Sports Center /Free (Snowmobile, Avalanche and snowmobile helmet safety education program \$45 includes a helmet)