AVALANCHES

The swift downhill movement of a large mass of snow, ice, earth, rock, and other material.

CAUSES

REQUISITE CONDITIONS

Significant accumulation of snow

Snow layers with different densities

Slopes steeper than 20 to 30 degrees (35 to 40 degrees pose the greatest risk)

TRIGGERS

Human movement and voice vibrations

Earthquakes

Increase in temperature

Heavy rain or snow events

IMPACTS

Damage to homes and businesses

Injury or loss of life

Damage to roads, sewer systems, power and telephone lines

Economic impacts from damaged businesses and reduced tourism

Reducing Risk

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Find out if you live, work, or travel through a known avalanche zone

Learn to identify warning signs and triggering events

Sign up for emergency notifications

Check current conditions and forecasts before doing outdoor activities

Get professional advice about the use of protective structures

WHAT YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN DO:

Develop a buyout program and relocate homes in high-risk areas

Adopt and require Avalanche Design Standards to reduce vulnerabilities

Trigger controlled avalanches to prevent dangerous levels of snow accumulation

Develop an Avalanche Path Study Area Map and conduct a specific avalanche-hazard study

Delineate areas of known and potential avalanche paths

Adopt an avalanche ordinance to restrict development in high-risk areas and limit access during post-avalanche periods

Protect vulnerable structures and infrastructure using protective measures such as retention, redistribution, or catchment structures

For more information on avalanche risk reduction, please contact the State of Alaska Risk Mapping, Assessment and Planning (Risk MAP) Coordinator, Sally Russell Cox at sally.cox@alaska.gov, (907) 269-4588.

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