

Avalanche Hazard Mapping For Snowmobiles and Other Winter Trail Users

Bob Comey, Chris Mccollister

Bridger-Teton National Forest Avalanche Center / Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Jackson, WY, USA

Snowmobilers have become the most likely user group in the United States to become involved in a fatal avalanche (Utah Avalanche Center, 2008). Greater awareness and education is necessary. Wyoming has over 3,000 kilometers of maintained trails that are machine groomed for winter use. These trails are extremely popular, and are frequented by winter travelers with a large variation in avalanche knowledge and experience. The trails avoid most avalanche prone slopes; however, along some portions of the trails avalanches are a threat to trail users and trail grooming/maintenance personnel. To address this problem avalanche specialist used global positioning satellite (GPS) and geographic information system (GIS) technologies to locate and characterize the avalanche hazard impacting a portion of these trails. Avalanche hazard maps and accompanying text were created and posted on the internet at jhalanche.org/statetrailmaps/. This website is expected to be a useful means to raise avalanche awareness among this important user group.