Avalanche hazard management without mitigation action

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My presentation is about my experiences at a mechanized guide service where I was hired to develop a hazard forecasting and guiding program. And how we were successfully able to forecast and manage the avalanche hazard instead of using mitigation action.

There were no operational records from the previous management, so I had to start at the beginning. The previous management operation plan was over resourced, using heavy mitigation and a guide staff with little to no formal training. I started a forecasting program that utilized industry-recording standards and a guiding program with a professional guide staff that possessed industry standard qualifications.

This process produced a significant learning outcome. For the first time in my career I was able to put theory to practice on a daily basis through using recording standards and a knowledgeable staff. We were able to predict avalanche hazard, manage terrain, and educate clientele on companion rescue and backcountry philosophy giving them a better understanding of real and perceived hazard. This also increased situational awareness among our staff and our clients.

The staff also benefits by gaining a strong understanding involving the complexities of slab avalanche instabilities, trigger points, and slope configuration. By using recording standards and documentation the staff members are empowered to work independently and communicate more effectively, giving every guide the role of Hazard Forecaster.

To conclude we were able to forecast and manage the avalanche hazard instead of using mitigation action, with the implementation of standardized recording, qualifications, and educating clientele.