

The Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale in Alaska

Sean Mcmanamy¹ Eeva Latosuo² Wiliam Corwin² Sean Brennan³

1. Alaska Pacific University, Girdwood, AK, USA
2. Alaska Pacific University, Anchorage, AK, USA
3. Private Practice, Hope, AK, USA

Avalanche terrain, inclement weather, and multiple snow climates create a dynamic winter environment within Alaska. Turnagain Pass, in south-central Alaska, has widespread avalanche terrain use but no common discourse between users. Avalanche terrain use associates every aspect of backcountry recreation with voluntary exposure to avalanche hazards.

The Canadian Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale v.1/04 (ATES) isolates terrain as the static variable in avalanche terrain use. Canadian ATES materials connect avalanche awareness, education and forecast with terrain orientation. The ATES provides a common discourse for topographical hazards appropriate worldwide. Additionally, the ATES establishes a universal concept for avalanche hazard mitigation viable in Alaska. It provides terrain-based framework for the anticipation of avalanches and concise communication over large areas.

This project recognizes that: (1) ATES is a feasible systematic approach to classifying avalanche terrain in Alaska. (2) ATES Public Communication and Technical Models are suitable for south-central Alaska specifically Turnagain Pass. (3) Adaptation is needed for integration into Alaskan avalanche curriculum.

This poster uses ATES discourse to classify popular terrain and examine avalanche terrain use at Turnagain Pass. Intended audiences include public and professional avalanche terrain use communities in coastal snowpacks.