

SNOWCRAFT AND SKI MOUNTAINEERING

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Abstract¹

Based on 38 years of accident-free ski-mountaineering, the author has prepared an instruction booklet which discusses in layman's terms snow metamorphism, avalanche formation, terrain features, route finding, slab recognition, group conduct, and related topics. Emphasis is placed on recognition of danger signs through practical techniques available in the field (e.g., use of ski poles).

The author makes a plea that more information be published in practical terms, and that an attempt be made to bridge the gap between scientific research and the needs of the back-country skier. There is a continuing need for public education, since this is the way to realize the greatest gains in avalanche safety.

Discussion

THYER: How do you make your ski pole test?

BRADLEY: It depends on the layering. Sometimes you have to push in your pole slowly and gently to feel out the weak layers. Many ski-tourers cram in their poles too quickly. If you have a hard layer over a weak layer, it may be necessary to invert the pole.

ARMSTRONG: You mention that the push of a ski pole can be used to find weak layers. At our area, you will always be able to find a weak layer in the snowpack.

BRADLEY: Then you must always take precautions

¹Copies of the full-length booklet were distributed to workshop participants. Limited copies are still available on request by writing directly to Mr. Bradley.