

Survey of Ski Cutting Procedures - First Results. Spring 2021

For assessing (not evaluating) procedures. Many procedures not relevant/desirable for all operations.

This checklist approach may be biased against general guidance.

Some points may have few responses because survey methods varied and preceded this list (pre April 2021)

Some operations may have specific procedures that don't fit this list, e.g. observers in helicopter

Transceiver/shovel/probe for each team member assumed.

*Some points may have few responses because they are assumed or included in general SOPs, e.g. releasable bindings, team of 2, helmets

"Cornice stomping" excluded.

Specifications/guidelines for ski cutting procedures

How are practices specified/communicated

Written

Primarily on-the-job training/mentoring (not written)

General/informal

None

Country

United States

Canada

Type of operation (partitioning by op type desirable ... maybe later)

Ski area (with lifts)

Backcountry guiding (heli/snowcat/touring)

Gov't agency, e.g. highways, parks, forecast center

Other (resource industry, training schools, non-gov forecast center, etc)

Ski cutting allowed

Ski cutting allowed and explosives used

Objective

Exclude mitigation, i.e. slope testing only

Guidance for preferring/requiring other methods, e.g. explosives

Training

Start of season for all

Early season training for new/junior team members

Specific mentoring by a senior practitioner

People/team

Min 2 people

Qualifications specified for ski cutter (e.g. guide, full time or approved/senior practitioners)

Observer must be a practitioner

Communication (see also on-site actions)

Radio for ski cutter & observer *
Radio com to base/supervisor for each ski cut

Terrain

Pre-assessed, e.g. on map of control routes
Small/short slope
No terrain trap
General guidance for observer's position, e.g. low risk
Specified position for observer for specific ski cuts

Snowpack

Restrict av prob types, e.g. exclude deep/hard slabs
Limit to loose (D/W) and recent storm
Allow wind slabs
Limit to wind slabs to recent soft wind slabs
Upper limit on expected av size
Upper limit on depth of expected failure layer
Specify threshold (size/problem type) for switch to explosives

Equipment

Releasable bindings *
Airbag req'd for ski cutter
Helmet req'd for ski cutter
Rope req'd for specific slopes/conditions
Ski cutter on snowboard excluded

Actions on site

Deliberate re-assessment by field team before each cut, e.g. on-site veto by each team member
Cut from low risk to low risk location
Escape plan stated before each cut
Maintain momentum during cut
Specified alternatives to maintain momentum
No explosives in ski cutter's pack