

Successes and Challenges of Snowmobile Education

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For the last 24 years, the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center has achieved many successes in snowmobile avalanche education but many challenges remain. Building on the efforts of many others and the work outlined by the GNFAC at an ISSW twelve years ago, our snowmobile education has evolved considerably. Live recoveries, unheard of only 10 years ago, seemingly occur every winter now. Montana contains some of the top destinations in the U.S. for mountain snowmobiling and receives a sizable number of riders from Canada as well. While there has been a severe drop in new snowmobile sales during the last 10 years, snowmobile registrations in Montana have doubled. The good news is that number of fatalities in this time has remained flat, but Montana continues to lead the U.S. in snowmobile avalanche fatalities with 23 in the last ten years. This paper will discuss recent avalanche accidents and use them to illustrate topics in snowmobile avalanche education that work and ones that don't.

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