

2007 Reading Released Items

Directions: Read the selection and answer the questions.

Avalanche by Stephen Kramer

A Chilling Experience

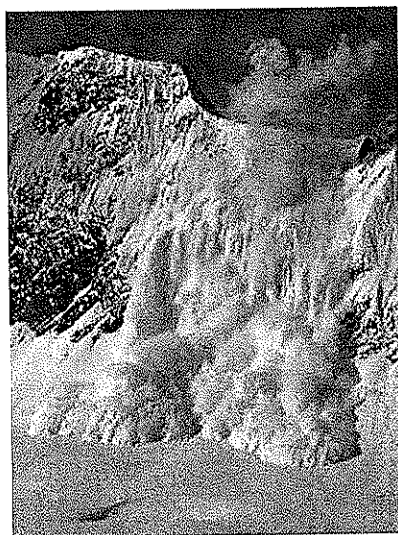
- 1 Avalanches happen so often and in so many places that avalanche experts cannot keep track of them all. Everyone who spends time in snowy mountains needs to watch out for avalanches. But each year, snowslides catch skiers, snowmobilers, and travelers by surprise.



Avalanches occur often.

- 2 People who have been swept away by an avalanche usually have clear memories of the moving snow's power. Paul Baugher was skiing in Washington State when he was caught in a snowslide. The snow carried him down through trees and over a cliff. He described it like this:

- 3 *I tried to ski to safety, but the snow caught me. It buried me and swept me downhill. I felt like I was shooting along in a fast-moving stream.*



Avalanches move swiftly.

I curled my body into a tight ball. The snow bounced me off a tree, and I lost my skis and poles. The next thing I remember was a feeling of floating as the snow carried me over the cliff.

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After the avalanche shot over the cliff, it fell down onto a road below. As the avalanche began to slow down, Paul Baugher was able to fight his way to the top of the snow. His skis and poles had disappeared, and his goggles were full of snow. But his only injury was a large bruise from hitting the tree.

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Warm-hearted Rescuer

Many people (and animals) are not as fortunate as Paul Baugher was. When an avalanche races down a hillside, there is usually lots of air mixed in with the moving snow. But when the avalanche stops, the snow crystals pack tightly together. The air is forced out.

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- 7 The snow often becomes very hard. People buried by an avalanche usually cannot move their arms or legs—even if they are covered by only one or two feet of snow. They must depend on others to rescue them.



Members of trained avalanche rescue teams find people buried by avalanches and dig them out.

- 8 In many mountain areas, there are avalanche rescue teams ready to help. Members of these teams are trained to find people buried by avalanches and to dig them out.
- 9 Speed is important in all rescue work. People trapped under snow eventually run out of air to breathe. The longer it takes to dig someone out of the snow, the less chance there is that the person will still be alive.
- 10 Rescuers usually start by making a quick search of the area where the avalanche happened. They check downhill from the last place the person caught by the avalanche was seen. They look for a glove, hat, ski tip, or any other sign that the buried person is near the surface of the snow. If no sign is found, rescuers search with avalanche probes. An avalanche probe is a long, thin, metal rod. The rescuers form a tight line and march together slowly, pushing their probes deep into the snow at each step. The rescuers hope a probe will touch the buried person so they will know where to dig.
- 11 Mountain hikers and skiers are fortunate that avalanche rescue teams are trained and ready to find the victims of snow's moving power.