



NSP AVALANCHE COURSE DELIVERY COVID-19 GUIDELINES August 2020



Prepared by NSP National Avalanche Committee

The following guidelines are recommended for safe delivery of NSP avalanche courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. These guidelines are based on current Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for preventing the spread of COVID-19 and specific program delivery recommendations made by the NSP National Avalanche Committee.

Based on current knowledge of how COVID-19 is spread the CDC recommends everyone take the following precautions:

- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid close contact.
- Cover mouth and nose.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Clean and disinfect.
- Monitor your health daily.
 - Stay at home if feeling sick.

For further details and updates on these recommendations visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

1. Follow the rules.

In addition to CDC recommendations many state and local governments have specific requirements for preventing the spread of COVID-19. All avalanche courses must adhere to federal, state, and local requirements in place at the time of the course as well as any NSP guidelines. Updates on NSP's response to COVID-19 may be found at:

<https://nspserver.org/covid-19-updates/>

2. Allow for social distancing.

- Evidence suggests that lengthy indoor gatherings expose people to larger viral loads than brief indoor gatherings or outdoor gatherings. For this reason, consider holding as many of the in-person class meetings as possible outdoors. Outdoor meetings in warm months are preferable to indoor meetings in cold months.
- Whenever feasible, use internet-mediated facilities such as Zoom WebEx, or other media in place of indoor course meetings.
- Conducting as much learning as possible in the field is preferable over in-person classroom sessions.
- For indoor, in-person meetings, seek well-ventilated spaces, and plan for short interactions with frequent breaks. Do not schedule in-person, indoor gatherings involving more people than federal, state, local, and NSP guidelines, if any, permit or recommend.
- Minimize physical contact among participants. Ensure that participants, indoors or outdoors, can remain physically separated by at least 2 meters (roughly 6 feet) at all times.
- During in-person, indoor gatherings, require all participants—instructors and students—to wear masks. Ask students to agree to this protocol before the course starts.

3. Adopt safe administrative procedures.

- With the exception of web-based sessions all participants (instructors, students, and others) must complete and sign an NSP Avalanche Course COVID-19 Self-Certification Form. This form must be completed, signed, and submitted to the Instructor of Record within 24 hours prior to attending each session of a course. Any participant not submitting this form will not be allowed to attend the session.
- Spend time at the beginning of the course explicitly reviewing pandemic-related protocols, to promote students' confidence in the course and their willingness to adhere to the procedures.
- Set a good example: Follow the protocols that you have established, and make note of them as you do.

- If your course involves student fees, it is a good idea to advertise full refunds in cases where registered participants do not attend because of illness. This policy reduces incentives for people to participate when they are sick.

4. Add pandemic safety to the standard field-session safety measures.

- Transportation to and from field sessions should adhere to all distancing guidelines. A good rule for vehicle travel is to require participants to provide their own transportation to the trailhead for any field session and to recommend no more than one household per vehicle.
- To the extent possible, use areas close to home.
- Field sessions must include measures to avoid disease transmission via equipment handling, meals, drinking water, hand sanitizer, and other articles. Necessary field equipment should be carried by each participant and avoid sharing.
- If it is necessary to share equipment during field sessions the following guidelines are recommended:
 - Wear vinyl or nitrile gloves under normal gloves.
 - Wear eye protection.
 - Wear masks when handling equipment.
 - Remove and dispose of the protective gloves using procedures consistent with Outdoor Emergency Care, 6th edition, then wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Instructors may offer protective gloves prior to field sessions in which equipment is expected to be shared.
 - Instructors should provide a disposable waste bag for protective gloves and other waste.
- If equipment is loaned to participants by course instructors proper precautions must be taken to clean and disinfect such equipment each time it is exchanged.
- In certain outdoor activities, such as field-session travel, protective face coverings are neither necessary nor recommended. During aerobic activities, face coverings get wet with exhaled aerosols and are therefore potentially hazardous. But participants must keep protective face coverings readily available and wear them during low-intensity field activities, when passing other parties, when stopping for rests, or whenever separation of two meters or more is not feasible. Buffs® or equivalent headwear offer a convenient, multi-use option for the mountain environment.
- Use personal protective equipment (gloves, eye protection, masks) whenever administering first aid.
- As with all NSP field sessions, instructors must have, in advance of any course, an appropriate evacuation plan for participants who exhibit signs or symptoms of illness during a field session.

References

American Mountain Guides Association, Responsible Return to Work, <https://amga.com/responsible-return-work/>, retrieved 24 August 2020.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus (Covid-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html> , retrieved 24 August 2020.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Symptoms of Coronavirus, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html?utm_campaign=AC_CRNA, retrieved 24 August 2020.

Colorado Mountain Club, COVID-19 and Colorado Mountain Club Programming, <https://www.cmc.org/COVID-19andCMCProgramming.aspx>, retrieved 24 August 2020.

National Ski Patrol, <https://nsp.serves.org/covid-19-updates/> , retrieved 24 August 2020.