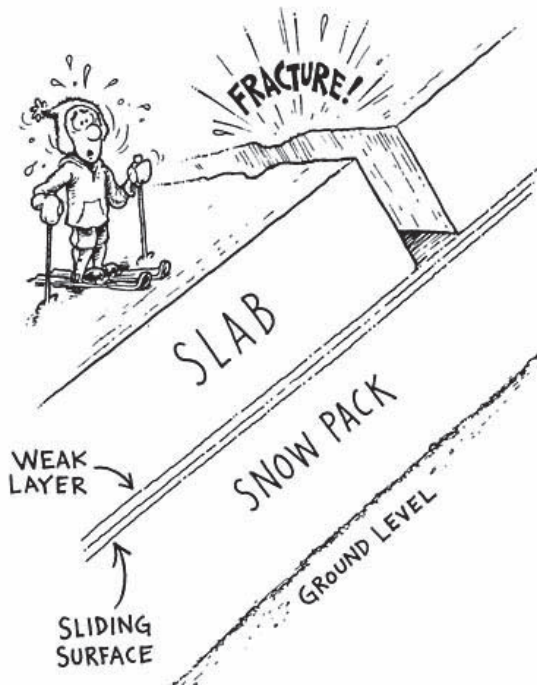


## Safety

## Avalanche Dangers - by Emilio Trampuz

## Safety

Avalanches seem like a remote possibility to many of us. We think it happens to other people in far away places. But, there have been fatal avalanches on Mount Hood, and at many ski areas we visit often. Also, during the one week we spent at Val d'Isere (France), there were at least 2 deaths from avalanches.



An avalanche usually happens after a fresh “dump” of new snow, just the conditions many of us love for powder skiing. Under certain conditions, the slope just cannot hold the new snow any more, and it suddenly slides down the hill at terrifying speed. If you get buried, you might have only 15 - 30 minutes before you suffocate.

Avalanches most often (but not exclusively) happen at slope angles between 35° and 45°, which is the equivalent of black and double-black diamond terrain, precisely where powder skiers go. Terrain that is less steep is less likely to slide, and terrain that is too steep usually doesn't hold enough snow.

A “slab” avalanche (illustrated here) happens when there is a weak layer of snow that hasn't bonded well with the snow pack. It could be a thin layer of light powdery snow, which is then covered by another foot of two of denser and wetter snow. At some point, that whole new layer of snow collapses and slides downhill under its own weight, because it hasn't had a chance to bond with the deeper layers.

That's why avalanches often happen after a rapid series of snowfalls, with snow of varying consistency, over a relatively short period of

time. It could take up to 2 weeks after the storm for all that new snow to settle and bond and become safer.

Avalanches are unpredictable, so play it safe. If in doubt about a particular slope, avoid it.

Avalanche safety is a complex topic. Educate yourself. A good place to start is [www.avalanche.org](http://www.avalanche.org). Or take a course with the American Avalanche Association: [www.americanavalancheassociation.org/education.html](http://www.americanavalancheassociation.org/education.html).

## Safety

## Turning Skills -- Safer Skiing in the 21st Century

## Safety

Here's another idea safer for skiing in the 21st century. It's part of an effort started in the July/August 2005 issue of Lift Lines #55-56. Ski areas could make the slopes **safer** by providing more opportunities for us to practice **controlled turning**, by simply setting up a variety of **fun obstacles** on the slopes. This would not only make the slopes more **fun**, but would also **slow traffic down**, make the slopes **safer**, and lift lines **shorter**. Urge ski areas to implement this idea. Here's just one of the ways:



### Set up a terrain park for turning!

Instead of jumps, give us something to turn around. Traffic cones, scattered all over the slope is just one inexpensive way to do that.

Just 30 cones were enough to create this fun little maze! Different people choose different paths, thus delaying the formation of ruts.

For more ideas, and the whole vision, see our web site at: [www.mthigh.org/Vision.htm](http://www.mthigh.org/Vision.htm).

