

### Trailhead Outreach FAQ

This document is intended to help you field some of the more difficult questions you may have to respond to while you partake in trailhead outreach. We **DO NOT** give directions and we provide no travel advise beyond what is written in the forecast or on the North American Avalanche Danger Scale cards.

How do I get to \_\_\_\_\_?

- **Response:** There are many routes and ways to get to \_\_\_\_\_. Are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center?
- **Rational:** NWAC cannot be responsible for someone getting lost or inadvertently traveling in terrain where they could encounter an avalanche, so we do not provide directions. Also, if people are recreating in the backcountry, in theory, they should know how to get where they are going.

Where would you go today?

- **Response:** We all have our own risk tolerances, experiences, and education and where I would travel today cannot dictate where you would go today. Are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center?
- **Rational:** The rational and response are the same for questions along this line. We also do not provide route, travel advise (outside the forecast), or directions b/c NWAC cannot be held liable for folks' decisions.

How do I identify avalanche terrain/how do I know if I'm entering avalanche terrain? Am I entering avalanche terrain today?

- **Response:** I don't know where you're traveling or which route you are taking today, so you may be entering avalanche terrain on your journey today. You can take one of NWAC's hundreds of free Avalanche Awareness classes, to have a better understanding of what avalanche terrain is. Are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center?
- **Rational:** We don't know where they are traveling, therefore we can't answer this question. Also, if you are traveling in the winter backcountry, they should have the tools to understand how to identify avalanche terrain and whether or not their route takes them into avalanche terrain.

This is my route; will I be entering avalanche terrain today?

- **Response:** I am unable to assess your travel plan. Are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center?
- **Rational:** Even though as a volunteer you may know the answer to this question, we need our messaging to be consistent across all trailhead outreach events, and knowledge varies from event to event; therefore we do not assess any trip plan or route plans.



Why should I care about the avalanche forecast?

- **Response:** You may encounter avalanche terrain on your trip today. And your decision making impacts your, your team, and other recreationists; so you should care about an avalanche forecast. Are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center?
- **Rational:** This question came up last year, and we thought it was very curious and worth providing some speaking notes. This plays into the previous question about entering avalanche terrain.

I'm not entering avalanche terrain today.

- **Response:** Great! Did you know that all of the trailheads we operate at access avalanche terrain in a short-day trip? Are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center?
- **Rational:** We cannot assume people do or don't know whether or not they are entering avalanche terrain, and we are not the mountain police.

What equipment do you recommend?

- **Response:** There are a ton of great manufacturers out there; I would recommend checking out your local gear shop and get their opinion. Are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center?
- **Rational:** We have no sponsorship associated with THO; therefore, we do not recommend any particular equipment.

Is it safe today?

- **Response:** A lot of factors go into making your outing "safe" including winter navigation, your skills and experience, understanding and applying both the Mountain Weather and Avalanche Forecast. Are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center? - This is a good time to speak to the avalanche forecast and the North American Danger Scale Card and call out specific language relating to the danger rating for the day.
- **Rational:** We don't know where they are traveling, their skills, experience, background, education. Also, low avalanche danger does not mean no avalanche danger. We cannot tell them if it's safe or not.

Is \_\_\_\_\_ that direction (pointing toward some destination)?

- **Response:** I am unable to answer that question, you can look it up on your map. Oh, you don't have a map. Hmmm, are you familiar with the Northwest Avalanche Center. – You could also refer them to the Forest Service if near a station.
- **Rational:** NWAC cannot be responsible for someone getting lost or inadvertently traveling in terrain where they could encounter an avalanche, so we do not provide directions. Also, if people are recreating in the backcountry, in theory, they should know how to get where they are going.

