



March 2021

[Support the UAC](#)

## What's New



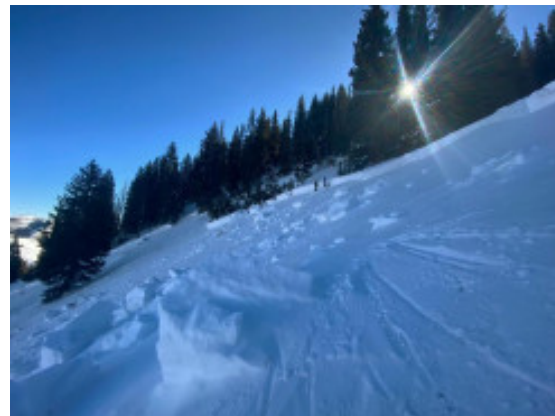
### Spring Awareness Campaign!

The [UAC's Spring Campaign](#) is here! UAC programs are growing to meet the demand of new and existing backcountry users, meaning big things are coming in the next year. See details below in the Giving Back section for how you can support these three initiatives:

- Adding new educational courses and increasing the number of existing classes offered.
- Expanding our avalanche awareness events.
- Building out a new UAC Avalanche Education Center.

### Fatalities in the West

So far this winter the U.S. has experienced 33 avalanche fatalities. Between January 30 and February 8, there were 16 fatalities in the western United States making that time frame the busiest for avalanche deaths in the past 100 years. Of the 33 total fatalities, [Utah accounts for six of that total](#), with one more just north of the border in southeast Idaho.



This is not a number avalanche centers take lightly, as our collective mission is to keep people from getting caught in avalanches. However, it seems this season was set up for the “perfect storm” with more users recreating in the backcountry and a fragile snowpack harboring weak sugary faceted snow.

The persistent weak layer is a problem that is tough to anticipate as we sometimes aren't given direct feedback while on the snow. As we saw throughout the season, a slope can be ridden five, six, seven times and not avalanche until the eighth track on the slope. This season also showed us the reality and seriousness of backcountry travel in unprecedented circumstances. For additional information on avalanche fatalities and accident reports, [visit the national database](#) recorded by the Colorado Avalanche Information Center.

## Meet the Staff

### Andy Nassetta

#### Personal Background

I grew up out East, skiing at two and holding on tight from there. From ski-racing to freeskiing, then on to ski coaching for Okemo and Killington Mountain Schools, moving west seemed to be the right move. I graduated from Westminster in 2017 and have been working for the UAC ever since. In the warmer months, my days are spent on wheels, motor or motorless, and sometimes climbing on the easy end of the rope.



#### Getting into the Business

I got into the avalanche industry after moving west for college, finding myself in some rather interesting backcountry situations and avalanches, and developing the desire to educate myself. I was hungry and wanted to kick down any door in the business I could find. I started volunteering with the UAC, later became an intern, and am now taking lead on running the UAC education programs. I also get to spend time teaching for the amazing crew over at the American Avalanche Institute, as well as some time forecasting out in the Uintas for the Park City Powder Cats operation.

#### Learning Moment

My greatest learning moment about avalanches comes from all that has occurred in my time since deciding to make this a career. From first-hand experiences with the avalanche dragon, to losing friends and coworkers, to putting it all together and nailing it when the time is right in the big mountains. My greatest takeaway from avalanches is patience, and what it means to have respect for the mountains.



### Advice

My one piece of advice for avalanches and the backcountry is to step back and take a look at the big picture. Shredding, avalanches, safety - the backcountry is not the place to always ski big lines in deep powder, it's different... it's special. Take your time, develop your style, and know when the time is right to go big, as well as when it's time to dial it back and jam low angle slopes with a big smile all day long. I'm happy to just be in the mountains.

## Tech Tips

### Spring!!!

Spring in the mountains is one of the best times of the year. Longer days and lots of sunshine bring on great corn riding, bigger objectives, and changing avalanche problems. While those pesky weak layers we've been worrying about all season become more and more dormant, we begin turning our attention to wet avalanches.



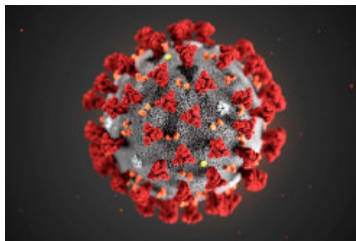
There can be two types of wet avalanches - wet slab avalanches and wet loose avalanches. Wet loose avalanches are much more common and happen predictably when we see roller balls or 'cinnamon rolls' beginning to fall down the mountain side, and sinking into the snow beyond your boot top. Wet slab avalanches are much more difficult to predict. Seeing wet slabs or hearing about ones happening in other places are the major clues. Also, multiple nights in a row when the snowpack doesn't refreeze can be a clue and a red flag for both types of wet avalanches.

So how do these changing conditions impact our route planning? We start earlier in the morning when the snowpack is refrozen and ride slopes just as they are beginning to warm and soften. We typically go home in the afternoon after the snow becomes very wet and the likelihood of wet avalanches goes up. This warming process typically happens first on east facing slopes and later in the day on west facing slopes. If you plan on riding a slope directly exposed to the sun, make sure you're down and clear before those clues above become apparent. As we get later into the season, this often means getting back to the car by noon. We also have to be aware of slopes above us that might be out of sight, as these wet slides have the ability to run extremely long distances.

A change in seasons also brings along a change in the way we pack our backpacks. A few extra pieces of gear get added to our stash in exchange for a few items that become obsolete as the temperatures begin to rise. For starters we don't have to carry as many layers as we would in the cold months; that big puffy jacket and extra

pair of gloves might be able to be left at home. For skiers and boarders, icy skin tracks and bulletproof bootpacks mean carrying a set of ski or boot crampons to make the difference between a great day in the mountains and a complete sufferfest. Additionally, wet snow in the afternoon can stick to your climbing skins leaving you with an extra 15-lbs of weight to move with each passing step. Keep some skin wax on hand and apply as necessary to keep your walk back to the car an enjoyable one.

For motorized users, make sure you have a good set of scratchers or start just a little later in the morning just as the icy snow begins to soften to help cool your sled. Check out the technique [in this video from Rob Alford](#). Last but not least, we can't forget an extra water bottle and sunscreen to keep our bodies happy and healthy. Spring is a great time to enjoy the mountains with your friends and family, and it only takes a little bit of extra preparedness to make that time even better.



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## The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Backcountry Skiing and Snowboarding

The University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine and Montana State University, in concert with The National Avalanche Center, are doing a brief survey of backcountry ski and snowboard use. From this survey they hope to learn if, and how, use of the winter backcountry has changed due to the coronavirus pandemic. If you ski or snowboard in the backcountry, please complete this survey. It should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. Thank You!

[Click here](#) to access the survey.

**Giving Back to the UAC**

## Spring Campaign 2021



As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, the UAC is committed to making every one of your days in the mountains the best possible by arming you with the information you need to come home safely. During this historic season, and despite many challenges, the UAC team has undertaken new initiatives and increased the number of courses and events we offer to meet the needs of our backcountry community. Our organization is growing and you can help us prepare to provide more programs and courses than ever before as we look forward to next season. We hope you'll be part of the UAC's next 40 years!

There are a lot of changes happening at the UAC in the coming year. Help us raise \$75,000 during this campaign to carry out these three exciting initiatives:

- Adding new educational courses and increasing the number of existing classes offered
- Expanding our avalanche awareness events like the Trailhead Avalanche Awareness Program
- Creating a new UAC Avalanche Education Center

Any amount you donate will help us toward our \$75,000 goal and make this vision a reality. You can also support the UAC by sharing this campaign and letting your network know why our work is important to you. Everyone who donate \$100 or more during the 2021 Spring Campaign will receive a special edition UAC 40th anniversary Black Rose pin to commemorate this historic season.

Visit our [campaign page](#) to make your contribution today!

## The Details

### Upcoming Classes

- March 23-24: [Backcountry 101 - Park City](#)

[More Class Info](#)

### Upcoming Events

- September 9: Backcountry Benefit - Salt Lake City

[More Event Info](#)

## Stay Connected

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