

Being avalanche aware with kids in the backcountry

By Katie Arnold, Outside

Just after the New Year, my husband and I skied in with our daughters and family friends to High Camp Hut, a rustic four-bedroom cabin without running water or electricity at 11,000 feet elevation in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado. This was our fourth backcountry ski trip in as many years, and we've become addicted to the silence and stillness that you only get when go off the grid for a few days.

To get to the hut, our group skied three miles, up 1,000 feet of vertical gain, and through a snowstorm. We had three kids on nordic skis and a fourth being pulled in a sled, and the meadow surrounding the log cabin was blanketed in pristine powder. All this is to say, our pace was anything but electric. But when we arrived, it felt as though we were the first people in the world to set foot in that gorgeous alpine basin rimmed by spiky 13,000-foot peaks.

The U.S. Forest Service's National Avalanche Center reports that, in the past decade, an average of 27 people died annually in avalanches in the U.S.—and not just in the big mountains out West. New York, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont all have recorded fatalities. The problem is happening overseas as well. For instance, last winter more than 100 people died in avalanches in the Alps.

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