

Probing Strategies

20151017-AVA-REC0011 Avalanche Rescue Commission Recommendation

To minimize search times, maximize survival chances and reduce risk to rescuers, it is recommended to apply the following procedure:

- 1) With limited resources, in cases with obvious terrain traps and around anchored surface clues, spot probe the most likely burial areas.
- 2) Coarse probe the likely burial areas:
 - a. On first passage limit the probing depth to 1,5m.
 - b. On second passage, probe with lateral offset and maximum probing depth.
- 3) Fine probe the entire avalanche debris including the immediately adjacent areas to maximum probing depth.
- 4) Remove the fine-probed debris to within 1m of the probed depth.
Repeat steps 2, 3 and 4.

Accurate marking allows a systematic continuation of probing in subsequent passages (according to AVA-REC0003).

Risk to rescuers and resource availability may influence the rescue procedure.

Slalom Probing

Slalom probing has been demonstrated to be an efficient coarse probing method.

- 1) Space rescuers 1.5m apart (outstretched arms, wrist to wrist) to create a 50 x 50 cm grid (88% probability of detection).
- 2) Ensure correct forward spacing by placing the probe forward 50cm before the forward step.

- 3) The leader is probing in the center and gives commands: "probe" - "right" - "right" - "forward" - "left" - "left"... and "align left to right", if required.
- 4) Probe at 90° to the slope surface in front of the rescuer.

If resources allow, split rescuers into multiple probe lines of 6 to 10.
Higher levels of rescuer training allow for longer probe lines.

In certain circumstances e.g. very rough/soft debris, forest, or untrained volunteers, other coarse probing methods may be more suitable.

A detailed description of the method is available in: SLALOM PROBING - A SURVIVAL CHANCE OPTIMIZED PROBE LINE SEARCH STRATEGY; 2014; Genswein M, Letang D, Jarry F, Reiweger I, Atknis D; Proceedings of ISSW 2014

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