



International Commission for Alpine Rescue

Organized Avalanche Rescue Probing Strategies

20251011-AVA-REC0011 Avalanche Commission Recommendation (Original 2015, Updated 2025)

Recommended Probe Specifications

ICAR recommends that avalanche rescue probes for rescue teams be at least 3 meters long and meet UIAA SafeCom 157 standards.

Search Procedure to Maximize Survival Chances and Minimize Risks

To optimize search efficiency for teams and enhance survival prospects for missing persons the following procedure is recommended. These techniques are used by organized rescue agencies looking for missing person(s) suspected to be buried in avalanche debris. Risk assessments should be completed by teams prior to rescue team members being placed on a slope.

Techniques:

- 1. Spot Probing** - During the initial phase of a response or when resources are limited. Focus probing efforts on obvious terrain traps and areas surrounding surface clues.
 - Probing in likely areas.
 - Consider removal of skis to ensure good probing strategies if conditions allow.
- 2. Coarse Probing with 50cmx50cm grid spacing**- Formed with up to 10 probers to maintain effective control. First probing pass to 1.5m depth and second pass with lateral and forward offset to 2.5m or greater depth. Common techniques such as Slalom Probing, 3 Holes per step (HPS), 2HPS.
- 3. Fine Probing with 25cmx25cm grid spacing**- Initiate after two passes of Coarse probing. Include adjacent areas, probing to a depth of at least 3m or the depth of the probe. Systematic and thorough probing of the avalanche debris is essential.

Marking of areas Probed - Refer to ICAR REC L 0003 E Marking of locations on an Avalanche

Additional Considerations:

- During Coarse and Fine Probe lines, probes held in a vertical orientation may make it easier to maintain consistent spacing for probe line members.
- Suspected probe strikes by a probe line member should be indicated to the probe line leader with a loud verbal confirmation. Leave the probe in place to allow additional probing and shovelers a depth and location to excavate.
- Organized probing strategies can be alongside other techniques, such as RECCO, dog or transceiver.
- Probe line member should ensure gloves are worn to prevent icing on the probe.