



EQUIPMENT LIST

AVALANCHE COURSES: LEVEL 1 – LEVEL 3

Alaska requires that backcountry travelers be prepared. In an effort to reduce exposure we have compiled an equipment and gear list. Every thing here is REQUIRED unless it states “optional.” Depending on conditions you may not need or use every single item listed below. However, as all of you know, Alaskan weather is unpredictable and it is best to be prepared for all types of conditions. During the field portions of the course there will be periods as long as an hour that you will be standing still for a demonstration, or to view and discuss terrain and snow conditions. You will also be moving often, so layer your outdoor clothing. Courses head out into the field in all weather conditions. We need to be prepared for snow, rain, wind, sun, frigid arctic temperatures and everything in between.

Please feel free to contact the AAS office if you have any questions about this list. **Our AAS office in Anchorage has a small avalanche specialty retail store, which sell gear denoted with an asterisk (*).** Our office staff will give the pros and cons of the various gear on the market and help you find the correct items for the backcountry.

Alaska Backcountry Rentals, LLC has alpine touring skis, skins, poles and boots for rent. Special rates if you mention you are doing a course with AAS. <http://alaskabcrentals.com/> email: info@alaskabcrentals.com

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT (the following items are required for ALL field portions of the course)

- ___ **Transceiver*:** Digital with direction arrows. **Must be less than 10 years old.** Older single antenna analog beacons such as Ortovox F1 and F2 are old technology and should not be used as a life saving device. AAS choice: BCA Tracker 2.
- ___ **Batteries:** Good idea to always carry an extra set of Alkaline batteries for your transceiver. No Lithium or rechargeable.
- ___ **Probe*:** Must be a minimum of 240cm. 260cm or longer recommended. A quality probe will have cable instead of string to hold it together and a quick and easy locking mechanism. AAS choice: BCA Stealth 300 or Black Diamond Quickdraw Guide (300cm) or Tour (265cm) Probe. Ski pole probes are not acceptable but can work as a backup.
- ___ **Shovel*:** Quality backcountry avalanche shovel. Must be metal, **no plastic shovels.** Also avoid cheap shovels such as the Life Line brand sold at Costco and Fred Meyer. AAS choice: BCA B2-EXT.
- ___ **Snow Saw*:** Required. AAS choice: Black Diamond Flicklock Snow saw.
- ___ **Inclinometer*:** This can be included in a compass or as a single plastic card. Bubble types not recommended. AAS choice: AAS inclinometer card with an Avalanche Hazard Checklist.

TRAVEL: (be familiar and have experience with your gear before the course)

- ___ **Skis:** Alpine Touring or Telemark skis with bindings and a pair of skins for traveling uphill. Make sure your boots and bindings are sized to match and the DIN set appropriately.
- ___ **Snowshoes:** They must have metal teeth for ascending and descending steep slopes. AAS choice: MSR Lightning Ascent.
- ___ **Snowboard:** If you bring your snowboard for descents during the course, please bring a pair of snowshoes and collapsible ski poles.

- ___ **Split-board:** In combination with a pair of skins for traveling uphill.
- ___ **Skins:** For use with your skis or split-board. Skins are essential for uphill travel. Make sure they are trimmed to your skis and that they work well BEFORE arriving to your class. AAS choice: Black Diamond Ascension or G3 Alpinist.
- ___ **Ski Poles:** Mandatory for everyone. Everyone needs these for quick tests. AAS choice: Black Diamond Traverse for skier/snowshoe and the Expedition or Compactor for snowboard/split-board.
- ___ **Helmet:** Optional but recommended. Ski or snowboard helmet.
- ___ **Ski Strap:** Recommended to hold your skis and poles together. Also useful for emergency repair. AAS choice: Voile or Black Diamond ski strap. Orange color.

DAY PACK ESSENTIALS:

- ___ **Backpack:** 30 to 45 liters. This needs to be big enough to carry ALL of your gear INSIDE your pack for the field portions of the course. AAS choice: BCA Stash 40.
- ___ **Lunch Food:** This should be field type food that does not freeze. Bring plenty. There is not typically a designated lunch break. Instead we eat at short breaks throughout the field session.
- ___ **Thermos:** For warm drinks during the frigid Alaskan field days.
- ___ **Water bottle:** 1 to 2 liters. In combination with a water bottle insulator. AAS choice: Nalgene 32-oz wide mouth.
- ___ **Goggles:**
- ___ **Sunglasses:** Good to have even in the dead of our dark winter as a backup to your goggles.
- ___ **Headlamp:** Bring extra batteries. Alkaline to match your transceiver batteries.
- ___ **Extra Clothing:** Gloves/mittens and warm puffy jacket. Be prepared for all types of weather: rain, snow, wind or sun.
- ___ **Notebook and Pencil:** To take notes! Bring extra pencils.

CLOTHING: Do not bring cotton!

When cotton gets wet it retains its moisture content. This means it does not dry quickly, and leaves the user cold and wet. Poly-pro and wool dry out quicker and they do not lose their warmth even when damp. A winter environment is conducive to hypothermia, and you will miss out on class time if you are sitting inside because you are cold.

- ___ **Long underwear Top and Bottom:** Light to mid-weight Polypropylene, Capilene or wool.
- ___ **Mid-weight Top and Bottom:** Polartec or light fleece top. Bottoms for extra cold conditions.
- ___ **Hard Shell Top and Bottom:** Wind and waterproof/breathable with Gore-Tex or equivalent. Pants should fit over boots.
- ___ **Gaiters:** To keep snow out of your boots. Most ski/snowboard pants have these built in.
- ___ **Warm socks:** Polypropylene or wool. Make sure they fit comfortably with the boots you will be wearing. A common mistake is to wear thick or two pairs of socks, which then often constricts blood flow and causes cold feet.
- ___ **Warm hat:** Fleece or wool.
- ___ **Balaclava, Face mask or Buff**
- ___ **Warm Gloves/Mittens:** Bring a few pairs of varying warmth.
- ___ **Glove liners:** To combine with your gloves/mittens. Important for warmth when taking notes, packing, etc.
- ___ **Insulated Parka:** Synthetic Primaloft or goose down puffy with hood. Your parka should fit over all of your other layers and be warm! This is extremely helpful when you're standing around outdoors on the field portion of the course. Bring two if it is to be extra cold or if you tend to get cold easily. AAS choice: Patagonia Micro puff or DAS. Wild Things Belay Parka.

___ **Puffy Pants:** Optional. This is a parka for your legs. Good for sub-zero temps. AAS choice: Mountain Hardwear Compressor pant or Patagonia DAS pant.

___ **Boots:** Assure they are warm and comfortable enough to allow you to stop traveling for as long as an hour!! No leather hiking boots! A good pair of boots is essential to being happy outside on cold days. If you have any doubts, spend a day outside in cold temperatures testing them before the course. Please break your boots in to avoid cold feet and blisters.

SLEEPING QUARTERS (For Hatcher Pass Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 Courses only)

___ **Sleeping bag:** This should be a medium to light weight sleeping bag for indoors.

___ **Sleeping pad:** Hatcher Pass courses only: the floor is hard!

___ **Toiletries:** Include toothbrush/paste, deodorant, personal prescriptions etc. You know the drill (hopefully).

___ **Indoor footwear:** Sandals, slippers, booties, etc.

___ **Earplugs:** Some people snore...

FOOD (For Hatcher Pass Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 Courses only)

___ **Bowl, plate, utensils, etc:** You are required to bring all of your own eating and cooking utensils and supplies.

___ **Food:** You are required to bring all of your food for the full three days of the course.

___ **Water:** There is running water at the Hatcher Pass Visitor Center.

OPTIONAL

___ **Hand/Foot warmers:** These are helpful during the blustery cold days.

___ **First Aid Kit:** A small simple kit for blisters and cuts. Ibuprofen, Tylenol, personal prescriptions, etc. Instructors will have an extensive kit on hand.

REQUIRED FOR LEVEL 2 & 3 COURSES ONLY:

___ **Field Data Notebook*:** AAS highly recommends the Snowpit Technologies Field Notebook.

___ **SWAG Book*:** Snow, Weather and Avalanche Observation Guidelines (SWAG):

___ **Compass:** Some compasses have an inclinometer built in. AAS choice: Silva Ranger.

___ **Mechanical Pencil**

___ **Snow Saw*:** AAS choice: Black Diamond Flicklock Snow Saw.

___ **Magnifying Lens/Loupe**

___ **Crystal Card*:** AAS choice: BCA Crystal Card

___ **Folding Ruler or Marked Probe*:** marked in centimeters