

The White Cross Code

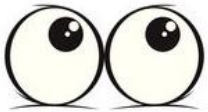
Before crossing avalanche terrain :



STOP! and assess the slope from a safe place. Make sure everyone in the group gets to speak.. Look for signs of **danger** or **safety**.



LOOK AT THE SLOPE! How steep is it? **Slopes under 30° are usually safe**. Is it **big** or **small**? Look for **TERRAIN TRAPS** like **boulders**, **trees**, **cliffs** or **gully/streambeds** where even a small slide can be consequential. What shape is the slope? Steep **roll-overs** are more dangerous. What way does it face? Is it sheltered from the **wind** or exposed to a strong **sun**? Look at the snowpack. **Thin snow** is usually safer. Does it look and feel **'slabby'**? Will your route take you into the path of **avalanche slopes above or to the side**? An avalanche on a steep slope can make adjoining gentle slopes slide too. Avoid **cornices**.



LOOK AT THE SKY! What direction is the **wind** and how strong? Is snow being blown? If so, where is it being deposited? **Wind-eroded slopes and ridge lines are safer**, **sheltered slopes can form wind slab**. Is it **raining** or **snowing heavily**? **Fresh heavy rain and snow** increases the danger. Has it **suddenly warmed**? Is the **sun** out? Is the slope still **frozen** in the shade or being **melted** with **snowballs** rolling down?



THINK! How do you feel – listen to your gut! Are you **alone** or in a **big group**? Do you feel are you relying on someone else to decide? Are you eager to make fresh tracks? Are you confident your companions have the equipment and skills to rescue a buried victim out in less than 15 minutes? Does your safety equipment or local knowledge make you feel like **taking bigger risks**? **Resist pressure to 'just go for it'**. **Don't be lazy** and never be afraid to turn back.



DECIDE! Make a clear go/no-go decision. **Everybody should discuss**. Does the slope match the hazards mentioned in the **avalanche forecast**? Are there any **signs of danger** – **recent avalanches** nearby, **shooting cracks**, **'whoomping'** noises from the snow indicating an you are at high risk of triggering an unstable slab. If a **persistent weak layer** is mentioned in the forecast, this is very dangerous and hard to detect.

If there are **signs of danger** ***do not cross*** – find a safer way or turn back. If there are **signs of safety**, ***cross*** – but one at a time, with jacket hoods up, faces covered and hands out of pole wrist loops; moving between 'islands of safety' like rocks; staying in sight and keeping a close watch on the person crossing. **Other tracks are not a sign of safety**.