



## ISIA Stamp-Level Avalanche Awareness Course 2020

### Description:

Commercial ski/snowboard areas in other parts of the world are vastly different in size, terrain, snow conditions and operation policies. The ISIA Avalanche course is intended for ski, snowboard and telemark instructors wanting to expand their knowledge of the mountain environment, to travel safely within it and impart knowledge useful for an instructor within organized ski area boundaries worldwide. This course has been designed to address the needs of snowsport instructors toward ISIA certification, but has historically attracted a much wider audience. The course is offered independently, using avalanche safety industry qualified and experienced practitioners; making the most of their expertise.

This course is one of the required components towards achieving international (ISIA stamp or card) status beyond your national instructing qualifications. Documented attendance at a professional Avalanche Safety Stage I course or another (4 day) Backcountry Course of similar content by an accredited provider is acceptable as a cross-credit toward ISIA status.



The ISIA Stamp-Level Avalanche Awareness course provides a better understanding of the nature of avalanches and what is needed to make decisions about personal safety when travelling in avalanche terrain with a group. Additionally, this course will help develop more advanced observation and route finding skills for moving in the mountains. Although we stress the need for avoiding avalanche related rescue, time is also dedicated to learning the technical skills required for small party rescue and handling other emergency situations.

### Prerequisites:

There is no prerequisite qualifications for the ISIA stamp-level course, however candidates **must** be capable of travelling in-control and comfortably, (regarding familiarity with touring equipment, personal fitness, clothing and nutrition), in challenging terrain and snow conditions, (see **Field Days** below). The course

may be attended by members of the NZSIA and non-members at no additional cost.

### **Content/Format:**

ISIA Stamp-Level Avalanche Awareness course is four days in length and involves a daily combination of classroom and field study. The length of each and sequence may vary due to weather or other considerations but overall include approximately 7 hrs in the classroom and 21 hrs in the field. Field study may take place within and beyond commercial ski area boundaries. This course will be under the guidance of a UIAGM guide or NZMGA qualified guide who is also NZ Level 2 Avalanche Safety qualified (similar level to CAA L2 Operational). The course covers:

- Mountain weather and NZ information sources
- Snow Stability (sources, characteristics, changes and basic tests)
- Decision making and human influences
- Safety equipment (including use of transceivers)
- Identification of avalanche terrain (including relationship to map)
- Navigation techniques
- Characteristics of avalanches
- Observation techniques
- Group travel in avalanche terrain
- Small party search and rescue
- Handling emergency situations
- Snow shelter construction
- Future study options

### **Learning and travel planning**

We usually begin in the morning on the mountain at 9am reviewing the weather, hazard and its implications to our daily goals and travel plans. Select topics will also be discussed inside as a group before applying that knowledge in the field. Afternoons are generally in the field. The day usually concludes by 4 pm following a daily debrief post field travel. Attendees are encouraged to bring a notepad and pencil. Off-mountain classroom venues may involve morning meetings or evening sessions the night prior to a field day. The venue will be confirmed by your instructor. Please arrive promptly and “be ready to learn and share”.

### **Field Days**

Field days focus on practical aspects and last half to two thirds of the day. Participants are required to bring a 20-50 L. backpack capable of carrying skis or snowboards and avalanche & personal safety gear.

You'll need avalanche safety gear, (457 kHz transceiver, and collapsible probe and shovel) which may be available from your local sports shop at your additional expense (and may vary by region). Snow (or tree-pruning) saws and compass will be useful but not required.

Your personal safety gear should include an extra layer of clothing, sun protection, water, snacks and perhaps a pack lunch for day 3 or 4.

Additionally, you will need a means of travel in the backcountry, (for usually day 3 of the 4 days). Depending on the conditions, climbing skins with touring skis/bindings, snowshoes (or split-boards with climbing skins). Contact your instructor for your most likely needs and possible sources for hire or purchase.

### **Assessment:**

Transceiver competency and trip planning considerations will be the only two assessed components of the course.

The transceiver assessment, typically done on day 3 or 4 of the course, is conducted to the following standard:

Locate 1 transceiver buried 60cm deep below a 50cm x 50cm target within 4 minutes within a 50m x 50m site. Shovel, probe and transceiver must be stowed in pack or worn as when touring then assembled, target probed and shovel placed where digging would commence within this time frame.

The trip planning considerations are assessed in quiz format, typically on the last day of the course. A minimum score of 60% is required to demonstrate competency.

### **Certificate:**

For ISIA Stamp-Level courses, a 'Certificate of Attendance/Trip Planning & Transceiver Competency' will be issued by the Course Director provided that participants attend the entire course and meet the assessment standard. Results are then sent on to the NZSIA.

