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U.S. motorized avalanche fatalities winter 2018-19.



AAA Motorized Avalanche Rescue Class at Silverton Avalanche School, CO.

It was an interesting year for snowmobile avalanche fatalities in the U.S. It's as if we stepped back 20+ years to when snowmobile fatalities involved the lack of avalanche rescue gear. The fatalities last year had an inordinate number of unprepared riders. Not what we expected to see with record number of riders attending advanced classes and buying gear. The opportunities exist for motorized specific courses. Like other user groups, avalanche knowledge and preparedness varies tremendously. Many riders have chosen not to be educated or properly equipped.

Total U.S. Avalanche fatalities: 25

- U.S. Snowbike fatalities: 0
- U.S. Snowmobile avalanche fatalities: 8

Breakdown of U.S. Snowmobile Avalanche Fatalities 2018/19:

- 32 % of the total US avalanche fatalities were snowmobilers.

- Snowmobile fatalities by state: UT-3, WY-3, MT-1, ID-1.
- All victims were single complete burials.
- **63 % of the snowmobilers killed did not have a transceiver.**
- Riding partners all not fully equipped with transceiver, shovel and probe in 63% of the accidents.
- **63% of the victims were dug out by people outside the riding group,**
- Digging to the victim varied from 6 minutes to the next day. Majority were not timely.
- Midwest riders accounted for 25% of the snowmobile fatalities, while western riders were 75%.
- **100% of the accidents were triggered by riders in the group.**
- **100% of the fatal avalanches failed on a persistent weak layer.**
- 63% of the accidents had riders in the runout zone.
- Multiple people on the slope only occurred in one fatality.
- 38% of the accidents involved a potential searcher getting caught in the avalanche which delayed the rescue.
- 25% of the victims had deployed an airbag.
- **Almost, if not all, of the riders lacked advanced avalanche training.**

There's room for improvement with many riding groups. Appears most victims died from asphyxiation, but inconclusive without coroner's reports. These snowmobile statistics are a definite contrast to winter 17-18, when 18% of the victims did not have transceivers and 50% died from trauma.

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