

## AVALANCHE: Thunder in the Mountains

People who ski face a constant danger. They practice their sport high in the mountains. The threat of an avalanche is always present.

An avalanche is a huge mass of snow. This snow suddenly loosens and slides down the mountain's slopes in a rush. It buries skiers, buildings, and all in its path. At the same time, it makes a noise like thunder.

The snow falls because it is unstable. The reason may be heavy winds, melting snow, earthquakes, or loud noises.

In the winter, a huge mass of dry, powdery snow can suddenly snap. It picks up speed on the slopes until it travels at 100 miles an hour. But the highest risk comes during early spring. Wet snow can shake loose as it begins to melt.

During any season, loud sounds or voices can make a huge slab of solid snow crack and split into falling chunks.

It is hard to know when an avalanche will hit. Sometimes, experts will try to force smaller ones to loosen when no one is near. They set off explosions. These reduce the heavy build-up of snow. This makes it safer for skiers. Man-made barriers and trees can also ease the impact of an avalanche.

In Europe, the Alps are known for their dangerous avalanches.



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1. What danger do skiers often face? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. When the snow suddenly loosens, what does it do? \_\_\_\_\_  
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  3. Why does the snow fall in an avalanche? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. What is the most dangerous season for avalanches? \_\_\_\_\_
  5. What is a word that means "to do again and again"? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. What is a word that means "things that stand in the way"? \_\_\_\_\_