



Friends of the Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center

PMB 711

15600 NE 8th Street, Suite B1

Bellevue, WA 98008

NWAC Job Announcement – Professional Observer

August, 29th 2013

Job Description

The Friends of the Northwest Avalanche Center (FOAC) is looking to hire four Professional Observers to provide backcountry observations throughout the NWAC service area to the NWAC forecast team.

The Professional Observer's Network will provide timely and relevant professional-level observations to the NWAC team, thus reducing the data gaps in NWAC forecast areas. All observations will be focused outside of ski area boundaries in unmitigated terrain.

Background

Currently, the NWAC forecast team receives routine snowpack condition reports from most local ski areas, but backcountry observations are limited to occasional volunteer and recreational observations submitted through the FOAC website and websites such as TAY for recent conditions reports. The objective of the Professional Observer's Network is to reduce the NWAC forecasters' workload while at the same time creating more accurate backcountry avalanche forecasts.

Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the Professional Observer is to communicate with the NWAC forecast team to analyze snow, provide weather, and avalanche observations, and determine current and future trends in avalanche danger. In addition, providing assessment of current avalanche danger compared to posted forecast levels will be a key function of the role.

Each Observer is responsible for a minimum of three backcountry observations per week. Observation requirements will vary based on the needs of the NWAC forecast team. The NWAC Program Director and the NWAC forecast team will communicate observational needs to the Observer's Network. Observations may be submitted to the NWAC through email, phone, and/or a mobile phone application. At a minimum, observations must be relevant to pertinent avalanche concerns and submitted on a timely basis. Some examples of the observations that may be recorded are: snow height, taken at many locations throughout a tour; full snow profiles; and various test profiles on multiple aspects and elevations throughout a valley. Observers will be asked to provide photos and/or videos of observations that will be incorporated into the next day's forecast to help illustrate conditions and concerns to the general public. Observers will also be asked to submit a blog post per week to the new NWAC blog.

Required Qualifications

All Observers in the Network will, at a minimum, work (or have worked) in the snow industry. This includes ski patrol, highway workers, mountain guides, forecasters, etc. The minimum qualifications are as follows:

- Completion of AIARE or AAA Level 1 *and* Level 2 avalanche classes
- Exceptional organizational skills
- The ability to take initiative and work with little daily supervision
- Strong written and verbal skills
- Thorough knowledge of avalanche hazards and a minimum of five years of experience recreating in backcountry avalanche terrain

- Excellent fitness and winter backcountry travel skills
- Previous professional snow and weather data recording experience
- Ability to write accessible and technically accurate descriptions of snow and avalanche conditions

Recommended Qualifications

- Professional avalanche training, such as National Avalanche School, Level III, AVPRO, CAA Level II, or equivalent training courses
- AAA Certified Instructor or AIARE Qualified Instructor
- AMGA Ski Guide or Ski Mountaineering Certification
- Professional member of the AAA
- Previous avalanche forecasting experience

Compensation

Each Professional Observer will receive a stipend consisting of \$1,000 per month. Compensation is provided by the FOAC.

Timeline and contract

The Professional Observer's Network will operate from December 1st to the end of the normal NWAC forecast season, sometime in mid to late April – a season consisting of approximately 20 weeks. The Professional Observers will work on a seasonal contract basis with the FOAC. This is a contract position, however, the FOAC will be providing Washington State Labor and Industries Insurance (L&I) for the hours spent in the field taking observations. Beyond the L&I and monthly stipend, no other benefits are provided for this position. Each Professional Observer will report directly to the Program Director of the NWAC and will work closely with the NWAC forecast team.

Application submission requirements

Please provide a cover letter detailing your reasons for applying for this position along with a resume of qualifications, including your knowledge of/experience with gathering snowpack and weather observations. Please include a certificate of the highest avalanche class completed. Email attachments will not be accepted unless they are in a format readable by MS Word or Adobe Reader. Attachments in formats such as .wps or .jpeg will not be accepted. **Please email all submissions to: scott@nwac.us.**

Submission deadline is **September 22nd, 2013**.

Contact

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Additional Information

This position will require backcountry winter travel in all types of terrain. The employee will supply appropriate clothing and equipment suitable to backcountry travel.