



Avalanche Research + Education

AIARE Recreational Avalanche Instructor and Course Leader

Qualifications and Continuing Education Requirements

Effective November 1, 2017

Updated July 2021

AIARE Apprentice Instructor

AIARE supports the long-held tradition of mentorship of aspiring avalanche instructors or apprentices. AIARE defines Apprentices as aspiring instructors who do not yet meet AIARE Instructor qualifications.

One Apprentice can assist in each field group under the direct supervision and mentorship of an AIARE Course Leader or Instructor. During this apprenticeship, individuals gain familiarity with the AIARE curriculum, as well as building reference experiences that form an essential foundation for engaged participation in the AIARE Instructor Training.

Qualifications

There are no minimum qualifications to be an apprentice other than to be proficient in their mode of travel such that the apprentice does not impact the outcomes of the course. Apprentices typically observe courses to gain familiarity with AIARE recreation curriculum. Apprentices cannot be solely responsible for instruction or group management and should work within their scope of expertise as outlined by the Course Provider.

Apprentice Instructors are solely managed by Course Providers. Individuals interested in observing a course or acting as an apprentice should connect directly with an AIARE Provider.

AIARE Instructor

An AIARE Instructor is an experienced backcountry traveler with a minimum of **five seasons** of winter backcountry experience. On every AIARE program, AIARE Avalanche Instructors are mentored under the direct supervision of an AIARE Course Leader. AIARE Instructors can lead Avalanche Awareness courses (including the field session) and Avalanche Rescue courses, so long as no activities are conducted in or near avalanche terrain. AIARE courses that do travel in or near avalanche terrain require the presence of an AIARE Course Leader. AIARE Instructors leading Avalanche Rescue Courses are required to be professional members of the American Avalanche Association (A3).

Qualifications

The following minimum qualifications must be met in order to apply for an AIARE Instructor Training Course. No exceptions or exemptions are made for these qualifications.

- 5 seasons of winter backcountry experience¹ involving leadership and decision-making in avalanche terrain
- Recent (within the last 4 years) attendance on all three of the following courses: AIARE 1, AIARE 2, and Avalanche Rescue

¹ Experience is defined using A3 guidelines for membership: 20 or more days of backcountry travel constitutes one season. These are documented days where the applicant is making decisions in avalanche terrain. Those who travel to South America or New Zealand during the North American summer can accumulate 2 seasons in one calendar year. Experience can be verified by documentation or by a letter from a professional member of A3 and can involve a combination of professional and recreational backcountry travel.

- A Pro 1 certificate or equivalent²

Aspiring instructors who meet the above qualifications may apply for an AIARE Instructor Training Course (ITC). Find more details and application instructions, including a list of materials needed for application, on the [ITC webpage](#).

All prospective AIARE instructors participate in the ITC, which teaches experienced backcountry travelers how to teach the AIARE recreational avalanche curriculum and manage backcountry risk in an educational context. (See course descriptions and sample itineraries for the [five-day in-person course](#) and the [hybrid course](#).) Participants who successfully complete the Instructor Training Course can apply for Instructor status by submitting proof of A3 Professional or Affiliate Membership.

Maintaining Instructor Status

AIARE Instructors maintain their status by:

- Participating in yearly AIARE Instructor Continuing Education (see more on this in the Continuing Education section below)
- Remaining current on their AIARE Instructor and A3 membership dues
- Keeping up to date on curriculum changes and updating teaching materials as they become available

AIARE Course Leader

An AIARE Course Leader is an experienced educator and avalanche professional with a minimum of **seven seasons** of winter backcountry experience and leadership along with significant experience teaching the entire AIARE course progression.

AIARE Course Leaders are qualified to lead the following AIARE programs: Avalanche Awareness, Avalanche Rescue, AIARE 1, and AIARE 2. A qualified AIARE Course Leader is required to be present for the entirety of the AIARE 1 and 2 courses, as well as any AIARE course that includes travel in or near avalanche terrain.

Qualifications

The following minimum qualifications must be met in order to apply for an AIARE Course Leader Training. No exceptions or exemptions are made for these qualifications.

- 7 seasons of winter backcountry experience³ involving leadership and decision-making in avalanche terrain
- Experience instructing AIARE 1, AIARE 2, and Avalanche Rescue courses
- A Pro 2 certificate or equivalent

² See [A3's Prior Learning Assessment](#)

³ Experience is defined using A3 guidelines for membership: 20 or more days of backcountry travel constitutes one season. These are documented days where the applicant is making decisions in avalanche terrain. Those who travel to South America or New Zealand during the North American summer can accumulate 2 seasons in one calendar year. Experience can be verified by documentation or by a letter from a professional member of A3 and can involve a combination of professional and recreational backcountry travel.

- Letter of recommendation from an AIARE Course Leader outlining competence delivering AIARE curriculum and readiness to take the Course Leader Training

Experienced AIARE Instructors can take the next step in the program by applying for a Course Leader Training. (Find more details and application instructions, including a list of materials needed for application, on the [CLT webpage](#).) The CLT trains highly experienced AIARE Instructors to lead Avalanche Rescue, AIARE 1, and AIARE 2 courses. See the [course description and generic agenda](#) for more about what typically happens on a course. Participants who successfully pass the CLT can apply for Course Leader status by submitting proof of A3 Professional Membership.

Maintaining Course Leader Status

AIARE Course Leaders maintain their course leader status by:

- Participating in yearly AIARE Instructor Continuing Education
- Remaining current on their AIARE Instructor and A3 membership dues
- Keeping up to date on curriculum changes and updating teaching materials as they become available

AIARE Instructor Continuing Education

AIARE Instructors and Course Leaders keep on top of updates to AIARE curriculum, industry and teaching best practices, and their own professional development through annual continuing education. The AIARE Continuing Education (CE) Program provides AIARE Instructors and Course Leaders with professional development options tailored to meet their individual interests and needs.

Instructors pay dues, submit continuing education credits, and sign the [AIARE Code of Conduct](#) in October of each year.

Instructors meet their Continuing Education requirement with a course offered by AIARE at least every other year. For the non-AIARE CE years, Instructors can choose a CE course offered by AIARE or from a growing list of approved professional development opportunities.

Instructors who do not pay dues, or submit proof of continuing education by October 31 become inactive (i.e. not able to teach) until they do. Inactive instructors must complete their professional development requirements for the previous season in order to become active again.

If a course is completed after October 31 to reactivate an Instructor's status, this course will not count towards the Instructor's CE for the following season. In other words, the Instructor must take an additional course in that season to fulfill the requirement for professional development at the start of the next season. Instructors who are inactive for one year or more will need to work with the Rec Program Director to define an appropriate professional development plan in order to become an active AIARE Instructor.