

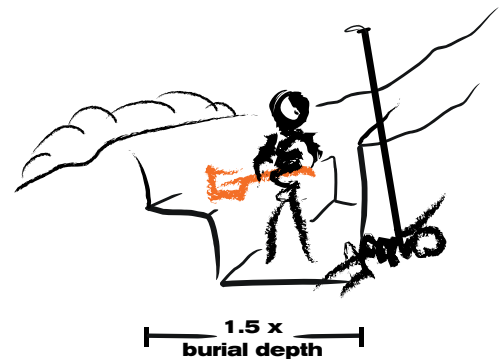
Shoveling 101

While shoveling might seem elementary, it consumes most of time during an avalanche rescue. For maximum efficiency, make your hole about one “wingspan” wide and excavate downhill about 1.5 times the burial depth. By excavating downhill from the probe, there will be less snow to move and you won’t compact the snow over the victim’s limited air pocket.

Avalanche debris is usually hard, so chop the snow into blocks, then scoop. Try “paddling” rather than lifting each scoop. Avalanche professionals recommend aluminum shovels over plastic in real avalanche debris. Oval shafts provide the most strength with the least weight.

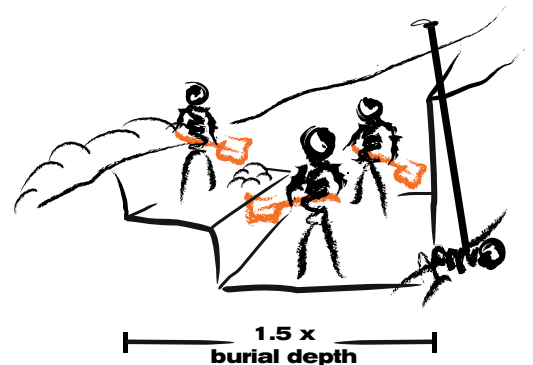
Single Rescuer

Once the victim is located, leave probe in place as a marker. Probe depth markings will also aid in determining optimum hole size. Start moving the snow out the sides of your hole. When the snow surface rises above your waist, start moving snow downhill, out the end of your hole. Attempt to get to the victim’s face as soon as possible. Uncover their head and chest immediately to establish an airway. It is not necessary to dig the entire hole to the depth of the victim. Excavate at an angle or in steps, as shown.



Multiple Rescuers

If two shovelers are available, work side-by-side, following the guidelines above. If more than two shovelers are available, then two should begin shoveling just downhill of the probe. Others should begin shoveling downhill of them (1.5 times the burial depth), following the guidelines above. When the uphill shovelers are up to their waists and must start moving snow downhill, the lower shovelers should exit the hole to rest and prepare for first aid and evacuation. Rotate shovelers once a minute. In deep burials exceeding two meters, it might be difficult to move snow clear of the hole. In this case, one downhill shoveler should exit the hole. The uphill shovelers then move their snow to this position and the remaining downhill shoveler should move it to the surface.



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