



The Northwest Avalanche Center is looking to hire three Professional Observers to provide backcountry observations in the following zones:

- Seattle
- Mt Baker
- Mt Hood

The Professional Observer's Network provides 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

The NWAC forecasters receive routine snow and weather observations from our team of observers complementing the condition reports from most local ski areas, remote weather stations, NWAC partner input, and volunteer observations. The objective of the Professional Observer's Network is to improve the backcountry avalanche forecast.

Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the Professional Observer is to frequent the backcountry and 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 an assessment of current avalanche danger compared to the posted forecast will be a key function of the role.

Each observer is responsible for weekly backcountry observations during a five month period between December and April. 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 tour. Observers are required to provide photos and/or videos of observations that will be incorporated into the next day's forecast to help illustrate conditions and problems to the general public. Observers will also be asked to submit one blog post per month to the 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 monthly stipend ranging between \$700 and \$1100 per month depending on the zone and experience. Some additional backcountry clothing and equipment will be provided by NWAC.

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 Observer will work on a seasonal contract basis with the NWAC. Several mandatory training days will occur in the fall. This is a contract position, however, the NWAC 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 **October 1st, 2015**.

Contact

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Additional Information

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