AWESOME stories

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This image depicts an avalanche in process. The photo is by Bruce Tremper and is <u>online via the U.S. Weather</u> <u>Service</u>.

<u>Approaching K2</u> from Baltoro Glacier, an uninitiated mountain trekker might find reality hard to believe. This towering peak of majesty can instantly become a gruesome killer because of avalanches.

Climbers on most of the world's great mountains have been "washed away" by hurtling torrents of snow. Skiers enjoying a day of alpine beauty have met the same fate.

America's worst avalance occured at a town called Wellington, located in the High Cascades of Washington State. Two trains, forced by a blizzard to stop at Wellington station, were filled with sleeping workers and passengers on the 1st of March, 1910.

At about 1 am, local time, a massive slab of snow descended on the station, hurtling the rail cars 150 feet into the river valley below. A recent forest fire had ruined nearby trees which might have mitigated the <u>Wellington</u> <u>disaster</u>.

What causes such an avalanche? Are there warning signs? Are they survivable?

Contrary to common myths, avalanches often do NOT strike without warning. Surprisingly, they are sometimes caused by people. According to Bruce Tremper, Director of the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center:

In 95 percent of all avalanche accidents, the avalanche is triggered by the victim, or someone in the victim's party.

That's a sobering thought. So is this:

An average-sized avalanche travels around 80 mph and it's nearly impossible for someone to outrun an avalanche or even have time to get out of the way.

The most dangerous type of avalanche (a <u>dry slab</u>) acts like a dinner plate that <u>slides off</u> the table. A huge "slab" of snow <u>slides away</u> from the mountain. When the slab shatters, the victim is often in the middle - with no means of escape.

A wet-slab avalanche covers a smaller area, moves <u>more slowly</u> (around 20 miles per hour), and is survivable. Incredible avalanche video footage is available on line, thanks to <u>NOVA</u>. Follow the links to view spectacular sights.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/AVALANCHES-Vertical-Limit-K2-The-Savage-Mountain</u>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

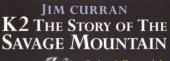
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/AVALANCHES-Vertical-Limit-K2-The-Savage-Mountain

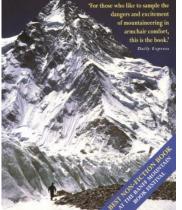


AVALANCHES

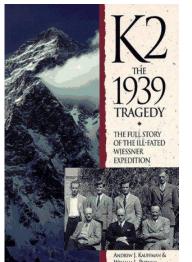












K2 - From the Baltoro Glacier

Image online, courtesy <u>Ev-K2-CNR</u> ("Keep K2 Clean"). PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/K2-From-the-Baltoro-Glacier

K2: The Story of the Savage Mountain - by Jim Curran Image online, courtesy <u>amazon.com</u> website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/K2-The-Story-of-the-Savage-Mountain-by-Jim-Curran

Summit of K2

Photo by Adam Jacob Muller. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. License: <u>CC BY-SA</u> <u>3.0</u>.

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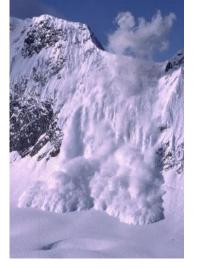
K2: The 1939 Tragedy - by Andrew J. Kauffman Image online, courtesy <u>amazon.com</u> website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/K2-The-1939-Tragedy-by-Andrew-J.-Kauffman





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Avalanche - Sliding Off the Mountain Side Photo by P. Chernouss; image online, courtesy Avalanche.org View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Avalanche-Sliding-Off-the-Mountain-Side



Avalanche - Snow Slides Away From the Mountain Image online, courtesy the Colorado Avalanche Information Center website. PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Avalanche-Snow-Slides-Away-From-the-Mountain

Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain

Image online, courtesy <u>amazon.com</u> website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Staying-Alive-in-Avalanche-Terrain



Wellington Disaster - America's Worst Avalanche Video about the Wellington Avalanche by FistyCuff1. Online, courtesy FistyCuff via YouTube. View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Wellington-Disaster-America-s-Worst-Avalanche

Dry Slab Avalanche

Photo by Dr. Bruce Jamieson. Image online, courtesy What is Civil Engineering (a Canadian website). PD

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