



2023/2024

ANNUAL REPORT



CAIC
Colorado Avalanche
Information Center





MISSION



CAIC
Colorado Avalanche
Information Center

The mission of the CAIC is to provide avalanche information, education, and promote research for the protection of life, property, and the enhancement of the state's economy.



The mission of the Friends of CAIC is to support avalanche forecasting and education throughout Colorado.

LETTER FROM FRIENDS OF CAIC



Dear Friends,

It is my honor to present the annual report for the Friends of the Colorado Avalanche Information Center (FoCAIC) for the 2023/2024 season. As I reflect on another year of supporting avalanche forecasting and education, I am proud to write my 17th annual letter on behalf of our organization. Over the past 17 years, Friends of CAIC has become an incredibly successful organization, the voice of the backcountry community, and a cornerstone for avalanche safety in Colorado. We continue to evolve and expand as we aim to make an even more lasting impact on avalanche safety across Colorado.

In FY 2024, FoCAIC contributed \$696,225 to avalanche safety, including a direct cash contribution of \$312,000 to the Colorado Avalanche Information Center (CAIC)'s forecasting operations and technology support. These critical investments help ensure that the CAIC maintains the most advanced avalanche forecasting operations team in the country.

A major milestone this season was the continued expansion of the Trailhead Outreach Program (TOP), now in its third year. This field education initiative engages backcountry users at trailheads and backcountry access points. During the 2023/2024 season, our team executed 179 TOP days, interacting with 6,553 backcountry enthusiasts across the state, reinforcing avalanche safety messages and the importance of checking the forecast before heading into the mountains.

This season also saw the successful rollout of our Mobile Avalanche Education Trailer (MAET), a mobile classroom designed to provide hands-on learning experiences for all backcountry users. The MAET was deployed 17 times during the season at various trailheads, ski resorts, third-party events, and retail partner locations. These interactive sessions, offering free avalanche awareness classes, have been an important tool in expanding our outreach and education efforts.

Friends of CAIC remains committed to supporting avalanche forecasting and education across Colorado. As the backcountry community continues to grow and evolve, we will scale our programs and investments to meet its needs. At the same time, we are excited to adapt our long-term strategic plan, building on our successes to make a lasting impact on avalanche safety.

Thank you for your unwavering support of Friends of CAIC. Your dedication to avalanche safety has made a real difference, and together, we can continue to make Colorado's backcountry safer for everyone. Let's make the 2024/2025 season our safest yet.



Sincerely,

Aaron Carlson
Executive Director
Friends of CAIC

LETTER FROM CAIC



The 2023/2024 season was the Colorado Avalanche Information Center's 50th year of operation. During this significant milestone year, CAIC continued its ongoing work to provide improved and more detailed avalanche information. One way we supported this was through some staffing changes. We converted some temporary jobs to permanent positions to attract and retain the most qualified avalanche forecasters and base them in our mountain communities. We launched a field technician program to provide opportunities for people early in their avalanche career and help gather information in data-sparse areas.

We collaborated with partners on a few new and exciting initiatives. We developed a new avalanche awareness curriculum with AIARE and NWAC. This new resource is designed to convey basic avalanche safety messaging in jargon-free language and is aimed at different youth and adult audiences. We also launched the Avalanche Accident Explorer in collaboration with Colorado Mountain College. This interactive map displays information about Colorado's fatal accidents to help people learn how to avoid this natural hazard.

We partnered with Simon Fraser University to launch The Snow Pool—a research panel to help inform our avalanche risk communication—and completed three surveys this season. More than 1,200 people signed up to participate in this online community of backcountry users and shared feedback about how we can improve communication about avalanche conditions and risks. This effort will continue next season and beyond.

In terms of weather and avalanches, the season was characterized by numerous close calls—including one involving a CAIC forecaster—and several impressive successful companion rescues. Sadly, two people were killed in two separate avalanches this season. Though this is lower than the season average of six avalanche fatalities over the previous 10 years, every avalanche accident is a tragedy. This number also could have easily been higher: CAIC documented 120 incidents—a season record for CAIC—with 149 people caught in avalanches.

As the population of our state and the popularity of winter recreation increase, so does the demand for avalanche safety. Our team of 31 people exhibited their deep dedication to our mission by educating and sharing information to help protect people. We created a Basic Avalanche Safety page in Spanish, translated educational videos and other materials, and shared critical safety information in Spanish on social media. We will continue to build on these outreach and education efforts next season.

Thank you for being a part of the CAIC community. I look forward to your continued support and to another year of working with you to keep the people in Colorado enjoying the snow and staying clear of avalanches.



CAIC
Colorado Avalanche
Information Center



Sincerely,

Ethan Greene
Director
Colorado Avalanche
Information Center

2023/2024 BY THE NUMBERS

There were **148** people reported caught in avalanches, up from 122 last season. **2** people were killed, down from 11 the previous season.

5,091 AVALANCHES REPORTED

973 HUMAN TRIGGERED

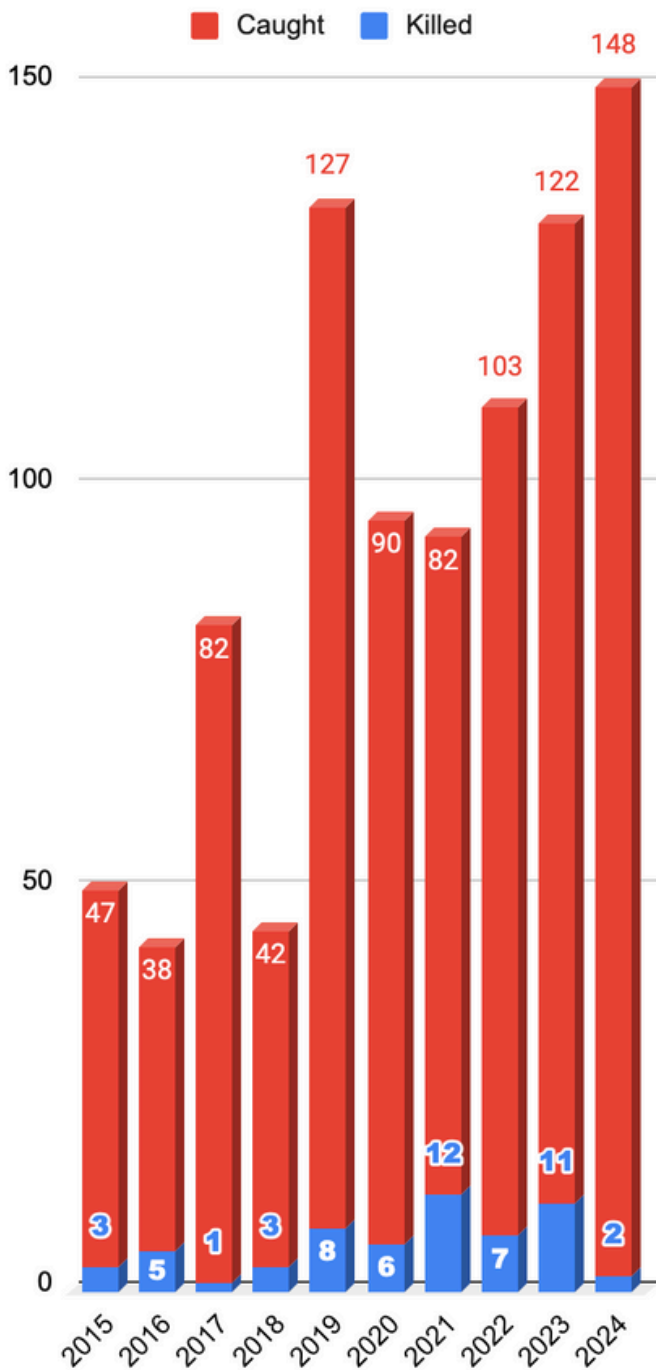
148 INVOLVEMENTS

2 DEATHS

CAIC WEBPAGE VIEWS **3,027,380**

PUBLIC OBSERVATIONS **1729**

MEDIA MENTIONS **5554**



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

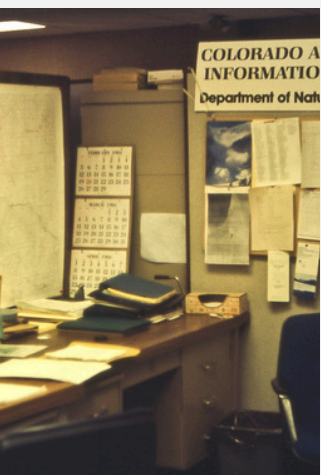


SCAN TO
READ MORE



50 CAIC
Colorado Avalanche
Information Center
50 years of avalanche safety

This past avalanche season marked 50 years of operations for the Colorado Avalanche Information Center. CAIC got its start as the Colorado Avalanche Warning Program (CAWP) in 1973 as part of the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station. This was the first program in the US that issued public avalanche forecasts. Today, CAIC remains a leader in avalanche safety, research, and education.





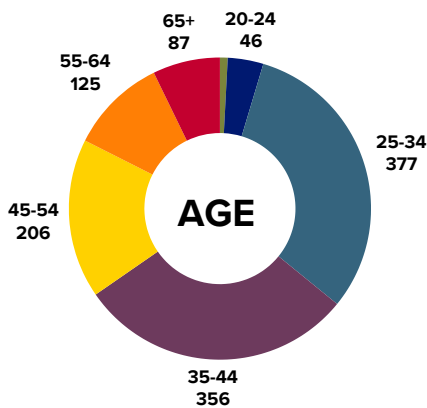
IMPROVING AVALANCHE RISK COMMUNICATION THROUGH USER FEEDBACK

CAIC partnered with Simon Fraser University's Avalanche Research Program, the U.S. National Science Foundation's National Center for Atmospheric Research, and the Friends of CAIC on a collaborative research initiative aimed at enhancing avalanche safety communications. During the 2023/2024 season, the team launched The Snow Pool—a community of backcountry enthusiasts dedicated to improving avalanche safety.

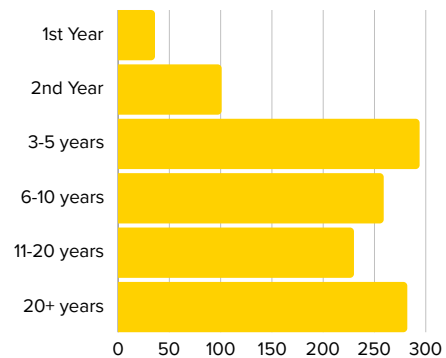


SNOW POOL BY THE NUMBERS

1,213 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS | 70% MALE



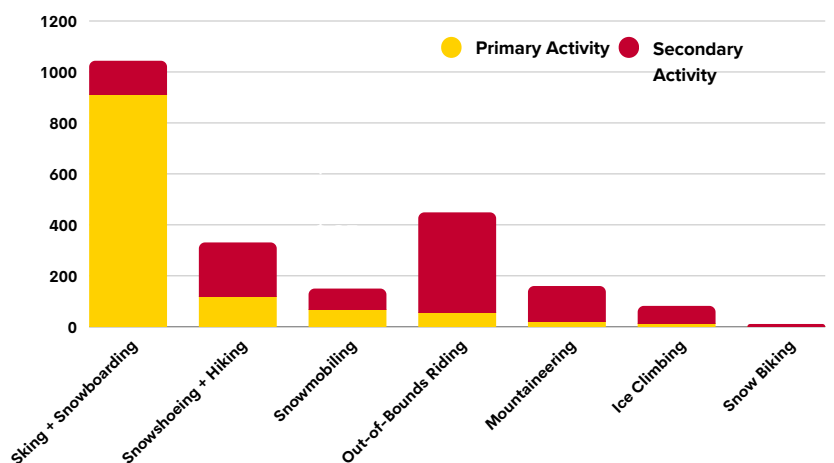
YEARS OF BACKCOUNTRY EXPERIENCE



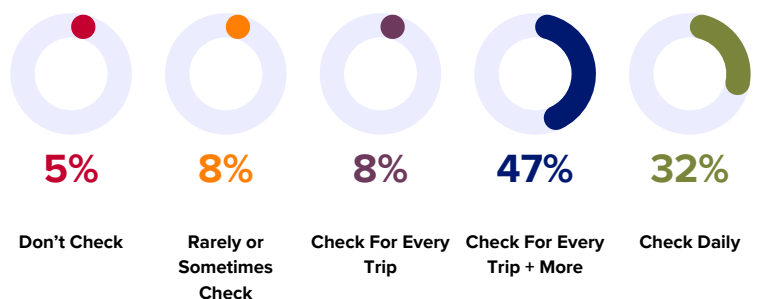
WATCH EEVA LATUSO'S CSAW PRESENTATION ON USERS' UNDERSTANDING OF UNCERTAINTY IN BACKCOUNTRY FORECASTS



PREFERRED BACKCOUNTRY ACTIVITIES



HOW OFTEN PARTICIPANTS CHECK THE FORECAST





REACHING THOUSANDS OF BACKCOUNTRY USERS

179 VISIT DAYS

6,553 CONTACTS LAST SEASON

17 CLASSROOM DAYS

16,925 CONTACTS SINCE 2021/2022

The winter of 2023/2024 marked the third season of the Trailhead Outreach Program (TOP). Launched with a goal to keep the avalanche forecast “TOP” of mind, our staff continues to meet thousands of backcountry users across the state at winter access points, targeted events, and at partner locations. Friends of CAIC staff interacts with all levels of experience and user groups, with special attention paid to how to get in front of a wide range of backcountry travelers.

New for last season, we rolled out a mobile avalanche classroom trailer 17 times across the state. TOP staff uses the trailer to teach awareness classes, review basics like terrain and route management, and occasionally just serve as a warm place to chat about the CAIC and Friends of CAIC. We look forward to introducing new presentations and visiting new places in the coming season!



CAIC OUTREACH



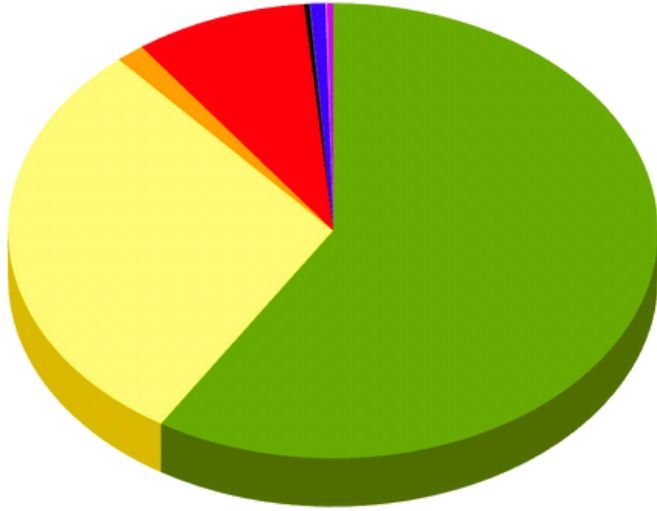
In addition to conducting forecasting operations, the CAIC team attends meetings, events, and school assemblies throughout the state. Forecasters present on basic avalanche safety, the state of the local snowpack, how to use the forecast, and many other topics tailored to the audience at hand. Each season, these events add up to thousands of contact points across Colorado!



Zone	Number of Classes	Class Participants	Participants Under 18
Aspen	15	378	43
Front Range	23	689	115
Grand Mesa	5	118	0
Gunnison	4	193	21
North San Juans	15	655	30
Sawatch	9	264	20
South San Juans	11	435	146
Statewide	9	261	120
Steamboat/Flattops	4	213	20
Vail/Summit	13	477	70
Grand Total	108	3683	585



2023/2024 FINANCIALS



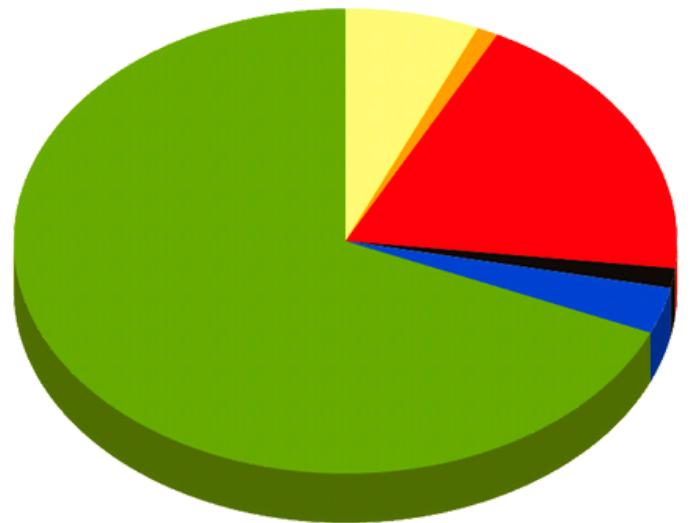
FY24 REVENUE | \$3,492,123

Colorado Severance Tax	\$2,056,103	58.88%
Colorado Department of Transportation	\$1,035,675	29.66%
United States Forest Service	\$50,000	1.43%
Friends of CAIC	\$300,000	8.59%
Colorado Ski Country USA	\$10,000	0.29%
Donations from Private Sources	\$700	0.02%
Interest Income	\$26,663	0.76%
Snowmobile Fund	\$2,000	0.06%
Education presentations	\$10,982	0.31%



FY24 EXPENSES | \$3,467,509

Personnel Services	\$2,377,021	68.55%
Rentals	\$110,811	3.20%
Utilities	\$47,837	1.38%
Cost of Goods and Services	\$668,900	19.29%
Travel Expenses	\$36,308	1.05%
Total Admin Costs	\$226,632	6.54%





2023/2024 STAFF & BOARD

CAIC STAFF

Ethan Greene
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Deputy Director/
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Regional Manager

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Regional Manager

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Rich Rogers
Field Technician

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Avalanche Forecaster

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Avalanche Forecaster

Troy Nordquist
Avalanche Forecaster

Will Barrett
Avalanche Forecaster

FRIENDS OF CAIC STAFF

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Trailhead Program Manager

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Kia Soden
Development Officer

Sam Gifford
Trailhead Outreach
Program Coordinator

Sean Tiffany
Trailhead Outreach
Program Coordinator,
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Partnerships Officer

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Allison Donovan
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Ethan Greene
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Aaron Carlson
Ex-Officio



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CAIC

