

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Date: January 19, 2010

Contact: Gerry Blair (928) 226-5089

Flagstaff, AZ- The Coconino County Sheriff's Office and the Coconino National Forest are warning backcountry mountain travelers to be alert for potential avalanche hazards on the San Francisco Peaks. Due to the predicted heavy snowfall dangerous avalanche conditions may exist and may remain potentially hazardous for long periods. It is important for backcountry travelers to be aware that no avalanche control is conducted in the backcountry outside of the Arizona Snowbowl Ski Area boundary.

People venturing into mountainous terrain should carry avalanche rescue equipment such as a shovel, avalanche rescue beacon, avalanche probe, and winter survival gear. Be prepared for travel and emergencies in the remote winter mountain environment where rescue is not immediate. Do not travel alone and leave a detailed trip plan with a responsible person. Your best chance for survival in an avalanche is companion rescue. It is important to review recent weather reports and forecasts as well as driving conditions prior to and during your trip. Carrying a cell phone is recommended, however, it may not always work in backcountry locations and should not substitute for good judgment and preparation. It is recommended that people who use the mountain backcountry receive formal avalanche safety education and winter survival skills. Free avalanche awareness clinics are offered by the Kachina Peaks Avalanche Center. More information about these clinics can be found at www.kachinapeaks.org.

Winter backcountry travel into the Kachina Peaks Wilderness Area from Arizona Snowbowl requires a free annual backcountry permit. This includes the parking areas at FR 522 and Lamar Haines Wildlife Area. Backcountry permits are available in Flagstaff at the Peaks Ranger Station, 5075 N. Highway 89, and the Coconino National Forest Supervisor's Office, 1824 S Thompson St. Permits will also be available at Arizona Snowbowl's Agassiz Lodge weekend mornings once the ski area opens.