

Avalanches

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Causes and effects of avalanches

An avalanche is a sudden downhill movement of snow. It is a significant hazard to people living in, or visiting, glacial areas. A **slab avalanche** is the most dangerous form of movement. It can be caused by:

heavy snowfall

deforestation (for example because of new ski runs) making the slope less stable
steep slopes, as this helps to increase the speed of movement

vibrations (for example from an earthquake, noise or **off-piste** skiers)

layering of snow - for instance where snow is already on the mountain and has turned into ice, and then fresh snow falls on top which can easily slide down

the wind direction piling snow which can overhang a mountain