DO STABILITY TESTS INFLUENCE FORECASTERS' SLOPE STABILITY RATINGS? A case study supporting the application of snowpack stability tests

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Snow stability tests provide information about the likelihood of avalanching on slopes with a similar snow structure. They are especially important during times of conditional stability, when avalanches or obvious signs of instability may be rare (LaChapelle, 1980). Avalanche forecasters use these tests to assess stability across a region, ski area, or transportation corridor, while recreational backcountry users typically use them for assessing slopes they want to ski or ride. Regardless of these differences, stability tests are invaluable for informing decisions for travelling in, or opening or closing, avalanche terrain. This study focuses on professional avalanche forecasters, showing that stability tests influence their slope stability ratings in nearly 30% of the tests. Our results show the importance of stability tests in professional decisions regarding avalanche conditions.

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