

Beacon Searching 101

There are three phases to an avalanche beacon search: the signal search, coarse search and fine search phases. It is essential to practice all three to become effective with your transceiver.

1. Signal Search

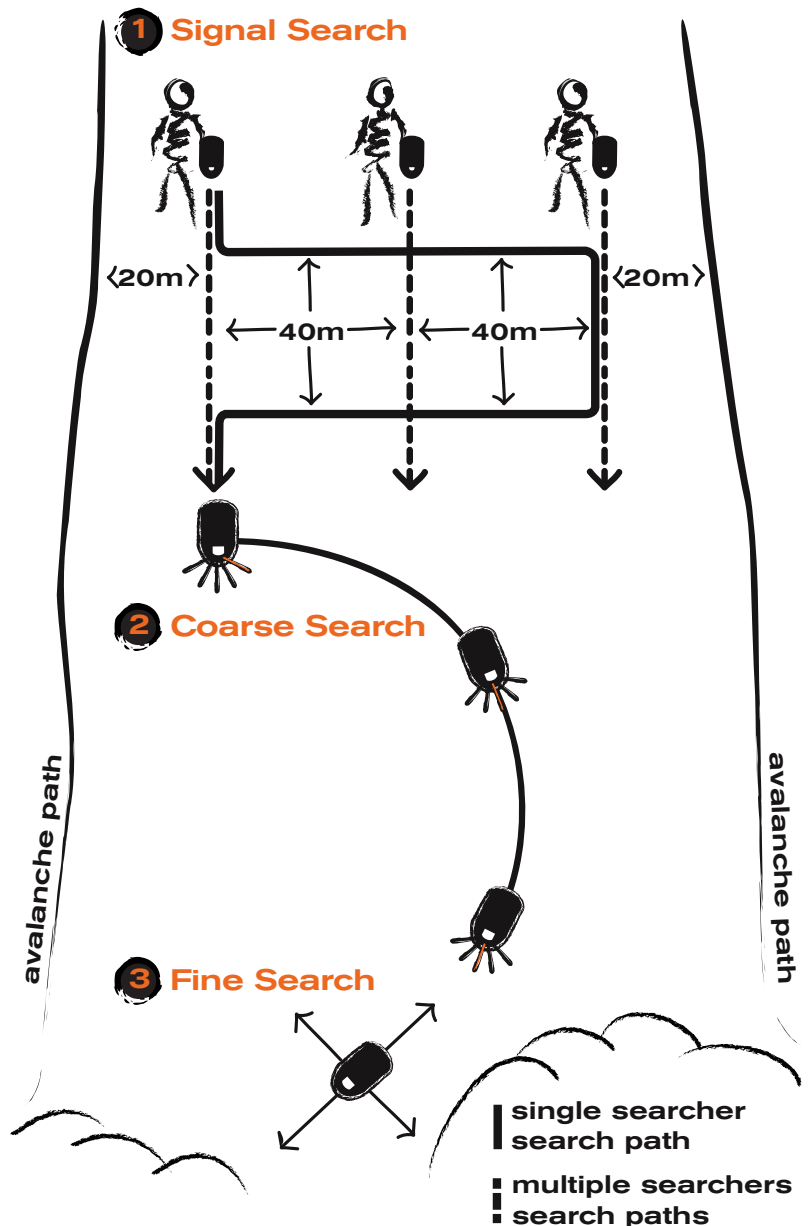
Performed when no signal has been detected, starting at the last-seen-area. If there's a last-seen area, search straight down the fall line from there. If there is no last-seen-area, search the entire debris pile for the victim. With multiple searchers, spread out no more than 40 meters apart. If alone, make switchbacks no more than 40 meters apart, 20 meters from each side. Move fast, always looking for clues on the surface.

2. Coarse Search

Once the signal is detected, use your directional lights and distance display to follow the victim's signal. This will often be curved. Analog beacon users will need to adjust your sensitivity control. Move as fast as possible until you reach a distance of about three meters from the victim.

3. Fine Search/Pinpointing

Slow down and pay close attention to your distance readings; directional arrows are less important. Get your beacon as close as possible to the snow surface. Once the lowest distance reading is found, search along the perpendicular axis for an even lower reading. When the lowest reading is confirmed, don't hesitate. Start probing!



To find an avalanche educator or BCA Beacon Training Park near you, check out www.backcountryaccess.com/education.



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