



While some avalanche victims die from trauma, the majority die from a lack of oxygen. Survival times drop in a non-linear fashion with the length of time the victim is buried beneath the snow. Use of the AvaLung (right) may increase survival time by an hour or more. Many pulseless victims will have snow in their mouth and nasal passages. You may not be able to get air into their lungs until their chest is uncovered due to the weight of the snow. Severe hypothermia is typically not a concern for recoveries less than 35 minutes.

Clear his airway and begin rescue breathing once his face and chest have been uncovered. Once he is completely exposed, place him in a hypothermia package and begin a gentle Level 1 evacuation to the nearest hospital. Do your best to protect his spinal cord throughout the recovery and treatment process. His pulse should strengthen as you continue to breath for him. With luck, he will begin to breath on his on. If he becomes awake, cooperative, and reliable at any point during his treatment and evacuation, you may rule out traumatic problems as usual.

