
A Great Town with Just One Problem

Article

JUNEAU, Alaska (Achieve3000, April 11, 2007). Butch and Janice Holst bought a home at the foot of Mount Juneau in 1978. They were thrilled with their new home, but later, their excitement faded a bit. Why? Someone showed them a picture of their house. It was in an article about avalanches. The article said that Juneau, Alaska, has the greatest risk of snow slides of any U.S. city.

There are more than 60 homes at the base of Mount Juneau. There is also a busy boat harbor and part of a highway. All are at risk of being hit by avalanches. Small slides happen fairly often and cause little damage. However, large avalanches can cause a great deal of harm. Juneau's worst slide happened in March 1962. It blew off roofs. It sent trees flying through walls and windows. Some houses were even moved a bit. No one was badly hurt. However, 17 homes had to have major repair work done.

Disasters like these make local people nervous. In March, record amounts of snow piled up on the mountain above the Holsts' home. The couple had to spend the night at their son's house in a safer part of town.

Experts believe that another large avalanche will strike Juneau. They are not sure when it will hit. However, experts believe that it will be larger than the 1962 slide.

The city of Juneau is trying to protect its people. This year, it opened an avalanche forecasting office. The office was open until April. After that, the avalanche danger is much less. The office is the only one of its kind in North America. Each day, the office posts forecasts on a Web site. There, people can find out whether there is an avalanche risk.

Riley Woodford owns a house that was damaged in the 1962 avalanche. He checks the Web site daily. Sometimes, Woodford sleeps in his basement or stays with friends.

"We are so lucky that . . . they decided to [put money into] avalanche forecasting. [It's] the one year we've had this kind of snowfall. It's great timing," Woodford said.

The system has some problems, however. Many times, there is a warning, but no avalanche. Because of this, some people do not listen to the warnings.

Leaders are worried about people who do not listen to avalanche warnings. Leaders are afraid that a big avalanche will hurt or kill many people. Still, the government cannot make people leave. Alaska law does not allow for this. Bill Glude is in charge of the avalanche office. He doesn't think that changing the law will help.

"When you . . . force [people to leave], they get [angry] pretty quickly," Glude said.



Photo credit and all related images:
Wikimedia Commons

*Mount Juneau has snow on top.
Sometimes, the snow slides down
the mountain and hits Juneau.*

Many people think that there is another answer. They say that the government could buy the homes that are in danger. People who wanted to could sell their homes and move. Butch Holst says he is not sure that the risk is high enough.

"I've been here since 1978, and I've never tried to sell out and move," Holst said.

Information for this story came from AP.

Dictionary

avalanche (*noun*) snow and ice that falls quickly and suddenly down a mountain

disaster (*noun*) something that causes serious loss, damage, or harm

forecasting office (*noun*) an office that tells what the chance is of something happening

risk (*noun*) chance of danger

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

Cause

Large amounts of snow pile up on Mount Juneau each winter.



Effect

Based on the article, which fits best in the empty box above?

- (A) Much of Juneau is closed during the summer.
- (B) Some parts of Juneau could be hit by an avalanche.
- (C) Newspapers rarely contain articles about Juneau.
- (D) Most people in Juneau are moving to other places.

Question 2

What is the big idea in this article?

- (A) The government plans to buy many homes in Juneau.
- (B) Many homes were damaged in the 1962 avalanche in Juneau.
- (C) Juneau is the American city with the greatest risk of snow slides.
- (D) Juneau is the American city with the highest amount of snowfall.

Question 3

The article does **not** talk about _____ being in danger from an avalanche in Juneau.

- (A) More than 60 homes
- (B) A school
- (C) A busy boat harbor
- (D) Part of a highway

Question 4

Look at this paragraph from the article:

Riley Woodford owns a house that was damaged in the 1962 avalanche. He checks the Web site daily. Sometimes, Woodford sleeps in his basement or stays with friends.

Which sentence would fit best in the paragraph above?

- (A) Woodford went to college in California.
- (B) Woodford works at a newspaper in Juneau.
- (C) Other times, Woodford stays in a nearby hotel.
- (D) In the summer, Woodford likes swimming.

Question 5

Look at these words from the article. Which are *antonyms*?

An antonym is a word with an opposite meaning. Hot and cold are antonyms.

- (A) *Avalanche* and *snow slide*
- (B) *Home* and *boat harbor*
- (C) *Repair* and *damage*
- (D) *Expert* and *disaster*

Question 6

Based on the article, how is Juneau different from other U.S. cities?

- (A) Juneau has warmer summers.
- (B) Juneau has many people living there.
- (C) Juneau has less ice in the winter.
- (D) Juneau has an avalanche forecasting office.

Question 7

Here is a sentence from the article:

This year, [Juneau] opened an avalanche forecasting office.

The word *forecast* means "to tell what might happen." The reader can tell that Juneau's *forecasting office* was made to tell_____.

- (A) When businesses will close
- (B) When snow slides might happen
- (C) When school will be over
- (D) When people can go snow skiing

Question 8

Based on the article, the reader can tell that _____.

- Ⓐ Riley Woodford is glad that Juneau opened its new avalanche forecasting office.
- Ⓑ Bill Glude plans to try to change laws in Juneau.
- Ⓒ Bill Glude thinks people in Juneau should have to leave when he says so.
- Ⓓ Riley Woodford is planning to move away from Juneau.

Thought Question

Write a summary of today's news story. To write a summary you should do these things:

- **STEP 1:** First you must read the article carefully.
- **STEP 2:** Look back at the article:
 1. What is the main idea for each paragraph?
 2. Take out any facts that are not needed.
 3. Put all the details in one paragraph.
- **STEP 3:** Reread your summary.
- **STEP 4:** Check your summary. Check it again.