Davos, March 2005

Dear Delegates and Members of the ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission,
Dear Colleagues,

It's already March and much of Europe is still in deepest winter. As far as I am aware, the current avalanche accident statistics in the various Alpine countries are slightly higher than the average values that have applied for many years now. Switzerland counted 16 avalanche victims up until the end of February 2005. Clearly we must continue to come up with useful tips, guidelines for decision-makers and recommendations regarding training and rescue procedures.

As you will have been aware since Zakopane, the main topic of the next ICAR Congress, which will take place in Cortina, Italy from 12 to 16 October, will be "missing people and search operations". Please send in your contributions to me as soon as possible (by 31 August 2005 at the latest). Presentations will be selected for their general interest on the basis of the abstract and table of contents submitted. The scheduled speaking time will be shorter than usual, but there will be greater opportunities to discuss presentations after they have taken place and to suggest potential solutions to problems.

As well as considering the main topic specified above, the Avalanche Rescue Commission is currently focussing on five open topics, which we intend to tackle in working groups starting this spring:

1. **Glossary**
   Create a glossary of common avalanche rescue terms for different languages (for example Verschwindepunkt = last seen area). This work would update the 1995 book: Multilingual Vocabulary – Snow and Avalanches.
   This request comes from Manuel Genswein and Dale Atkins.

2. **Guidelines for new avalanche rescue technologies**
   Define minimum guidelines for new avalanche rescue technologies (for example radar) to guide developers and manufacturers of new and devices and systems. (We should provide developers and manufacturers with guidelines and information regarding how new devices and systems should best work in the field as to snow cover penetration, working temperatures, waterproofness, maximum weight, snow wetness, etc.)
   This request comes from the SFISAR.

3. **Recommendation search-strip**
   Create a recommendation for avalanche rescue transceiver manufacturers to emphasize search-strip diamensions rather than maximum range. ICAR should work together with the manufacturers to create the recommendation.
   This request comes from François Sivardière.

4. **Standardize the ICAR data collection of avalanche accident**
   Standardize the collection of avalanche accident data to better assist in the collection and interpretation of avalanche data.
   This request comes from Albert Lunde and Hans-Jürg Etter.

5. **Checklist of avalanche accidents**
   Review and evaluate the Rescue Checklist of avalanche accidents (Proposed at the Leichtenstein ICAR-Congress). Do rescuers use it, what do they think about it, is more clarification necessary, or what is not needed in the "Checklist."
   This request comes from Albert Lunde.
The working groups formed to cover these 5 topics should each comprise at least six people if at all possible.

When asked, the following agreed to chair working groups:
Topic 1, Dale Atkins
Topic 2, Hans-Jürg Etter
Topic 3, François Sivarière
Topic 4, Albert Lunde
Topic 5, Heini Malue.

I would ask you all to choose one or two topics, report at your own initiative to the person chairing your group, and make the biggest contribution you can to the subsequent proceedings.
It would make life much easier if the persons chairing working groups did not have to go in search of members for their groups. Thank you for your understanding.

During the year, the members of working groups will keep in touch and exchange information by e-mail. If necessary, some time at meeting in Italy will be set aside for discussions amongst the members, but most of the time available will be devoted to briefing the remaining members of the Avalanche Rescue Commission on any progress made. Timetables for attaining goals will be set by the people chairing working groups. Work does not necessarily have to be brought to a close by October 2005.

Schedule to aim for:
By the end of June 2005, initial contact should have been established, the working groups structured and preliminary queries ironed out.
In mid-July 2005 the persons chairing working groups should give their first short presentation to Chairman ICAR-Avalanche Rescue Commission (CARC), by e-mail.
During the latter half of July 2005, the CARC will give a short briefing to everyone.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the members of the Avalanche Rescue Commission in advance for their active and constructive contributions to our success.

With best regards
Hans-Jürg Etter
Chairman ICAR-Avalanche Rescue Commission