Improving Mountain Safety Programs

Being Prepared For Opportunities:

The ICAR “Best Practices” For Avalanche Safety Programs Survey

Clair Israelson
Executive Director
Canadian Avalanche Centre
We Believe….

Rescue, Prevention Is “God’s Work”
• Saving human life is a noble humanitarian cause
• Improving safety programs = less suffering, more lives saved!
The Reality

We do God’s work...... but
• God does not pay the bills!
• More resources (money) and wisdom to improve our safety programs is something we can always use.
When Safety Programs Are “Good Enough”

- Public, politicians, bureaucrats complacent
- When programs static - staff enthusiasm, volunteerism is a challenge.
- Incremental, low cost improvements are still possible, necessary for morale.
- Vision, strategy, priorities required: What can / should we do to improve? What are international best practices?
“Public Outrage Bomb” prompts major program change; be ready!

OPPORTUNITY = LOSS X OUTRAGE
Disasters = Opportunity
For Major Program Improvements

• High profile fatal accident(s), major media coverage sparks public empathy, outrage.
• Politicians engage, bureaucrats wake up.
• Rescue, prevention programs scrutinized.
• Be proactive, “on the record” with solutions.
• Vision, strategy, priorities required: What improvements are needed next? What are international best practices?
ICAR Survey: Issues, Suggested “Best Practices” For Avalanche Safety Programs

Project Summary
Project Goals

- Identify avalanche safety issues, programs and practices in ICAR countries.
- Suggest ICAR “best practice” benchmarks for avalanche safety programs.
- Facilitate awareness, sharing of avalanche safety programs & ideas between countries.
“Prevention Working Group”
Established, 2006

• Hans-Juerg Etter, (Pres) ICAR Avalanche Com.
• Dale Atkins, US
• Francois Sivardiere, FR
• Ion Sanduloiu, ROM

• Albert Lunde, NO
• Christophe Berclaz, CH
• Manuel Genswein, CH
• Clair Israelson, CA
Survey Respondents, 13 ICAR Countries

- B. Gebhard, AT
- W. Wurtl, AT
- C. Israelson, CA
- F. Bebic, HR
- F. Sivardiere, FR
- D. Le Gall, FR
- B. Zehetleitner, DE
- A. Kjartansdotter, IS
- S. Pivot, IT
- G. Frangioni, IT
- S. Sterpinio, IT
- P. Lampert, LI
- A. Lunde, NO
- I. Sanduloiu, RO
- J. Peto, SK
- H. Etter, CH
- J. Rhyner, CH
- D. Abromeit, US
- E. Greene, US
Reports Produced

- Compiled results (raw data, 25 pages)
- Summary of survey results (5 pages)
- Suggested ICAR “Best Practices” statement for avalanche safety programs (1 page)
- Available for review - [www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca) or see me at the break
Best Practice
Organized Avalanche Rescue Services

- Organized avalanche rescue services exist for all avalanche prone areas of the country.
  - Rescue teams are fully integrated; modern SAR technologies, avalanche dogs, helicopters.
  - Time, alert to dispatch of first party is < 20 min.
  - Successes: coordination, cooperation, integration; live recoveries.
  - Challenges: developing, maintaining capacity and motivation (volunteers); inter-operability.
Suggested ICAR Best Practices For Avalanche Safety Programs

1. A credible professional organization issues scheduled avalanche forecasts for popular winter mountain recreation areas.
2. Avalanche training courses for non-professionals are readily available.
3. Comprehensive programs protect highly used public places from avalanches.
4. Avalanche professionals require specialized training / credentials / certifications.
5. Organized avalanche rescue services exist for all avalanche prone areas of the country.
“Recipe For Success”

• Vision – right program(s) for time, place
• Good people, right mix of skills, partners
• Organization, equipment, infrastructure
• Effective media, public relations
• Public demand for safety programs
• Political support, funding
“Public Outrage Bomb” prompts major program change; be ready!