



**Minutes of the
ICAR CISA IKAR Avalanche Rescue Commission Meetings
held Thursday, October 12, and Saturday, October 15, 2006
in Kranjska Gora / Slovenia**

Chair : Hans-Jürg Etter, Commission President
Call to order : 0900 hours
Agenda : see below

Agenda

1. Avalanche Rescue Commission minutes from Cortina (October 05)
2. Schedule of the Avalanche Rescue Commission meeting (translation, voting)
3. List of participants, introduction of the members (name, position in rescue organization, delegate of a rescue organization, manufacturer or guest)
4. Information about the activities during 2006, (procedure, 6 workgroup topics)
5. Information and discussion about the results of the 6 workgroups. Two topics with possible ICAR recommendations.
6. Avalanche accident data collection, statistics
7. Information and forum on the ICAR website (<http://www.ikar-cisa.org>)
8. Motions to the commission
9. Miscellaneous

Minutes of the Avalanche Rescue Commission meetings in Kranjska Gora (separate minutes will be provided for the joint presentations with the Terrestrial Rescue Commission)

Hans-Jürg Etter, the President of the Avalanche Rescue Commission, cordially welcomed all the participants. He wished everyone an enjoyable, efficient, and collegial conference.

1. Minutes from Cortina

No comments were made on last year's minutes. The recorder of the minutes and the translator were thanked for their work.

2. Course of the Avalanche Rescue Commission meeting

- Voting: Prior to the vote of the General Assembly 2006 at the end of the conference, each member organization had one vote according to the current bylaws.
- The French-speaking colleagues agreed that during the commission's sessions, translations would only be made in English and German, respectively. The President thanked for the understanding.

3. List of participants / Introductions

- The participants briefly introduced themselves including their roles in their (national) organizations.
- The list of participants was circulated for verification and potential modification.

4. Information on the progress of the workgroups throughout 2006.

Procedure: Each workgroup was given 40 min to present. Additionally, Clair Israelson, CDN, brought new questions and suggestions, which were discussed subsequently.

5. **Information on and discussion of the workgroup topics and their results.** Two topics with possible ICAR recommendations followed at the end.

Definition of the search strip width (François Sivardière, F):

Last year, a proposal for a recommendation was made that in the future only search strip widths or effective ranges should be printed on the transceivers and mentioned. The maximum range, which is not of practical value for the user, shall only be mentioned in the technical data. This proposal has been on the table for discussion within the member organizations for a year. Under the direction of François Sivardière, AENA has developed its own recommendation and sent it out to all members of the Avalanche Rescue Commission for discussion. The two drafts for a recommendation were available in writing. A discussion and a subsequent vote was to determine which of the two will be used as an ICAR recommendation.

Several comments were made that only one recommendation should be finalized ensuring that clear and relevant data will be provided to the users. This means that the search ranges and practical search strip widths stated by the manufacturers must be objective, valid, and reproducible. Participants were reminded that the recommendation would be limited to essential requirements. The two drafts did not contain any verbiage as to how the range must be determined and how the search strip width must be calculated. A common methodology to determine the effective range and the search strip width should be developed in collaboration with the manufacturers. This methodology should be applied by all manufacturers.

After an orientation for the Terrestrial Rescue Commission, the Avalanche Rescue Commission held a final vote on October 14 on the two proposals at hand.

Nils Faarlund, N, served as vote counter.

12 organizations with voting rights were present.

The question voted on was:

Shall the proposal drafted in Cortina or the proposal from ANENA be adopted as recommendation of the ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission?

Voting results

Proposal drafted in Cortina: accepted as follows: yes: 11, no: 1, abstention: 0

Proposal drafted by ANENA: declined as follows: yes: 1, no: 11, abstention: 0

Additional vote

Shall the following text be added to the proposal drafted in Cortina: "The technical data shall specify which method was used to determine the search strip width."

Voting results: yes: 7, no: 5

The text mentioned will therefore be included in the recommendation.

The English version of the proposal drafted in Cortina will become an official recommendation and will be translated into German and French.

On Thursday, October 12, the question was brought up, who would head up the group that would develop a consensus on how to determine search strip widths and ranges in collaboration with the manufacturers. Jürg Schweizer (SLF, CH) was nominated as a neutral analyst of the current calculation methods. His analysis of the current methods will be sent to all the manufacturers for comment. Hans-Jürg Etter will find out whether Jürg Schweizer is willing to accept the task and will inform the commission about the decision. The further procedure will be determined at that time.

Definition of common terminology for statistics (Albert Lunde, N)

A draft was already presented in Cortina and handed out to the organizations for comment. Since no suggestions for enhancements or modifications were made throughout the past year, Albert

has integrated the draft version into the statistics. Albert explained the issues that have been cause for questions in the past.

Several suggestions were made with regard to the category "Number of persons caught". To date only data stemming from organized rescue missions has been collected. After a thorough discussion, it became evident that only a few countries would be able to provide the total number of persons caught fairly accurately. The conclusion was made that this data should be collected where possible and processed within the countries. The ICAR statistics will continue to gather organized rescue data only.

Data on the rescues conducted by professional heli-skiing outfits in Canada will be collected and integrated in the statistics, because their guides are considered to be well-trained rescue professionals.

Additional categories and criteria can be collected in the future using additional forms. This may become relevant in connection with the suggestion of Clair Israelson, which was discussed later.

Suggestion: an electronic data exchange (via the ICAR website) would be desirable. Hans-Jürg Etter agrees; it is also a great desire of his. According to Hans-Jürg, the possibility to enter and exchange data in ICAR would be available soon.

Prior to the conference, Albert Lunde suggested, that each country should provide a brief summary of the avalanche accidents of the past winter in writing. Unfortunately, this issue could not be discussed due to a lack of time. The subject was tabled for the next meeting. Short presentations are welcomed for the 2007 conference. There is no prescribed format.

There will be no shortage of work for the Avalanche Rescue Commission in the near future. Hans-Jürg Etter thanked everyone for their active participation.

Checklists (Heini Malue, D und Walter Würtl, A)

The evaluation of the questionnaires was already discussed at last year's meeting in Cortina. All the checklists returned turned out to be very similar.

The checklists submitted will be made available on the ICAR website. This way everyone can access and use the most suitable checklist. They can be found at www.ikar-cisa.org under Avalanche Rescue -> Checklists.

Additionally, the workgroup created a checklist "Anleitung Lawinenunfall-Kameradenhilfe". It is designed for lay rescuers. By utilizing the checklist, favorable conditions can be created for organized rescue. Walter Würtl, the author of this interesting presentation is open to suggestions. Thank you very much for the great work.

Minimal criteria for new search device prototypes (Hans-Jürg Etter, CH)

A paper on this topic (see annex) was distributed in Cortina. Since no comments or objections were made over the past year, the paper was put to a vote as is.

After an orientation for the Terrestrial Rescue Commission, the Avalanche Rescue Commission held a final vote on October 14 on the two proposals at hand.

Nils Faarlund, N, served as vote counter.

12 organizations with voting rights were present.

The question voted on was:

Shall the "Minimal requirements for new search system / device prototypes to locate buried subjects who are not equipped with technology, such as transponders or transmitters (for the test phase in the terrain)" be adopted as an ICAR recommendation?

Voting results

Accepted as follows yes: 11, no: 0, abstention: 1

Glossary of terms (Dale Atkins, USA and Manuel Genswein, CH)

It has been noticed that multiple terms are used for the same thing in different countries speaking the same language or even within one country (e.g. Switzerland). This automatically leads to difficulties and confusion in training.

Manuel Genswein gave some examples. The workgroup asked all commission members to determine whether the terms could be consolidated in their current form. Some terms would require further explanation. This would also be the case for literal translations.

On Saturday, October 14, a broadly supported proposal was made for the terms “coarse search” and “fine search” with the avalanche transceiver as well as “pinpointing” with a probe pole. Unfortunately, there was no time left to discuss the issue. The work will be continued under the direction of Dale Atkins.

Thanks for the work of the workgroup.

Information and discussion on workgroup topics (Clair Israelson, CDN)

*Is anyone from the participating 17 countries opposed to discussing one of the topics in the Avalanche Rescue Commission that was already announced throughout the year?
Nobody objects; no abstention.*

- a) Clair Israelson asked whether ICAR should recommend the ABS System as standard equipment for rescuers and other professionals working in avalanche terrain.

Various suggestions were made. François Sivardière pointed to a statement made in 1999 that was issued by ICAR in connection with avalanche transceivers. He suggested drafting something similar. Hans-Jürg Etter reminded the participants that Markus Falk was going to give a presentation the following day on statistics of people caught in avalanches with an ABS or a transceiver. This would be part of the joint presentations with the Terrestrial Rescue Commission.

After extensive discussion, a consultative vote was taken on the type of document that should be drafted.

*Develop a recommendation: no votes
Provide a fact sheet: no votes
Prepare a statement: everyone voted in favor*

Under the direction of Dale Atkins, a draft will be prepared by Andres Bardill, Nils Faarlund, Albert Lunde, Peter Schwitter, François Sivardière, and Walter Würtl.

The draft will be discussed with the Terrestrial Rescue Commission and the Alpine Medicine and possibly enhanced. Ultimately, a joint statement will be issued by all three commissions.

- b) Clair Israelson suggested that the RECCO-System be included in the statement above along with the ABS System.

This was accepted without opposition.

- c) Clair Israelson asked whether examples of call rosters should be established for avalanche rescue, similar to wildland fire fighting. During the discussion, it was mentioned that many organizations already have multiple specific call rosters.

Another question was:

Should such call roster be collected and published on the website?

The majority decided in a consultative vote not to collect and publish call rosters on the website of the Avalanche rescue Commission.

- d) Should the ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission analyze avalanche accident data from the individual countries? The purpose would be to determine why the numbers of accidents is rising in some countries and while it is declining or remaining constant in other countries (see paper and poster presented by H.-J. Etter at the ISSW 2004 in Jackson Hole 2004, which is also available on the ICAR website).

A new workgroup was established to address this issue. The following members volunteered to develop proposals: Christophe Berclaz, Manuel Genswein, Hans-Jürg Etter, François Sivardière and Ion Sanduloiu. Clair Israelson will head up this workgroup. The findings of the workgroup will be published continuously on the ICAR website.

6. **Avalanche accident database and statistics**

Hans-Jürg Etter asked all the organizations to complete and return the datasheets with the avalanche accident statistics as soon as possible, even if they couldn't be filled out completely yet. (At least, the number of fatalities should be known).

7. **Information pages und Forum on the ICAR Website (<http://www.ikar-cisa.org>)**

No further information was provided or questions asked. It was recommended to visit the site from time to time. These minutes will be posted there, as well.

8. **Motions to the Commission**

No additional motions were made.

9. **Miscellaneous**

After a brief announcement on Thursday, October 12 and time to think it over, a vote was taken on Saturday, October 14, whether a one-day practical field session should be held prior to the 2007 ICAR Conference in Pontresina.

The question was:

Is there interest for a practical field session immediately preceding the official ICAR Conference in 2007?

The voting results were:

Yes: 12 votes

No: 0 votes

The event will take place provided enough practical topics/suggestions are submitted.

Suggestions and contributions for this day are to be submitted to Hans-Jürg Etter. After consulting with the event host, the deadline was set to **May 31, 2007**.

President Hans-Jürg Etter adjourned this year's Avalanche Rescue Commission meeting at 1520 hours. He thanked all the participants for their valuable collaboration, and he is looking forward to meeting everyone again at the next busy ICAR Conference.

President:

Hans-Jürg Etter

Recorder:

Nathalie Werlen