

**Avalanche commission report – Killarney Ireland 2015 Oct.**

**Practical day :**

Presence of the President of the avalanche commission.

**Assembly of Delegates of the Avalanche Rescue Commission:**

Welcome / Meeting program

Minute of silence

Minutes of Lake Tahoe : approved

**President's report**

**Avalanche Accidents reports**

Six avalanches data presented from :

France, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, USA, Austria, Canada

Furthermore, we have collected a lot of avalanche data that missed since a few years, in order to implement a new database. A big job from Dale Atkins and Manuel Genswein and I would like to thank both. Concerning Dale, he leaves the commission as vice-president. I would like to introduce Joe Obad during our assembly.

**Presentation of new Icar members :**

**Report from Marcel Meier** – Dog-handler sub-commission regarding the dog-handler gathering that be held by Marcel last winter.

**Report from Per.O Wiberg** about working prevention group. The entire report will be give at the end of our assembly.

Proposal text of a recommendation from the working prevention group:

**ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission  
Killarney, Ireland**

To help prevent incidents and accidents in the mountains, it is highly recommended to follow these principles:



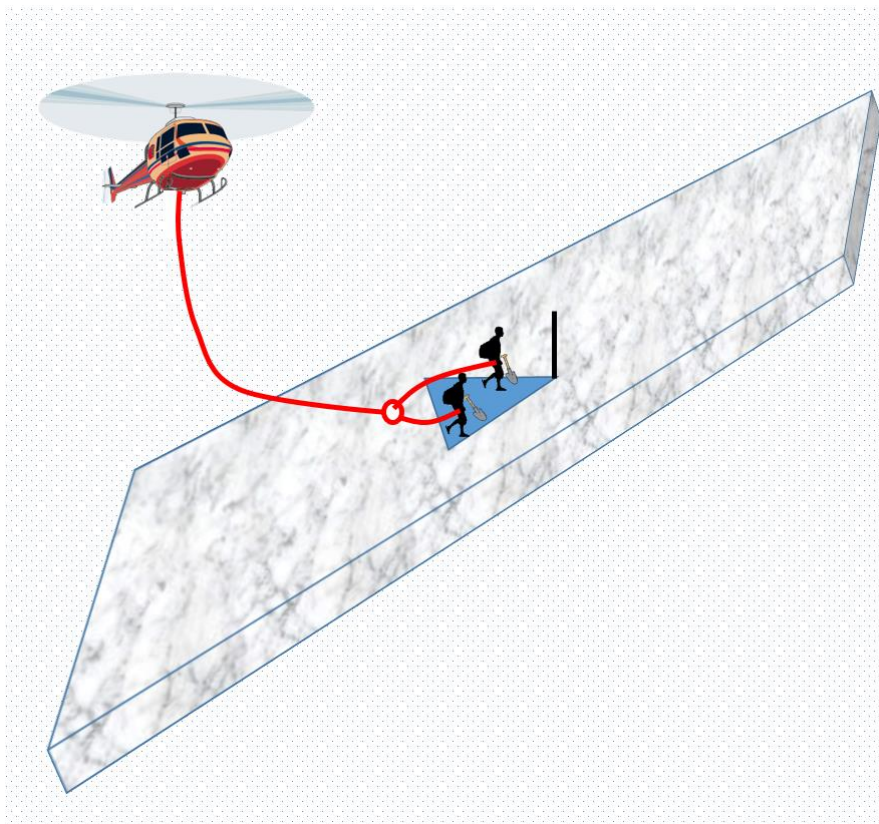
- Seek appropriate training
- Use relevant decision-making tools/checklists
- Prior to departure plan alternatives to your main objective
- Constantly re-evaluate conditions and adapt decisions as necessary
- Establish an open communication culture within the group

Whereas these principles are equally valid for organized mountain rescue, refer to all ICAR recommendations for specific topics of mountain rescue.

### **2015 ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission Topics**

#### **Scoop and Run Excavation Procedure - Joint Project with ICAR Air Rescue Commission**

Discussion on a “scoop and run excavation procedure” carried out by two rescuers attached to the helicopter. See attached PDF as a simplistic sketch of a potential set-up.



## Synopsys:

Today's helicopter based search capabilities for buried subjects in avalanches allow to reduce the exposure of the rescuers during search to a minimum. However, when the search is concluded from the air, conditions do not always allow to expose rescuers to the ground and hazard mitigation might be complicated or impossible.

For these cases, a strict protocol for a “scoop and run excavation procedure” carried out by two rescuers attached to the helicopter should be developed as joint effort between the Avalanche and Air Rescue commission. The protocol needs to include under what conditions the procedure should be considered (i.e. safety margins for helicopter, limitations on burial depth), the requirements on equipment, the requirement on training, emergency pull-up procedures etc.

Delegates are invited to consider different options for such a procedure in order to have an efficient and interesting session on this topic.

## Example / Point to Consider and Evaluate:

Attachment of rescuers: Two rescuers are attached to the central carabineer of the static rope with a 3m long, static, cable or rope. As the connections to the rescues will unavoidably get covered by excavated snow blocks, they need to be as small as possible in diameter in order to easily cut the snow if the rescuers need to be lifted in an emergency evacuation procedure. 5.5mm Kevlar ropes (holding 1800daN) are one option.

Emergency pull back procedure: In order to allow the rescuers to excavate the buried subject over several minutes in an efficient manner, the downwash of the helicopter needs to be reduced by a downslope offset of the helicopter.

In case of an emergency pull back operation, it is thus critical to avoid that the pull is applied in the appropriate direction in order to avoid serious injuries.

## **Accident Data Collection**

### Situation Online Platform:

The new ICAR website is not yet able to provide the entry forms of the old version. Thus, we have to collect the data again in Excel spreadsheets.

Dale Atkins is currently evaluating an online tool to simplify the data entry for you and he will contact all organizations in the near future.

### **Definition of Future Accident Data Collection:**

- database standard
- to what extent does the ICAR Avalanche Commission collect and compile its own worldwide statistic
- to what extent should the interface to national collection of accident data be standardized

### **Update Working Group “Database of Standardized Avalanche Rescue Illustrations and Key Instructional Texts”**

Based on the various feedback received after the 2014 Lake Tahoe meeting, the content of the of the database has been updated.

More languages where added and existing translations completed and optimized.

Currently, there is still translation work ongoing which will be integrated over the course of the summer.

The members of the working group will meet for a separate session during the ICAR 2015 conference.

### **Slalom Probing**

- Feedback Season 14/15 on Slalom Probing ( F. Jarry – Manuel genswein)

### **Proposal text for a recommendation from the avalanche commission:**

Killarney, Ireland

To minimize search times, maximize survival chances and reduce risk to rescuers, it is recommended to apply the following procedure:

1. With limited resources, in cases with obvious terrain traps and around anchored surface clues, spot probe the most likely burial areas.
2. Coarse probe the likely burial areas:
  - i. On first passage limit the probing depth to 1,5m.
  - ii. On second passage, probe with lateral offset and maximum probing depth.
3. Fine probe the entire avalanche debris including the immediately adjacent areas to maximum probing depth.

4. Remove the fine-probed debris to within 1m of the probed depth.  
Repeat steps 2, 3 and 4.

Accurate marking allows a systematic continuation of probing in subsequent passages (according to AVA-REC0003) Risk to rescuers and resource availability may influence the rescue procedure.

### **Slalom Probing**

Slalom probing has been demonstrated to be an efficient coarse probing method.

1. Space rescuers 1.5m apart (outstretched arms, wrist to wrist) to create a 50 x 50 cm grid (88% probability of detection).
2. Ensure correct forward spacing by placing the probe forward 50cm before the forward step.
3. The leader is probing in the center and gives commands: "probe" - "right" - "right" - "forward" - "left" - "left" ... and "align left to right", if required.
4. Probe at 90° to the slope surface in front of the rescuer.

If resources allow, split rescuers into multiple probe lines of 6 to 10. Higher levels of rescuer training allow for longer probe lines.

In certain circumstances e.g. very rough/soft debris, forest, or untrained volunteers, other coarse probing methods may be more suitable.

*A detailed description of the method is available in: SLALOM PROBING - A SURVIVAL CHANCE OPTIMIZED PROBE LINE SEARCH STRATEGY; 2014; Genswein M, Letang D, Jarry F, Reiweger I, Atkins D; Proceedings of ISSW 2014*

### **Update UIAA Safety Commission Workgroup Avalanche Probes and Shovels Standard**

The standard development has progressed with many laboratory and field test sessions. Target is to present a final standard proposal for avalanche shovels at the UIAA Safety Commission 2016 meeting and for probes at the UIAA Safety Commission 2017 meeting.

A summary of the current draft will be circulated to the Avalanche Commission members prior to the 2015 ICAR congress.

During and after the presentation, we welcome your active feedback.

### **Project Based Collaboration Between UIAA Safety Commission and ICAR Avalanche Commission**

The above mentioned standardization project has shown that there is need and potential in a closer cooperation between ICAR and UIAA in certain projects and on certain topics.

Concerning the Avalanche as well as the Terrestrial Rescue Commissions, the UIAA Safety Commission is lacking know-how on the proper application of the products, where as vice-versa more in-depth know-how on the working materials/equipment might be beneficial in the development and optimization of rescue techniques.

### **Recommendation "Be Searchable"**

At the board meeting in January 2015, the final version of the recommendation on "Be Searchable" 20150124-AVA-REC0010 has been accepted.

Please take the responsibility to make concerned organizations, user groups and specialized media in your country aware of this important recommendation.

English version : [20150124-AVA-REC0010 Be searchable! \(pdf, 65.18 Kb\)](#)

German Version : [20150124-AVA-REC0010 Sei auffindbar! \(pdf, 138.24 Kb\)](#)

French Version : [20150124-AVA-REC0010 Soyez localisable! \(pdf, 192.76 Kb\)](#)

Vote about the both proposals:

Recommendation "prevention"

Recommendation "Coarse probe line strategies"

APPROVED

Dominique LETANG

President of avalanche commission.

