



IKAR Kommission Lawinenrettung
ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission
CISA Commission Sauvetage Avalanches



**Minutes of the Avalanche Rescue Commission meeting
of 20th October 2011
at the ICAR-Congress at Are, Sweden**

The president of the commission Hans- Jürg Etter welcomes the participants to this year's meeting.

1. Minutes of the meeting from October 2010 at Visoké Tatry, Slovakia

The minutes are approved.

2. Progress of the meeting

The delegates agree with the agenda. The voting power will be allocated to the delegates. The participants accept the languages German and English for the meeting. Manuel Genswein offers himself as translator. Naturally the applications can be also presented in French.

3. List of participants, introduction of participants

The president circulates the list of participants with the e-Mail addresses and asks the participants to control and update them.

New delegates introduce themselves. They come from Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Czech Republic and the United States; for example Lukas Dürr as successor of the SLF employee Hans-Jürg Etter and Jan Allaart as successor of Peter Lampert. Then the voting cards are distributed to the authorized representative.

4. Practice day ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission in Canada, Revelstoke, 21.-24. March 2011

The documents about the first practice day in Canada are available on the ICAR web site.

Ian Tomm thanks all the persons, who went to Canada.

The president thanks the leadership of the CAA for the organization of the training day between CAA and ICAR-ARC, which was very well performed.

5. Short summary of the winter 10/11 and the avalanche events of the different countries

Austrian:

The last winter season was an exceptional case, because there were „only“ 3 dead persons, in relation to the 33 avalanche victims 09/10. The reason is that there were only 3 times big snowfalls. The total was only 30 missions what means a quite winter time. Almost each mission has been done with avalanche dogs.

The statistic figures in detail are published on www.alpinesicherheit.

France:

November started with good snow conditions, but there was an accident with 4 casualties. December was very mild and the snow was melt in the lower layers, there were solely accidents in the higher layers.

January and February were very dry; there were only 35-50% of the normal precipitations and therefor less accidents as usual: „only“ 8 further casualties.

In March there wasn't enough snow felt down and within 1 week there were 9 casualties. In April the temperature was +4°C over the average, what leads early to the end of the season.

A total of 105 persons have been covered by an avalanche. More than 50% were recovered by colleagues.

Italy:

It was a quite season with just isolated accidents, dry with some snow. During March it was as warm as last time 30 years ago. More victims were counted in off-piste as in back country skiing. The quantity of dead persons was 16, what is under the average of 19.

From 15 avalanche accidents were 10 with mountain guide and 25% were foreigners. 1 Airbag was not triggered, 4 were activated.

During an accident of 3 leaded groups, 1 person felt down and set up an avalanche, which carried away 18 persons. 2 persons felt down over 400m and were saved alive thanks to LVS. From the 8 discovered, 2 of them were recovered death.

In France the snow conditions were bad, so there were more French people involved in an accident in Italy as usual.

Canada:

There was a lot of snow what led to many road and railway accidents.

During the 11 accidents, thanks to improved coordination between the organizations involved, more rescues were successful.

In a snow-mobile accident 20 persons were affected and there were 3 dead persons. The help by palls rescue was ineffective.

During poor visibility, a back country skiing accident happened, whereby the group skied faulty. Two of them were buried, 1 person wasn't buried and 1 person wasn't affected. In panic one transceiver wasn't applied properly, what resulted in discussions about training with transceivers.

Norway:

There were unusually many victims: 13 casualties versus the average of 5. The main share was recorded at backcountry skiing.

During a back country skiing accident, 3 persons were carried away: 2 of them applied a personal flotation device and were staying at the surface. A woman without personal flotation device was fully covered and died.

This begs the question of why not all of the group were equipped by a personal flotation device. It should be considered if ICAR has to publish a recommendation about this case.

During an avalanche accident, 5 persons were covered, 2 of them died. After 2 hours a person was saved due to an avalanche dog guide and his dog.

Catalonia:

Primarily a lot of snow was fallen; thereafter no snow came down during the main season what led to fewer accidents. A worth mentioning accident happened by back country skiers, who were skiing in a forbidden area. Also an open piste towards the valley was covered by a triggered avalanche.

USA:

The snow conditions were as well as not for a long time ago.

Unfortunately there were 26 avalanche victims (2 fewer than the average), 11 were saved dead. All of them were carrying a transceiver. Remarkable was that there was a big problem during the companion rescue with the proper handling of the transceiver.

In one case the transceiver was intentionally left in the car, because the persons were superstitious and they believed in not carrying the device with them would prevent them of an accident.

On another occasion one person got a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) as a gift and thought it would be a transceiver. During the application the person switched it on and later off what led to false alarms.

The president called attention to the fact that good prevention means the correct and useful employment of devices.

Liechtenstein:

There was only 1 avalanche mission, whereas nobody was buried.

The event was taken for training purpose.

Switzerland:

A total of 26 avalanche victims were to be complained. There were no property accidents. In Switzerland there was just a little snow. Most of the snow was fallen in the South of Switzerland, Ticino, but there was no avalanche accident recorded.

Most of the accidents happened in slopes of 36-40°. During 110 avalanches with persons and 6 with property damages, 176 persons were carried away from an avalanche what led to 26 dead and 41 injured persons.

The difficulty is that formerly back country skiing was mostly done in spring time but today they occur in November – June.

An accident happened downhill from a back country skiing during the climbing. The first person went in the primarily avalanche, the second person in the following avalanche. The second person was able to free himself and to locate thanks to transceiver the colleague. The first person doesn't breathe any more and nobody could bring help. The question was coming in, how long a companion has to stay by the victim and conduct resuscitation, if there is no chance of being rescued. The colleague has to leave him towards evening (nightfall). The victim was dead rescued.

One delegate said that in Canada the 1-hour-rule was commonly used in such cases.

6. Information about the duties during the year 2011

6.1 Glossary / Genswein

The organisations should report, if they find some mistakes or would like to complete the glossary with the objective to remain the glossary updated.

6.2 Actual state of the work from the group avalanche dog guides / Lunde

The questionnaire, which should determine the factor of success from the missions with avalanche dogs was translated into 5 languages and contains 68 questions. Albert Lunde asks strongly the participants to complete the questionnaire, because the raw data are very important for analysing the data.

6.3 Actual state of the work group probe distances / Hölzl

Markus Hölzl says that the work group, which wants to harmonise different strategies for probing by an ICAR recommendation and wants to determine a uniform product, couldn't start until now. The interested parties should execute tools (example exercises).

6.4 Actual state of rescue compass / Etter

The final version is available in German, French, English, Italian and Spanish language. The purpose of the rescue compass is to get a possibility to check by a written instruction, if nothing was forgotten by the use of a check list. There is no copyright and the rescue compass can be downloaded for free. The president thanks Reto Keller for his work. The rescue compass can also be ordered at cost price in the shape of a booklet. E-Mail rescue.compass@slf.ch.

6.5 Collection of avalanche data via web site

All of the ICAR support the project. Walter Würtl will supervise the platform together with the provider during the next years. The ICAR managing committee has decided to get a second opinion regarding the costs. The data programming will be starting in 2012 most probably.

7. Information: election of the new president ICAR - ARC

Dominique Létang from France offers himself as a candidate.

He has taken an active part from more than 20 years in the mountain rescue and is since 2009 manager ANENA.

Walter Würtl withdrew his candidature.

8. To present applications to the commission

- **Mike Wiegele: pursue the ARC consideration to change the stability rating from 1 to 5, to 1 to 7**

Mike Wiegele submits a change of the stability rating from 6 new to 7 steps: very poor / poor / fair / good / very good should be developed to 7 steps. Fair should be divided in poor-moderate / moderate / moderate-good to react more practically.

He would like that this change will take place in all countries as definition / steps of stability to guarantee the highest possible safety and to simplify the risk management.

9. Collection of avalanche accident data, -statistic

The president asks the delegates to fill in the statistics. The raw data are only useful, if all of the members complete it.

10. New thoughts about the survivor ship curve (Walter Würtl, A)

The change of perspective during an avalanche accident should be considered.

0 – 18 Min. = survive / 18 – 35 Min. = phase of suffocation / 35 – 90 Min. = phase of latency; around 7 % survive during the first 2 hours.

The time factor is an essential point, „Time is life“.

The mortality of completely buried persons is 49%, partially buried persons 3%.

Unfortunately, the mortality of persons, who weren't buried completely but died wasn't taken enough in attention.

25 % of the killed persons were remaining on the surface but nevertheless died.

(basic for the statistic was 143 avalanche victims of over 6 winter times in Austria).

Conclusion:

- To suffocate was the main reason, but the trauma is the critical factor of persons who wasn't all completely buried.
- In wooded areas, trauma injuries are often to be found, this should be considered as an important factor during the training
- Regarding the equipment the protection of the head of the victim must be taken in consideration as an important aspect for the future
- In general the problem of the partially buried persons should be paid more attention

11. Miscellaneous

No remarks.

12. Avalanche accident - tendency

In general, during the last years the avalanche accidents were rising strongly. That's why it becomes always more important to verify further and new objectives regarding prevention.

All of the statistics are available for download to all ICAR - organisations, to apply the raw data for comparing purpose (info president).

Are, Sweden, 20. October 2011

recorder: Caroline E. Irniger

Accepted by: H.J. Etter