Mountaineer-Oriented Local Avalanche Forecasting System in a Graphical Format in Val d’Aran (Eastern Pyrenees)

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This paper presents a new avalanche danger information system. Internet based and with a graphical format, its display breaks down the information both by scale (entire valley, avalanche prone area, avalanche path) and by user level (from beginner to expert). It has been noticed that mountaineers have trouble when it comes to planning an activity to meet safety standards, due to the lack or scatter of information about the terrain and to the difficulties understanding and retaining the information contained in the avalanche advisories. In our valley, there is the additional problem of language, since we are located at the crossroads of four different linguistic areas. Thanks to a very dense observer network and to the forecasters’ vast knowledge of the area, we have been able to develop an avalanche forecasting system for a series of mountain itineraries, which consists on a description of the itinerary -including the dangerous spots which might affect the safest trace- and a weekly update of the avalanche advisory. This last includes text, graphics, icons and interactive maps where the information is displayed in the form of traffic lights.