Making the News: Using the Media for Avalanche Safety

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Canada is an alpine nation, yet most Canadians have little or no effective knowledge of avalanches. At the CAA and CAC we are focusing significant effort into building cultural awareness of avalanches and avalanche safety strategies through the use of the electronic and print media.

There are many challenges inherent in engaging the media. We have no shortage of media attention when avalanches cause deaths, close highways or isolate communities. In these situations, the difficulty lies in facilitating the distribution of accurate and timely information relevant to public safety, without fueling the fires of sensationalism.

Conversely, we actively seek media attention to cover stories that help Canadians understand and appreciate avalanches as a natural part of the winter environment, intrinsic to many winter activities and generally manageable through informed decisions. The challenge lies in providing newsworthy content while imparting this message in a way that resonates with the public.

This presentation demonstrates the strategies we have developed to harness the power of the media-including mistakes made and lessons learned.