

Experience is not enough, persistent weak layers in Western Canada 2007-2010

Karl Klassen

Canadian Avalanche Centre, Revelstoke, BC, Canada

The winters of 2007/08, 2008/09, and 2009/10 in British Columbia were characterized by numerous persistent weak layers (PWLs). Professional avalanche practitioners with 20, 30, or even 40 years of experience commented they had never encountered such conditions before.

By presenting an overview of prominent layers, fatality records, and select notable incidents involving experienced practitioners, the unusual characteristics of some of the exceptional PWLs are highlighted. Risk management strategies for high uncertainty situations due to low probability/high consequence scenarios are discussed with an emphasis on adjusting conventional thinking and the role of human factors