“Safe haven” at road sides near avalanche prone sites

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Snow avalanches cause threat to road traffic in mountainous areas in Iceland in wintertime. One or more vehicles are hit by avalanches every year but last year’s no fatal accidents due to snow avalanches have been reported. In case of avalanche accidents several different respond units like police, rescue group personnel and road maintenance personnel will participate in the rescue operation. A number of rescue vehicles and a base for onsite commander will need a space near the accident site during operations. Other vehicles must be able to turn safely from the accident site. A two-lane urban road can barely serve as a location for rescue operations.

This work describes how roads in mountainous areas can be improved by adding a safe area (safe haven) at the roadside where the respond units can place their bases during operations and road users can turn back from the accident site. The criteria for the location and design of the safe area is described. Safe area at road site will help all respond units to do their job during operations at accident sites.