

AVALANCHE SAFETY AND RESCUE IN MOUNTAINEERING

P. Fuhrmann

Abstract

Recognizing the seriousness of the avalanche hazard, Parks Canada maintains an active public information programme via the news media, pre-recorded telephone messages, public lectures to ski clubs, youth groups, Alpine clubs, etc., and via contacts made with back-country travellers when they register at sign-out points located throughout the Parks. The basic hazard forecast information is prepared and posted by the Warden Service. In dealing with the public, emphasis is placed on complete avoidance of avalanche paths (not on detailed methods for crossing avalanche paths, or on methods to outswim avalanches).

Parks Canada has trained rescue manpower and avalanche dog teams, both supported by helicopter but also capable and fully equipped to travel on skis or foot, when necessary.

As a member of IKAR (International Commission of Alpine Rescue), Parks Canada is working on the problem of standardization of avalanche rescue transceivers, and, in general, on updating safety and rescue procedures.

Discussion

EIGENMANN: Could you clarify the problem of avalanche dogs and gasoline?

FUHRMANN: The dog will follow the gas smell. If the gas is spilled over a large area, it will confuse the dog.

PERLA: Could you explain IKAR's recent resolution on rescue transceivers?

FUHRMANN: After long discussion, IKAR recommended that all three systems, Skadi, Pieps, and Autophone were suitable for avalanche rescue.

PERLA: How do you feel about a resolution that approves of the Autophone which operates on a different frequency than the Skadi and Pieps?

FUHRMANN: The situation is complicated, and IKAR felt that it would be premature to prohibit the Autophone, which has some fine characteristics.