

## THE CANADIAN AVALANCHE CENTRE

The Canadian Avalanche Centre (CAC) opened on 5 October 1991. The CAC is the operational arm of the Canadian Avalanche Association (CAA) and was set up to carry on some of the work of the National Research Council (NRC) Avalanche Centre which was closed in 1990. The CAA was formed in 1982 as a non-profit society to represent avalanche personnel in Canada. The activities of the CAC are determined by the membership (about 150 members) and the Directors. The four main activities (detailed below) are run by the staff of four at the Centre with additional work completed by Committees of the CAA.

The four main activities of the CAC are:

### 1. CANADIAN AVALANCHE ASSOCIATION TRAINING SCHOOLS (CAATS)

The Schools were originally developed by NRC, British Columbia Institute of Technology and avalanche personnel from USA & Canada in the early 1970's. They are now run by the CAC and are registered vocational training schools in Alberta and BC. The average annual enrollment is 200 students with a small number of students from USA & Europe. The course material has also been adopted in New Zealand.

### 2. INDUSTRY INFORMATION EXCHANGE (INFOEX)

The setting up of this service was the driving force in the formation of the CAC. Following a number of avalanche accidents in the 1970's and 1980's, a better exchange of snow stability information between operations was recommended. The principle of the INFOEX is that on a daily basis all avalanche operations exchange their weather, snowpack and avalanche conditions. This information is collated at the CAC in a standard format and sent to subscribers by fax and computer BBS. There are 42 subscribers from the eastern Rockies to the western Coast Range.

### 3. PUBLIC AVALANCHE INFORMATION BULLETIN (PAIB)

This service was established in response to requests for snow stability information for areas outside the National Parks. The Canadian Parks Service have provided avalanche forecasts for many years. The PAIB is a summary of weather, snowpack and avalanche conditions in four zones of western Canada; the Rockies, Selkirks, Purcells and Garibaldi. The Bulletin is available on an 800 number in Alberta & BC, a PC BBS and by fax to various retail outlets. Total distribution by those three methods was 761 in winter 1991 - 92.

#### 4. ASSOCIATION SERVICES

Other activities of the Canadian Avalanche Association and the Canadian Avalanche Centre include editing the Avalanche News, preparation and sales of avalanche related videos, compiling accident reports, membership services and representing the members to government organizations involved with explosives and technical matters.

Funding for the Centre is primarily through sale of services. Costs of the Training Schools are paid largely by course fees; the INFOEX subscribers pay a season fee and the PAIB is supported by a combination of public and private money. The establishment of the Centre was possible through grants from provincial agencies in Alberta and British Columbia. The National Search and Rescue Secretariat made a significant contribution through their project initiatives program.