



Davos, March 2009

Information from the ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission

Dear Colleagues,

The minutes arising from the 2008 conference in Chamonix and the three new recommendations of the ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission are available for review on the ICAR website. Please send any proposed additions and corrections concerning the minutes or recommendations to the President by August 14th. The electronic version of the glossary/multilingual dictionary will be made available on the ICAR website soon. I hope that this project can be completed in the quieter summer months. Thank you once again for your many positive contributions to the recent conference.

Avalanche victim update for Switzerland as of March 15, 2009

Thus far, the winter in Switzerland and the neighbouring countries has been accompanied by a lot of snow and many accidents. I have heard similar stories from North America as well. To date, 70 avalanches involving people have been reported in Switzerland. Among the 96 people caught in avalanches, 24 were injured. At present, the number of avalanche fatalities is slightly higher than the long-term average for mid-March. Fatalities 2008/2009 (to mid-March): 18 plus 2 persons missing (7 off-piste skiers, 1 off-piste snowboarder, 4 backcountry skiers, 0 backcountry snowboarders, 5 snowshoe hikers, 1 ice climber, 0 mountaineers, 0 others). One of the missing persons is thought to be in a lake, and the other buried deep inside an avalanche path.

ICAR annual congress 2009 in Zermatt, September 23 to 27, 2009

We look forward to a programme of useful and especially instructive contributions in Zermatt. As discussed, the **principal topics** are:

1. Coverage of the individual countries' entire territory by the avalanche rescue services.
2. Effectiveness of cooperation between neighbouring organisations in regions close to borders.
3. Existence of organisational structures/agreements (communication channels) for coordinating reciprocal support in case of large-scale incidents?

Delegates are most interested in practical examples of cross-border collaboration among individual rescue organisations in the event of avalanche accidents.

If you wish to deliver a presentation at the annual congress, please let me know by **August 14, 2009** (etter@slf.ch). Proposals for presentations must be accompanied by an abstract of the content.

Requests and proposals for additional subject areas (working groups) in the Avalanche Rescue Commission are also to be addressed the President. All proposals and requests received by **August 14, 2009** can be discussed at the congress. Afterwards we will decide together whether they are to be pursued any further.

I also look forward to receiving, as in the past, a brief summary of the events of the preceding winter and summer from each one of the ICAR countries. Especially noteworthy items can be briefly presented to the Commission Meeting. The congress format will be similar to the one adopted for the event in Chamonix. The avalanche accident list is to be updated in its current form.

Field day / practical working day on the eve of the 2009 congress (September 23rd)

Subject to favourable conditions prevailing, the field event will take place on the Breithornplateau (glacier region) above Zermatt at an altitude of approximately 3800 m (11'400 feet). Reserve locations have been selected in case of unfavourable conditions. Please embark on an acclimatisation programme before the event. Information on necessary equipment will be provided later.

The main purpose of the event is to demonstrate new avalanche rescue apparatus (including safety equipment). New crevice rescue techniques may also be demonstrated. Various interested parties have already registered to take part. Additional practical proposals are welcome from all members of the ICAR Avalanche and Terrestrial Rescue Commissions, as well as manufacturers of safety, rescue and emergency equipment. When making proposals, please provide for members to use the systems on location as far as possible. Each proposal is to be accompanied by a brief description of the equipment, the envisaged programme and the surface area and type of terrain required.

The deadline for proposals is **June 30, 2009**. The cost of the additional day for members is 150 euros (accommodation, food and transport to the glacier).

I look forward to receiving an abundance of interesting proposals. They will be examined for feasibility, novelty and utility together with the Vice-president and Organiser. It may not be possible to accept every proposal for the event.

I also wish to take this opportunity to remind you that the ICAR congress immediately precedes [ISSW 09 Europe](#) in Davos from September 29 to October 2, 2009.

With kind regards and best wishes for a pleasant spring,

Hans-Jürg Etter
President of the ICAR Avalanche Rescue Commission