

**TO:** Regional Directors  
Regional Managers, Rehab. & Maintenance  
District Highways Managers  
Snow Avalanche Technicians  
Provincial Highways Conditions Centre Staff

**SUBJECT:**

Check-in policy, procedures and identification of commonly used backcountry ski routes.

**Approved By:**

**Initiating Director:** Director, Construction and Maintenance Services

**Accountable Manager /**

**Supervisor:** Manager, Snow Avalanche Programs / District and Regional  
Avalanche Technicians

**PURPOSE:**

This policy and its procedures will:

1. improve on existing check-in procedures;
2. clearly define a Ministry standard for check-in procedures;
3. ensure that all applicable Ministry and Contractor staff are trained and/or knowledgeable in these procedures;
4. ensure that appropriate action is taken, in a timely fashion, in the event that an avalanche staff member does not check-in as planned;
5. provide the Ministry with a method of auditing "check-in" procedures.

**POLICY:**

All Ministry Avalanche Programs will implement operational procedures for checking the well being of workers who are assigned to work alone and/or in isolated conditions where there is a risk of disabling injury.

All Ministry Avalanche Program supervisors (supervisors being the Manager of Snow Avalanche Programs and District and Regional Avalanche Technicians) will review this policy and its associated procedures with all-applicable staff and/or Contractors prior to each winter.

All Ministry Avalanche Program supervisors will further define "Check-in" procedures specific to their local program. These specific procedures will clearly define roles and responsibilities and will include maps, which identifies commonly used backcountry routes. These procedures and maps will be reviewed and approved by the Ministry's Senior Avalanche Officers.

This policy and its procedures (attached) will be implemented by October 15, 1999.

The Manager of Snow Avalanche Programs will provide WCB with a copy of this policy by October 15, 1999.

**REFERENCE:**

WCB Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (BC Regulation 296/97) Core Requirements - Part 4: General Conditions, Section 4.21, 4.22 and 4.23 - Working Alone or In Isolation, effective April 15, 1998.

WCB Inspection Report Number 1999108490099 - Order 1, Inspector: R. Wallace, dated May 05, 1999.

Ministry of Transportation and Highways - "Implementation of Recommendations from the Snowbank creek Avalanche Accident"- Snow Avalanche Programs - J.D. Bennetto, dated Sept 1999.

**CONTACT:**

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Jack D. Bennetto  
Manager, Snow Avalanche Programs

Attachment: Check-in Procedures

## Check-in Procedures

The following information should be used as the Ministry's guidelines for "**Check-in**" procedures. Each District, Regional and Headquarters program will be responsible for further defining local roles and responsibilities. These guidelines will ensure that there is a consistent approach throughout the province and that there is an appropriate and timely response in the event a staff member does not "**Check-in**" as planned.

1. When should you use the "**Check-in**" procedure?

- when working in an isolated location; or/and
- when working in a location and/or conducting activities which could present a risk of injury.

The "**Check-in**" procedure is not specific to winter operations. It will be used throughout the year and for all activities which occur beyond the highway surface. This includes, but is not limited to:

- avalanche field observations,
- avalanche control work,
- servicing of equipment in remote locations,
- summer surveys of avalanche paths,
- dud recovery,
- rescue operations, etc.

2. Who do you contact?

Prior to departing the avalanche staff member(s) will contact a **Ministry Radio Operations Centre**, which must operate 24 hours a day.

3. What information will you provide to the **Radio Operation Centre**?

- your name and number of individuals in your party,
- your point of departure and destination,
- a local contact name (such as a road foreman / shift foreman),
- the type of work being conducted,
- your expected duration of work at that particular location,
- when you expect to check-in next, and
- your method of travel.

4. How often do you need to check-in?

The local avalanche technician or senior most staff member in the field will determine your "**Check-in**" frequency. This frequency will reflect the type of work being conducted, with the most frequent requirement tied to backcountry travel by foot or ski, and activities which expose the staff members to hazards.

In most situations you will need to "**Check-in**" when you are moving from one location to the next. You should identify your route, expected arrival time and method of travel.

5. What is the **Radio Operation Centre** responsibility?
- The **Radio Operation Centre** will **record** all the information that you have provided them about your trip.
  - If you fail to "**Check-in**" at a specified time, they will **immediately initiate** a call to you.
  - If there is no response, they will **notify** the **Local Contact**.
  - The **Radio Operation Centre** will continue to call you at regular intervals (a minimum of once every 15 minutes) until the local contact has confirmed your status.
  - If all efforts to locate and/or contact you are unsuccessful, the **Radio Operation Centre** will **notify P.E.P. and Snow Avalanche Programs, Victoria**. This will initiate the rescue operation.

6. What is the **Local Contact's** responsibility?

The **Local Contact** should be:

- familiar with your standard field practices and sites;
- aware of areas with problem communication;
- aware of road level locations, which may allow them to visually (with field glasses) check your status.

The **Local Contact's** primary purpose is to eliminate false alarms, but at the same time ensure that a rescue operation is initiated in a timely fashion.

Once notified by the **Radio Operations Centre**, the **Local Contact** will **immediately** make every effort to determine your field status. They should check to see if you have returned to your point of departure or intended destination, and they should try to make radio contact with you on the local frequencies.

7. What is **Snow Avalanche Programs, Victoria's** responsibility?

Once notified by the **Radio Operation Centre** the **Manger** or a **Senior Avalanche Officer** will act as a liaison with **P.E.P.** They will ensure that the best available resources are made available to the rescue operation. They will ensure that information is efficiently passed along to the appropriate agencies and individuals.

### **Defining Local Check-in Procedures**

All Ministry Avalanche Program supervisors (supervisors being the Manager of Snow Avalanche Programs and District and Regional Avalanche Technicians) will define the specific local "**Check-in**" procedures. This information will be distributed to all applicable Ministry and Contractor staff and will be reviewed by the Ministry's Senior Avalanche Officers.

The information will include:

- which **Radio Communication Centre** will be used;
- **Local Contact** name(s) and number(s);

- common route maps listing normal routes and locations of key facilities and field observations sites;
- communication information.

Copies of this information will be provided to the applicable Contractors, Radio Operations Centre, District Highways Manager, and Senior Avalanche Officers.

### **Training**

The Ministry will ensure that all applicable Ministry and Contractor staff are annually trained in this "**Check-in**" procedure. Annual training will occur during the fall start up.

### **Headquarter Staff Working in District or Regional Avalanche Program**

Headquarter staff will comply with local programs protocols and procedures when working in District or Regional Avalanche Programs. Any violation of these procedures will be reported to the Senior Avalanche Officer.

It is the visiting staff member's responsibility to request this information from the District or Regional Avalanche Technician prior to conducting or participating in fieldwork.

### **New Areas**

If a staff member is planning to do work in a "new area" where there is not an existing "**Check-in**" procedure, the staff member will define a "**Check-in**" procedure for the area and submit it to the appropriate locations prior to the commencement of work.

### **Equipment**

When working alone and/or in isolated conditions where there is a risk of disabling injury the staff member will carry safety equipment. This equipment will include, but is not limited to:

- survival equipment
- first aid equipment
- functional communications equipment, and
- ski touring equipment or a suitable form of transportation by foot.

Communication equipment will be primarily radio. The radios used must be suitable for the location and frequencies. In some locations this will include frequencies used by other agencies or individuals that may respond in the event of a rescue.

All helicopters that are used to transport staff member to these isolated locations will be required to have compatible radio communication.