

~~January 7, 2000~~

TO: All Regional Directors
All Regional Managers, Rehab. & Maintenance
All Avalanche Area District Highway Managers
All Snow Avalanche Technicians

SUBJECT:

Snow Avalanche Programs, Headquarters, will conduct a minimum of two on-site inspections of District and Regional Snow Avalanche Programs per winter avalanche season.

PURPOSE:

These inspections are to determine the status of avalanche programs with respect to their ability to safely and efficiently carry out their duties and responsibilities.

POLICY:

The initial inspection will focus on numerous items to ensure safe, effective and efficient operations. An emphasis will be placed on technical and operational aspects in addition to field related activities.

A second inspection will be conducted at a later date during the same winter season, which will include a session to ensure sufficient backcountry travel and route selection skills and abilities of each individual staff member.

A report will be generated at the completion of each inspection and distributed to involved participants. Program inspections will be coordinated and conducted by Senior Avalanche Officers.

Inspection Notification:

The Senior Avalanche Officer conducting an inspection will determine appropriate dates for the inspection to take place with the local Snow Avalanche Technician. The District or Regional supervisor of the local Snow Avalanche Program will be notified prior to the inspection.

Training needs for staff

- Training programs will be identified for any staff member to ensure that they fulfill the responsibilities of their job description to the best of their ability. Depending on the individual, training categories may include:
 - Computer skills
 - Management and supervisory skills
 - Explosives avalanche control
 - Artillery avalanche control
 - First aid
 - Transportation of Dangerous Goods
 - Backcountry terrain evaluation

Status of weather stations

- Ensure that any remote automated or roadside electronic weather stations are operational with current programming and equipment;
- Ensure that communication with weather stations is functional.

Explosives magazines and inventory

- Ensure that there is sufficient quantity of explosives to last for a “typical” winter;
- Ensure that condition of magazines meets regulatory requirements.

Explosives procedures review

- Review any revisions regarding safety operating procedures for explosives avalanche control;
- Clarify procedures as necessary;
- Ensure that any regulatory updates have been recognized.

Explosives Spill Plan (ERAP 2-0804) review

- Review the Explosives Spill Plan;
- Ensure that Avalanche Programs staff understand and are equipped to fulfill their responsibilities as defined in the plan;
- Ensure that the Explosives Spill Plan has been reviewed with the Maintenance Contractor and local ministry staff to ensure that they are able and prepared to respond as per the plan.

Ministry supplied equipment status

- Ensure that equipment for office, vehicle and field are available and in good working condition.

Backcountry routes review

- Ensure that backcountry travel routes to and from snow study plots and weather stations are located in terrain which will ensure safe passage for staff under condition which permit field studies.

Equipment carried during field trips

- Ensure that avalanche programs staff carry sufficient equipment to spend an unexpected night out in the field (when conducting high elevation, remote field trips);
- Ensure that a basic tool kit is carried to perform repairs on skis-bindings as necessary;
- Ensure that all avalanche programs staff carry basic first aid supplies;
- Ensure that all avalanche programs staff carry avalanche rescue equipment.

Check-in procedures review

- Ensure that all staff are familiar with local check in procedures.

Mock rescue set up for Maintenance Contractor

- Ensure that avalanche program staff are working with the local Maintenance Contractor and Ministry Area Manager(s) to conduct a mock avalanche rescue at some time during the winter season;
- Discuss details of the mock rescue to ensure that it will provide a positive learning experience for both Ministry and Maintenance Contractor staff.

Backcountry rescue

- Ensure that the avalanche program is prepared to respond to a backcountry avalanche accident which may involve ministry avalanche staff from the same or neighbouring program;
- Ensure the avalanche program is familiar with the protocol for ministry staff to become involved in non-ministry backcountry avalanche accidents and is aware of other agency (PEP, RCMP, Coroner) involvements and responsibilities.

Avalanche awareness training

- Ensure that a representative from the local avalanche program attends avalanche awareness training sessions conducted by Ministry approved avalanche instructors to make presentation(s) regarding pertinent local issues.

Other items specific to the program being inspected will be discussed, such as communication issues, helicopter use and any unique issues pertinent to the program under inspection.

Mid-Season Inspection Criteria

The mid-season inspection will focus on field skills and activities. Snowpack and avalanche observation guidelines and recording standards will be reviewed as per the Canadian Avalanche Association *Observation Guidelines and Recording Standards for Weather, Snowpack and Avalanches*.

Avalanche hazard evaluation criteria will be discussed in consideration of terrain, traffic volumes, and class one, two and three data. Dissemination of avalanche hazard information to pertinent individuals and agencies will be reviewed, as will road closure procedures and notification.

Backcountry travel routes will be reviewed in consideration of terrain, snowpack structure and weather conditions to ensure personal and group safety. The Senior Avalanche Officer will accompany avalanche crews to backcountry locations proximal to avalanche forecast areas. Focal points for the mid season inspection will include the following:

Terrain

- Terrain used to ascend or descend from field study locations will be discussed in consideration of personal and group safety.

Snowpack Structure

- Appropriate snow stability tests will be performed and their respective results discussed in consideration of terrain route selections;
- Snow stability tests may include rutschblock, shovel and/or compression tests;
- The Senior Avalanche Officer will participate in the digging and evaluation of a snow profile and stability testing.

Backcountry Access Routes

- The impact and influence of weather conditions will be discussed during backcountry field exercises. Access routes to and from field study sites will be assessed in consideration of snowpack stability, terrain features, weather and visibility conditions.

Avalanche Hazard Evaluation

- The Senior Avalanche Officer will review the techniques used to determine avalanche hazards to the highway;
- The efficiency of the notification process to disseminate avalanche forecast information will be reviewed.

Road Closure Procedures

- Road closure procedures and traffic control points will be reviewed;
- The efficiency of the notification process to disseminate road closure information will be reviewed.

Any items listed in the initial inspection criteria may also be covered during this inspection, as necessary, in addition to any other pertinent local issues.

Inspection Report:

The Senior Avalanche Officer will generate a report shortly after the inspection and present it to the Snow Avalanche Technician, District or Regional Supervisor and Manager, Snow Avalanche Programs.

The report will indicate the areas of the program that were inspected and the status of each item. Where necessary, recommendations will be made to ensure that the Snow Avalanche Program under inspection complies with existing Ministry policies in addition to pertinent provincial and federal regulations.

The primary goal of the inspections and subsequent recommendations is to ensure safety to the avalanche crew and that the avalanche program operates as effectively and efficiently as possible.

CONTACT:

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Original Signed by:
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