

## Check-in Procedures

The following information will be used as the Ministry's guidelines for check-in procedures. These guidelines are intended to ensure that there is a consistent approach throughout the province and that there is an appropriate and timely response in the event of a missed check-in.

1. When should you use the Check-in procedure?
  - when working in circumstances where assistance would not be readily available to the worker in case of an emergency.

The check-in procedure is not specific to winter operations. It will be used throughout the year. This includes, but is not limited to, the following operations:

- avalanche fieldwork and mountain travel;
  - avalanche control operations;
  - servicing of equipment in remote locations;
  - summer surveys of avalanche paths;
  - search and destruction of misfired avalanche control charges;
  - search and rescue operations;
  - flight operations
2. Who do you contact?
    - prior to departure, avalanche staff member(s) will contact the Provincial Highway Conditions Center (PHCC).
  3. How do you contact the PHCC?
    - Ministry radio and any telephone can be used
  4. What information will you provide to the PHCC?
    - Check-in Start Time;
    - ALL Party Members Names and Call Signs;
    - Name of any SPOT Units in use;
    - Radio Repeaters the party can be reached on;
    - Departure Point as listed in the Fieldwork Atlas;
    - Atlas & Work Site the Worksite Name listed in the Fieldwork Atlas;
    - Travel Method when traveling by helicopter, include phone number for the helicopter base;
    - Local Contact – give the Name and Call Sign, Repeater number(s), Phone number;
    - Next Check-in Time – This time is updated with each check-in. Field crews ALWAYS endeavor to contact PHCC before this time expires.
  5. How often do you need to check-in?
    - The local avalanche technician or senior most staff member in the field is responsible for determining the check-in frequency; in practice this is often guided by group consensus.

- The frequency will reflect the type of work being conducted and the exposure to hazards at various stages during the work. In most situations you will need to check-in when you are moving from one location to the next.

Consider the following two simple examples of appropriate check-in timing based on exposure:

a.) The work objective is to travel by ski up a ridge line over simple terrain for one hour then record a snow profile at a low angle location with access through simple terrain near the ascent ridge. From the snow profile location you intend to descend back to the highway through complex terrain while doing further probing and snowpack tests and expect to take 20 minutes for this work.

In this instance the initial check-in could include the time of the ski ascent and the snow profile, about 2.5 hours total. Before beginning the descent (higher exposure) an updated check-in of 20 minutes duration is appropriate and reflects the increased exposure during this phase of the work day. The work is always finished by notifying PHCC that the check-ins are ended for the day.

b.) The work objectives include a 15 minute helicopter flight from a maintenance yard to a remote weather station, 30 minutes of work at the weather station followed by a 1 hour ski through simple terrain to a truck parked on the highway.

In this instance the initial check-in should cover the time of the 15 minute flight. A second check-in period could be used for the time spent at the weather station. This can be followed by a check-in for the descent to the truck where a final close-out of the days check-in is made.

6. What happens at the PHCC?

- PHCC will have a current Fieldwork Atlas from each avalanche program;
- The Operator will **record** all of the check-in information on the check-in board;
- If a check-in time is missed the Operator will follow the Missed Check-in Response process in the **Avalanche Response Plan**;
- These steps include further call outs to the field party, asking the local contact to go to the departure point and notification of a Rescue Coordinator from the response plan contact list.

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

- The **Local Contact's** primary purpose is to ensure that a rescue operation has an active resource in the area of the missing workers. The **Local Contact** should be:
  - familiar with your standard field practices and sites and site names;
  - aware of areas with problem communication;
  - aware of road level locations used to park vehicles or as helipads for fieldwork;
  - aware of road level locations, which may allow them to visually (with field glasses) check your status.

- Once notified by the **PHCC**, 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 including the simplex channels.
8. How does the SPOT Personal Messenger help?
- Field parties using the Track Progress feature of the SPOT messenger devices automatically broadcast a regularly updated GPS location that can be accessed by the PHCC operators (and other rescue personnel) through a web based map;
  - Properly operated, the SPOT unit has the potential to dramatically reduce the size of the search area by sending frequently updated positions.
  - Using the SPOT unit to send an OKAY message will provide the Rescue Coordinator with information that will help determine the urgency of the situation and acts as an indication of the correct resources to deploy.
  - The SPOT Personal Messenger does not replace the requirement for voice communication between the field party and the PHCC operator.

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

Ministry Avalanche Program supervisors (supervisors being the Manager of Avalanche and Weather Programs and District Avalanche Technicians) may define the specific local check-in procedures when the local avalanche program intends to check-in with an alternate 24 hour radio communication centre instead of the PHCC. The local check-in procedures will be provided to the Manager, Avalanche and Weather Programs for approval prior to implementation.

Requirements for the local check-in procedures will include the following:

- Written Check-in procedures
- Fieldwork Atlas as described in the Avalanche Safety Plan
- Emergency Response Plan
- Contact information for emergency response resources
- Training program for staff and radio room operators

Current copies of this documentation will be provided to the applicable Contractors, PHCC, District Highways Manager, and Senior Avalanche Officers. The District Avalanche Technician is responsible for ensuring that all information related to the check-in process is continually up to date.

### **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 provincial or local protocols and procedures when working in District Avalanche Programs. It is the visiting staff member's responsibility

to request this information from the District Avalanche Technician prior to conducting or participating in fieldwork.

### **New Work Sites**

If a staff member is planning to do work in a new area where there is no existing worksite identification or hazard assessment in an existing Fieldwork Atlas, the staff member will document and assess the new area and submit the updated Fieldwork Atlas to the appropriate locations prior to the commencement of work.

### **Equipment**

When working alone and/or in isolated conditions the staff member and/or the field party 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.

In most location the communication equipment will be Ministry 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 members to these isolated locations are required to have compatible radio communication.

### **Initiating Change**

Ministry procedure documents of this nature benefit from suggestions for improvement. Written suggestions should be provided to the Manager, Avalanche and Weather Programs or to Senior Avalanche Officers.

Please review the information on Proposals for Infrastructure or Policy Change in the Ministry Avalanche and Weather Programs – Overview policy memorandum, Nov. 23, 2009, CLIFF: 183170 for more information on the Ministry process for change implementation.