

Guidelines for Reporting Avalanche Involvements

-- New Guidelines and Recording Standards for Weather Snowpack and Avalanche Observations,
2000 Edition – Mountain Safety Manual No.28

Appendix B - Reporting Avalanche Involvements

B.1 Objective

The objective of reporting avalanche accidents and damage is to collect data about the extent of avalanche problems in New Zealand. Summaries of the reports will draw attention to avalanche dangers and assist in the development of safety measures.

B.2 Reporting Forms

Two different reports are available for recording avalanche accidents and damage.

The **Concise Form** is designed for reporting the fact that people or objects had an encounter with avalanches. The short report should be submitted every time people are involved in an avalanche or property is damaged.

The **Detailed Report** allows for recording the characteristics of the avalanche along with details about the event. This report should be completed primarily for the records of the operation concerned, either when an avalanche caused a fatality, a serious injury, or property damage in excess of \$10,000 and/or when the incident has a high educational value. It may also be useful as a checklist when operations may wish to describe an accident and the rescue work in greater detail.

B.3 Filing of Reports

Completed short reports should be returned as quickly as possible to the Snow and Avalanche Committee of the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, Wellington.

The reports will be treated confidentially and the results will be made public in summary form only. Interesting cases will be included in publications of avalanche accident case histories, when and if the concerned reporters, people involved and companies agree. The reporters' or victims' names are not required.

B.4 Completion of the Short Form

B.4.1 Date and Time

Fill in the date and time of the avalanche occurrence

B.4.2 Location

Give the name of the mountain area, highway, or ski area and either a description, name, or number of the avalanche path.

B.4.3 Avalanche Description

Fill out the appropriate fields to the best of your knowledge

B.4.4 Number of People

Enter the total number of people in the party and how many of them were either caught, partially buried, or completely buried in the avalanche. Indicate how many people were injured or killed. Under this section enter the number of people in buildings or vehicles buried or damaged by the avalanche.

The number of injured and dead people must be included in the numbers caught, partially buried and buried:

A person is caught if he/she is touched by the avalanche but not covered with snow when the avalanche stops.

A person is partially buried if any part of the body is visible on the surface when the avalanche stops. People in vehicles, which are partially buried, should also be reported here.

A person is buried if he/she is completely beneath the snow surface when the avalanche stops. Equipment such as skis or poles may be visible on the surface. People in vehicles, which are buried, should also be reported here.

B.4.5 Activity of People

Write the type of activity of people caught, partially or completely buried: (e.g. skiing, snowboarding, mountain climbing, avalanche control, travel on the road, snowploughing).

B.4.6 Number of Vehicles

Indicate the number of vehicles that were trapped, partially buried or buried. Indicate how many of them were damaged.

Vehicles include those on roads, rails, as well as over-snow vehicles and aircraft.

A vehicle is trapped if it is blocked by avalanche deposits in front of and behind it, or if it became stuck when it tried to cross or ran into an avalanche deposit.

A vehicle is partially buried if any part is still visible when the avalanche stops.

A vehicle is buried if it is completely beneath the snow surface when the avalanche stops.

B.4.7 Structures Damaged

Enter the number and type of structural damages. For example include the function and construction type of buildings, the number of poles and length of telephone line or power line, the type of lift towers, a bridge, etc. Estimate the loss in dollar terms whenever possible.

B.4.8 Estimated Depth of Burial

For buried people and vehicles, give the depth between the highest part of the body or vehicle and the avalanche surface.

B.4.9 Estimated Duration of Burial

Estimate the time between the occurrence of the avalanche and when the person or object was uncovered.

B.4.10 Comments

Make brief notes on the principal cause of the avalanche encounter. Examples include the weather (snowfall, wind, temperature), snow conditions, skiers or snowboarders entering a closed area and triggering the avalanche. Add any comments that might be significant; for example whether or not warnings of poor instability were available, search by transceiver, type of injury, or refer to the completed detailed report.

B.5 Completion of the Detailed Report

On the form enter the information in the spaces provided or tick off the multiple-choice statements.

Write "N/A" if the information is not available or not applicable, for example, if the starting zone could not be visited.

The definitions of terms are those of the short report and those in part 3 "Avalanche Observation" of the NZMSC Guidelines.