



Snowmobilers Lead Avalanche Fatality Statistics

Revelstoke, BC, March 27, 2009: The Canadian Avalanche Centre (CAC) is calling on the snowmobiling community to help prevent further tragedies.

“More snowmobilers have died in avalanches in Canada this year than ever before,” says CAC Executive Director Ian Tomm. “The snowpack is fundamentally weak throughout much of western Canada this winter so it’s especially vital that all backcountry users leave an extra margin of safety in their activities. We strive to provide the best possible information and advice, but we are very concerned that some snowmobilers are not getting this message.”

This winter, 23 people in Canada have died in avalanches – 17 of these were snowmobilers. New technology and more powerful snowmobile equipment means even inexperienced riders are now able to access more extreme terrain, increasing their risk of triggering an avalanche.

“Many of these incidents occurred in terrain that clearly wasn’t appropriate for the conditions of the day,” said Jeff Dolan, Executive Director of Regional Operations for the BC Coroners Service. “It’s critical for snowmobilers and all backcountry users to take appropriate training, consult the avalanche forecasts, and heed the advice issued by the CAC.”

There are many resources available to help all backcountry users manage avalanche risk including regular avalanche forecasts issued by the CAC, which always include snowpack information and travel advice. Additionally, there are public avalanche education programs, online courses and the Avaluator – a hand-held card that provides users with a checklist for making sound decisions in avalanche terrain.

“We are also appealing to snowmobile manufacturers, distributors and retailers to do their part by encouraging snowmobilers to use the avalanche safety tools and programs available to them,” said Tomm.

For more information about avalanche safety and risks and to get the most recent bulletin and weather forecast, go to www.avalanche.ca.

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