

For Your Information

Attention Newsrooms

January 14, 2009

F09-xx

Immediate Public Avalanche Warning for Yukon and Northern British Columbia

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon government, Parks Canada and the Canadian Ski Patrol System, with assistance from the Canadian Avalanche Centre, are issuing a special public avalanche warning for the backcountry mountainous areas of southern Yukon and northern BC.

Areas include the Wheaton Valley, White Pass from Carcross to the Alaskan Border, Haines Pass from Haines Junction to the Alaska border and the Atlin area. The warning is in effect from January 15-18, 2009.

Recreational backcountry travelers are strongly advised to exercise extreme caution if venturing into the mountains in the coming days.

Rising temperatures, precipitation and strong winds forecast for the next few days is expected to produce a cycle of naturally triggered avalanches, which occur without an obvious trigger.

According to Whitehorse-based professional avalanche forecaster Hector MacKenzie, of greater concern is the period after this next natural cycle. He says it's still not safe to go into the backcountry after natural activity dies down because weak layers in the snowpack will persist and will be easily triggered by a person on skis or snowmobile.

This condition is similar to what has happened recently in much of British Columbia, where 13 avalanche fatalities occurred during a two-week long cycle of widespread avalanche activity, including historically large avalanches.

Everyone who goes into the backcountry should be equipped with basic avalanche safety gear—a transceiver, probe, and shovel—and know how to use them. All backcountry users are encouraged to seek avalanche safety training before venturing into the mountains.

Names and contact information for qualified avalanche course providers as well as an online course can be found on the Canadian Avalanche Centre website at www.avalanche.ca.

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