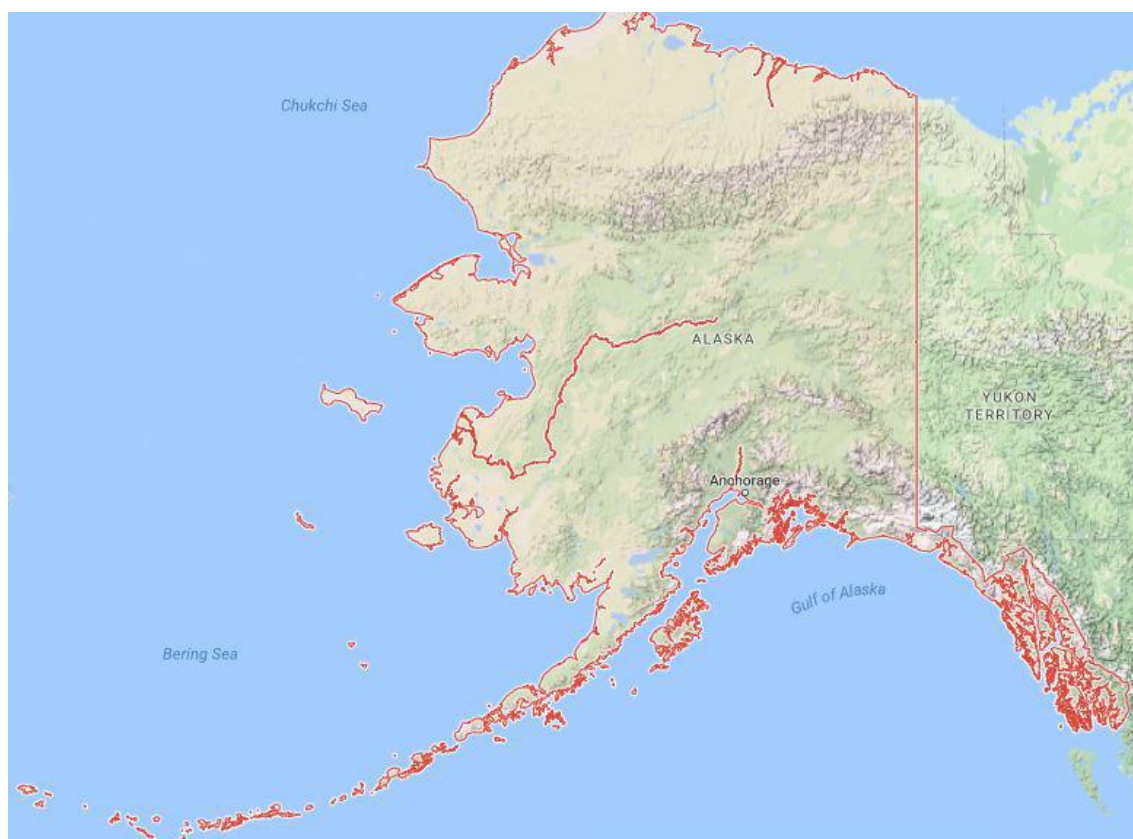




Alaska Avalanche Information Center November 2, 2017

Alaska Snow Safety Summit

Building a unified network of snow safety services for Alaska



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Report of the 2017 Alaska Snow Safety Summit

November 2, 2017

Communications for Snow Safety in Alaska

KEY PARTICIPANTS

Moderator, Anchorage Assemblyman Christopher Constant; Special Address, Anchorage Assemblyman John Weddleton; AAIC Vice President and Board of Directors Pete Carter; Welcome Address, Alaska State Trooper/ Search and Rescue Coordinator Lt. Paul Fussey; US Senator Lisa Murkowski representative Dylan Faber; Keynote Speakers: David Snider, National Weather Service, NOAA; Jeremy Zidek, State of Alaska Homeland Security; Mountain Hub CEO Brint Markle; NBC News, KTUU meteorologist Tracy Sinclair; CBS News KTVA News Director Joe Vigil; Alaska Coast Magazine Publisher/Editor John Woodbury; UAA graduate student Connor McDonald; Alaska Integrated Media representative, Kellen Pierce. Agency representatives: Wendy Wagner, Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center; Eeva Latosuo, Alaska Pacific University; Melis Coady, Alaska Avalanche School; Erik Stevens, Alaska Avalanche Information Center; Scott Sundberg, SEBA Heli Guides; Rich Peterson, CPG Heli Guides. Other participants included: Adam Babcock, Aleph Johnston-Bloom, Conrad Chapman, Dove Daniels, Louise Fode, Eric Geisler, Delmore Kinney, Debra McGhan, Malia Miller, Merletta Morris, Jeff Moskowitz, Jaime Musnicki, Graham Predeger, Bill Romberg, Miranda Sheely, James Swan, Kyle Van Peurse, Lisa Wax, Jed Workman, Katreen Wikstrom Jones, Gabriel Wolken.

HISTORY

This year marked the tenth annual Snow Safety Summit held in Alaska. The event started back in 2007 as a way to bring together snow safety professionals and community partners and policy makers in an effort to build a unified snow safety network of services for the state of Alaska. Although Alaska Statue 18.76.010 mandates the state provide avalanche forecasting and education services, there are no funds and no one in the legislature with the ability to get the necessary funds or agency to take this on. The Alaska Avalanche Information Center, a not-for-profit organization, has been organizing and presenting the event since 2014. This year, special thanks goes to Eeva Latosuo and the Alaska Pacific University for hosting the Summit, SAAW and the Community Snowfest.

Alaska is typically blanketed under snow for more than six months every year. Vast, mountainous regions crisscross the more than 570,000 miles of terrain which attracts residents and visitors from around the globe who live, work, travel and recreate in avalanche prone regions. The reason this matters is because this state is also ranked number one per capita in the nation for avalanche related injuries and fatalities. The US Government provides support for the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center in Girdwood, but that only serves a small portion of the total state population. Without any state government supported avalanche forecast information centers or a unified system for addressing avalanche problems, the state is left with no winter safety program to serve the general public. This summit, organized and hosted the past three years by AAIC, is designed to help address gaps and bring together critical resources for a grass-roots solution to benefit the general public. The first summit was held October 2007 at Kincaid Park in Anchorage and facilitated and organized by the North America Outdoor Institute.

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DISCUSSION

The 2017 summit focused on communications and identifying the best methods and spokespeople to get the word out about snow conditions and concerns.

The summit, moderated by Anchorage Assemblyman Christopher Constant, kicked off with a welcome from AAIC Vice President, Pete Carter, who thanked participants for attending and reiterated the importance of this statewide effort in building Alaska a sustainable Avalanche Information Network of resources.

Lt. Paul Fussey, Alaska State Troopers Search and Rescue coordinator, gave the Welcome Address on behalf of Governor Walker and Commissioner Monahan. He reminded everyone of the importance of communicating with others and leaving a trip report before heading out to participate in outdoor activities, especially in the backcountry. He spoke about the critical importance of inter agency communications and the resources that the state currently possesses to respond to search and rescue missions. He stated that the Alaska State Troopers receive over one million calls a year and good communication is critical for safe, efficient response. He spoke about the backcountry preparedness workshops the Alaska State Troopers support through the AAIC to help inform and educate the public to reduce the number of search and rescue incidents. He thanked all of the representatives that were on hand to participate in the summit to improve and streamline communications for avalanche safety in Alaska.



Lt. Paul Fussey, Alaska State Troopers



Dylan Faber delivers Murkowski's welcome

US Senator Lisa Murkowski was unable to attend however sent a letter of support with her assistant and spokesman Dylan Faber. She expressed her gratitude for the efforts of the avalanche and snow safety professionals who are dedicated to providing snow safety services for the general public and offered her assistance to support their work.

In his special address, Anchorage Assemblyman John Weddleton shared his personal story of arriving in Anchorage in the 80's, going to REI and picking up some new mountain equipment. then heading out to explore the mountains surrounding the Anchorage bowl. He admitted to making



Anchorage Assemblyman John Weddleton

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numerous mistakes and ultimately getting caught in a slide that proved a scary wake up call. He understands and strongly supports the importance of avalanche education and information.



Dave Snider, National Weather Service

Keynote Speaker David Snider with the National Weather Service (NWS) and Jeremy Zidek with the State of Alaska Homeland Security spoke about the 'Curse of Knowledge' which makes it challenging for the messenger to remember that their audience does not possess the same level of knowledge or experience on the topic. Snider emphasized the importance of crafting the message keeping this fact in mind. The NWS does this by focusing on hazard simplification through consolidation and reformatting in a way that meets

the needs of the customers or end users. They utilize Social science & meteorology in an effort to improve hazard communication. He explained that info graphics on avalanche advisories has helped his personal understanding of avalanche danger and improve his ability to focus on the what/where/when of his message for precautionary and preparedness actions.

Jeremy Zidek followed Snider and further explained:

- *How to reach your audience*
 - Give people the right information at the right time, so that they can make good decisions
- *Know your organization*
 - Know your capabilities and responsibilities
 - Be strategic and establish clear direction
 - Establish systems for release of information
 - Plan for continuity of operations
- *Have a message*
 - Key message (some of your efforts)
 - 2-3 talking points incorporating key points
 - Commercials through interviews (short, positive, memorable)
 - Crisp, high impact words that emphasize the positive, but never mislead or twist the truth
- Audience – Who are you trying to reach?
- Message – What will you say and how will you say it?
- Before you reach your target audience, you will first need to reach the news media
- Current info + key message = talking point
- *Manage the info/event*
 - Have a plan/objective
 - Understand the medias' needs
 - Work with partners



Jeremy Zidek, State Homeland Security

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- Monitor the media
- Respond to incorrect information
- Give guidance and be prepared to push back
- *Media needs*
 - Quality information
 - Access to experts and policy makers
 - Access to the scene
 - Fair treatment and respect for deadlines
- *In return, we as an organization, receive*
 - A conduit to the public
 - Respect for incident perimeter
 - Accurate and fair reporting
 - Maintained credibility

Brint Markle, the CEO with Mountain Hub, a crowd-sourced information network, presented on the workings of Mountain Hub and the information available through this simple, web based user-friendly platform. He demonstrated the powerful, dynamic features of the application and the potential benefits to all the agencies and the general public.

Avalanche center up-dates

- *Chugach National Forecast Avalanche Information Center*
 - All returning staff, will be starting with advisories the week of November 6th.
 - Forecast starting around Thanksgiving
 - Mobile app is now available and working better
 - New display of avalanche problems on, size and likelihood (utilizing Colorado icons)
 - > 50% funded by the public through the Friends group
 - Hold Friday morning meetings with all local Girdwood professionals including DOT, CPG, Alaska Avalanche School, Alyeska Ski Resort, AKRR and CNFAIC, where we discuss current, past and future avalanche activity and snow conditions.
- *Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center*
 - Early start this year with avalanche activity – Have already had one person buried to their waist
 - Doing more social media outreach
 - Sharing observation platform with CNFAIC
 - Working on getting a Snowmachine
 - Expanding advisory area for Willow
 - Access to recreation weather forecast through NWS
 - Working on building stronger relationships with snowmachiners in an effort to receive more observations, participation and financial support from that community
- *Alaska Avalanche School*
 - 1-2 courses to be offered every weekend Dec-Feb
 - Know Before You Go program available for schools

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- Offering awareness courses for adults, industry workers safety, snowmachine rescue avalanche courses, and weather courses
- *National Weather Service*
 - Avalanche program working with other avalanche centers
 - Hope to improve recreation forecast
 - Working on improving decision support services
- *Chugach Powder Guides*
 - Received new 10 year permit with the Forest Service
 - Received new permit for southern Kenai Peninsula
 - Improved info sharing with other agencies in Girdwood
- *Cordova Avalanche Center*
 - Anticipating forecasting to begin in early December
 - Will offer awareness training for the public and other emergency training
 - Hoping to offer an AIARE Level 1 course
- *Valdez Avalanche Center*
 - Hired a new forecaster, Luke Smithwick
 - Will put up “surf flags” (displaying avalanche danger) at events
- *Haines Avalanche Center*
 - New name, eliminated “information”
 - Two part-time staff plus several volunteers
 - New weather station installed
 - Teaching an AIARE Level 1 course in February
 - Already had a near miss avalanche incident this early season

Media Panel discussion

Participants:

Tracy Sinclair, Meteorologist, Channel 2 – NBC KTUU

- Spoke about the importance of providing short, concise information
- Communicate by email, phone...
- Their goal is to get the word out when it's warranted and the media can't do that if they do not receive word something is up
- Suggest submitting more moving picture since it's TV
- Tip – Be sure to shoot video horizontal when using your phone

John Woodbury, Coast Magazine, SnowRider Magazine

- Resources are scarce so it's important to deliver a print ready story whenever possible.
- Reiterated the importance of visuals to support the story
- Print has the luxury of a much longer deadline so this is the platform for stories that are coming or are more of a feature than deadline news piece



Media Panel from left: Tracy Sinclair, John Woodbury, Joe Vigil, Kellen Pierce, Connor McDonald

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Joe Vigil, KTVA News Director – CBS News

- Send information as quickly as possible
- Encourages phone calls in cases of emergency or public safety concern
- For non-emergent events, send email and make a follow-up phone call
- Also emphasized visuals

Kellen Pierce, KZND – Alaska Integrated Media

- Suggested information consist of no more than 30 sec speech/ad (think 15-30 second Public Service Announcements)
- Be prepared to explain your message in one sentence
- Send videos because those are powerful even on the radio!

Connor McDonald, researcher on how social media affects avalanche safety

- Influences:
 - o Getting the word out
 - o Hands on vs. videos for information. Important to reiterate practical training!
 - o Social media posts are having a big effect
 - o 30 sec visuals are extremely powerful and important

Summit attendants were grouped in teams and given scenarios to work through together. They were ultimately asked to prepare talking points, identify a spokesperson and then have that person deliver the message to their intended audience. Talking points were identified as general avalanche safety information to cover. Each incident is unique and requires the appropriate person to deliver the information. A list of contact individuals was developed by Debra McGhan and Wendy Wagner CNFAIC (ATTACHED.)

CONCLUSION

In addressing the challenge of providing snow safety information, forecasting, education and emergency response, all of us at AAIC recognize the critical need to include the thoughts and ideas of all stakeholders. Because it is not easy to get all those interested in snow safety together with enough time to address the challenges, it is our objective to continue to facilitate discussions and work sessions throughout the year that will ultimately result in valuable information and feedback that produces results. Our goal is to ensure that every mountain traveler has easy access to quality information and education opportunities that can help save their lives and reduce the number of avalanche related incidents.

How can you help make sure Alaska has a solid network of avalanche forecast center that you can locate easily, get dependable information from and learn about opportunities to get educated? You can join the movement. Become a member of your local avalanche center, use the website to get forecast information, or post a personal observation. Learn more at www.alaskasnow.org.

Get more information on the summit at: <http://alaskasnowsafetyconference.webs.com/index.htm>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to gather input and feedback from all stakeholders
2. Define the problems with clear step-by-step solutions for addressing the problems
3. Provide an information sharing forum

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4. Provide a single point of entry for information available to the general public
5. Host a full-day workshop to allow ample time for gathering suggestions, concerns and ideas for ensuring the general public in Alaska has easy access to snow forecast and education information

SPECIAL THANKS

All of us at the AAIC would like to express our sincere thank you to Anchorage Assembly Members Christopher Constant and John Weddleton for moderating and special address at the 2017 Snow Summit.

We also want to thank Lt. Paul Fussey, Alaska State Troopers; US Senator Lisa Murkowski; David Snider with the National Weather Service; Jeremy Zidek, State of Alaska Homeland Security; Tracy Sinclair, KTTU; Joe Vigel KTVA; John Woodbury, Alaska Coast and Snowrider Magazines; Kellen Pierce, Alaska Integrated Media; Connor McDonald, UAA graduate student.



Summit Moderator, Anchorage Assemblyman
Christopher Constant

Conoco Phillips; Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, Alaska Pacific University and Black Diamond Equipment for financial support to make this event possible.

Thank you to everyone who attended and provided thoughts and insight and suggestions on this important topic. Together we are working hard to ensure that every Alaskan and visitor to our state has quick and easy access to critical, timely professional information regarding snow conditions and education opportunities throughout our state.

The 2018 Summit has been tentatively scheduled for Thursday, November 1, 2018 from 9 am to 1 pm.



Summit attendants work in groups to develop talking points and practice media delivery strategies.

Chis Pavodore, APU Catering sets up a delectable meal of chili and seafood chowder for summit attendants

Avalanche Snow Safety Media Contacts

Avalanche Education (upcoming avalanche courses and events, general questions)

Name	Position	Phone	Email
Debra McGhan	Alaska Avalanche Information Center, Executive Director	907-982-0332	dmcghan@alaskasnow.org
Melis Coady	Alaska Avalanche School	907-841-7864	melis@alaskaavalanche.com
Emily Tallman	Friends of Chugach Avalanche Center, Executive Director	907-538-3808	chugachavyfriends@gmail.com

Avalanche Technical Specialist (current avalanche conditions or avalanche accident questions)

REGIONS: Girdwood, Anchorage, Turnagain Pass, Kenai

U.S. Forest Service – Chugach National Forest Avalanche Center

Name	Position	Phone	Email
Wendy Wagner	Director, Forecaster	907-229-9060	Wendy@chugachavalanche.org
Aleph Johnston-Bloom	Forecaster	907-749-2912	aleph@chugachavalanche.org
Heather Thamm	Forecaster	907-230-2370	heather@chugachavalanche.org

REGIONS: Hatcher Pass

Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center

Name	Position	Phone	Email
Jed Workman	Forecaster, Responder	907-746-4566	jedworkman@gmail.com
Allie Barker	Forecaster, Responder	907-746-4566	alliebarker77@gmail.com

REGIONS: Valdez, Thompson Pass

Valdez Avalanche Center

Name	Region/Discipline	Phone	Email
Sarah Carter	Forecaster, Educator, Responder	907-255-2242	scarter@alaskasnow.org
Peter Carter	Forecaster, Responder	907-200-2063	pcarter@alaskasnow.org

REGIONS: Eastern Alaska Range, Fairbanks

Eastern Alaska Range Avalanche Center

Name	Position	Phone	Email
Conrad Chapman	Educator, Responder	907-888-3396	clchapman@alaska.edu
Mark Oldmixon	Director, Responder	802- 598-7726	mtoldmixon@alaska.edu

REGIONS: Cordova

Cordova Avalanche Center

Name	Position	Phone	Email
Steve Witsoe	Forecaster, Educator, Responder	907-424-4668	hoots@ctcak.net

REGIONS: Haines

Haines Avalanche Center, Southeast Alaska

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Jeffrey Moskowitz	Forecaster, Educator, Responder	907-314-0188	jeffrey.moski@gmail.com
Erik Stevens	Forecaster, Educator, Responder	907-314-0956	estevens@alaskasnow.org

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