



ACMG

Association of Canadian Mountain Guides
Association canadienne des guides de montagne

Policies

Association of Canadian Mountain Guides

Critical Incident Management Policy

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Definitions and Acronyms

Acceptable Risk:	The likelihood of an event where probability of occurrence is small and consequences are so slight or benefits (perceived or real) so great that an individual is willing to be subject to the <i>risk</i> that the event might occur.
ACMG:	Association of Canadian Mountain Guides
ACMG Member:	An ACMG certified Mountain Guide, Ski Guide, Alpine Guide, Rock Guide, Hiking Guide, Via Ferrata Guide (VFG), Top Rope Climbing Instructor (TRCI), Climbing Gym Instructor (CGI), in good standing.
CPD:	Continuing Professional Development
Hazard:	A source of potential harm or a situation with a potential for causing harm in terms of human injury, or damage to health, property or the environment or other things of value, or some combination of these.
Inherent Risk:	An assessed level of untreated risk; that is, the natural level of risk inherent in an activity without doing anything to reduce the amount of risk.
Likelihood:	The chance of something happening. (ISO, 2016)
Near-miss:	An incident in which no personal injury was sustained, but where, given a slight shift in time or position, injury easily could have occurred.
Objective:	A specific trip or activity that meets an overall goal.
PIMS Committee:	Post-Incident Member/Client/Student Support Committee (a sub-committee of the ACMG Mental Health Committee).
PTSD:	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCMP:	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Residual Risk:	The remaining risk after selecting and implementing of measures to modify risk (risk treatment). (ISO, 2016)
Risk:	The likelihood of an outcome and the severity of its consequences when people or property are exposed to a hazard. Most hazards encountered in a mountain environment have some level of uncertainty of outcome.
Risk Communication:	The exchange of information, advice and opinions about the potential hazards, uncertainties and risks individuals and groups may face in a given activity.
Risk Management:	The process of identifying, assessing and treating risks and coordinated activities to direct and control a group with regard to risk. (ISO, 2016)
TAP:	Training and Assessment Program
TAP/CPD Instructors:	An individual contracted by the ACMG to provide TAP/CPD courses, exam or events, instruction and assessment services.
Uncertainty:	The result of not having enough information to reliably predict an outcome.
WCB	Workers' Compensation Board

1. Purpose and Objective of the Policy

Members of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG “Members”) often work in high-hazard environments to realize objectives of their clients, students or employer. The mountains are an environment where uncertainty makes it impossible to eliminate all risks. Despite following best practices in decision-making and risk management, accidents and “near misses” on guided trips and ACMG sanctioned courses, exams, and events can and will occur. Accidents and near misses that have resulted in serious, ongoing psychological injuries or where people have been seriously injured or killed have long-lasting repercussions.

The objective of this policy document is to provide Members, their clients, students and other stakeholders with a clear understanding of the ACMG’s response and Member responsibilities in the event of a critical incident.

2. Risk Management and Risk Communication

Critical Incident Management begins before a critical incident occurs and should start with proper risk management and thorough risk communication.

Risk management is the process of identifying, assessing and treating risk. The goal is to reduce risk to an acceptable level for those involved in a given activity. Most of the time, this is possible; sometimes, it is not. Participating in mountain travel and adventure activities involves accepting risk to achieve certain goals.

Risk communication is the exchange of information, advice and opinions about the potential hazards, uncertainties and risks individuals and groups may face in a given activity. This dialogue, between guides and clients or instructors and students, enables everyone to make informed decisions about risk. It is paramount for all involved to reasonably understand the risks involved in an activity and their own acceptance of that risk. Understanding is achieved through honest, straightforward and candid two-way communication between the guide or instructor and their group. In the end, the onus is on the client or student to decide whether or not the activity fits within their risk tolerance.

Risk is inherent in all of the activities that ACMG guides and instructors are involved with. Inherent risk cannot be separated from those activities without fundamentally altering the nature or essence of the activity. If one wishes to participate in the activity, one must accept the inherent risk and realize that while guides and instructors are highly trained to reduce risk, they cannot eliminate it. Everyone participating in the activity must contend with the residual risk once reasonable risk mitigation has been taken. Some clients and students may not genuinely appreciate the residual risk that remains even after they’ve hired a guide or instructor. They may not realize that there is always a possibility of an incident, even when reasonable decisions are made. In the end, however, a reasonable decision may not be the right one. Mistakes get made. It’s possible for a guide or instructor to be careful and, at the same time to make an error which may lead to injury. These concepts of uncertainty, residual risk, inherent risk and reasonableness should inform how risk is communicated to clients and students before a trip and how the guides and instructors communicate with clients and students after a critical incident.

Refer to Chapter 6 of the ACMG Core Guiding Skills manual for a more in-depth discussion on risk management and communication.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

ACMG Member Duty Manager

The role of the ACMG Member Duty Manager will be filled by the ACMG Director of Member Services (or delegate), who will be responsible for initiating the ACMG Critical Incident Response Plan by informing the Incident Commander and collecting basic information concerning an incident.

The ACMG Member Duty Manager is required to be on call during regular business hours. Because notification of an incident involving Members outside of an ACMG-sanctioned course, exam or event will almost always be after the initial emergency response, it is anticipated that notification will happen during regular business hours.

TAP/CPD Duty Manager

The role of the Training and Assessment Program (TAP) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (TAP/CPD) Duty Manager will be filled on a rotating basis by the TAP/CPD Operations Team, who will be responsible for initiating the ACMG Critical Incident Response Plan by informing the TAP/CPD Operations Manager, TAP/CPD Director of Operations, and Incident Commander and collecting basic information concerning an incident.

The TAP/CPD Duty Manager is required to be on call 24 hours per day during all ACMG TAP Mountain and Hiking Program courses, exams and events and assist as needed during an emergency response as per the TAP/CPD Emergency Response Plan (see [Appendix C](#)). For CGI, TRCI and VFG courses and exams and CPD and ACMG sanctioned mentorship events, the TAP/CPD Duty Manager will be available during the course, exam and event hours.

Incident Commander

The role of the Incident Commander will be filled by the ACMG Executive Director (or delegate), who has overall responsibility for managing the ACMG's response to the incident. The Incident Commander will organize an initial Incident Planning Meeting with the ACMG President (or delegate) and the Incident Report, Incident Support and Incident Communication Leads. The Incident Commander will lead incident briefings, assign additional roles (if necessary) and coordinate the ACMG's overall response to the incident. The Incident Commander will keep the President (or delegate) informed and work closely with the Incident Communication Lead to develop and approve all communication originating from the ACMG.

Incident Report Lead

The role of the Incident Report Lead will be filled by the ACMG Technical Director (or delegate), who has responsibility for managing the critical incident reporting and review process and coordinating with a subcommittee of the Technical Committee in reviewing ACMG Incident Reports. This role may also include identifying and contracting an incident investigator at the discretion of the ACMG's insurers and providing logistical support to the incident investigator throughout the process.

Incident Support Lead

The role of the Incident Support Lead will be filled by the ACMG DEI and Mental Health Services Manager (or delegate), who is responsible for organizing, administering and supporting the various mental health and advocacy support services offered by the ACMG. This role primarily includes activating the member, client and student support process and coordinating with the Post-Incident Member/Client/Student Support (PIMS) Committee (a sub-committee of the ACMG Mental Health Committee). This also includes identifying and contracting mental health professionals, as required.

Incident Communication Lead

The role of the Incident Communication Lead will be filled by the ACMG Communications and Engagement Coordinator (or delegate), who has responsibility for developing the response to all communications relating to the incident. This includes responding to media inquiries, monitoring and engaging on social media, communicating with the ACMG membership, and communicating with authorities and next of kin. The role of the Incident Communication Lead is to support the Incident Commander by doing the administrative work and developing the necessary material.

The **ACMG Critical Incident Confidentiality Agreement** (the link to which can be found [here](#)) attests to the non-disclosure of personal information, which must be protected for ethical, legal, and proprietary reasons and to comply with the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). All individuals accessing ACMG Incident Reports and other confidential information will be expected to sign and abide by this agreement. All individuals involved in critical incident review, support and communication must be free of conflict of interest and agree that the ACMG Incident Reports and other confidential information are the sole property of the ACMG.

4. Identifying a Critical Incident

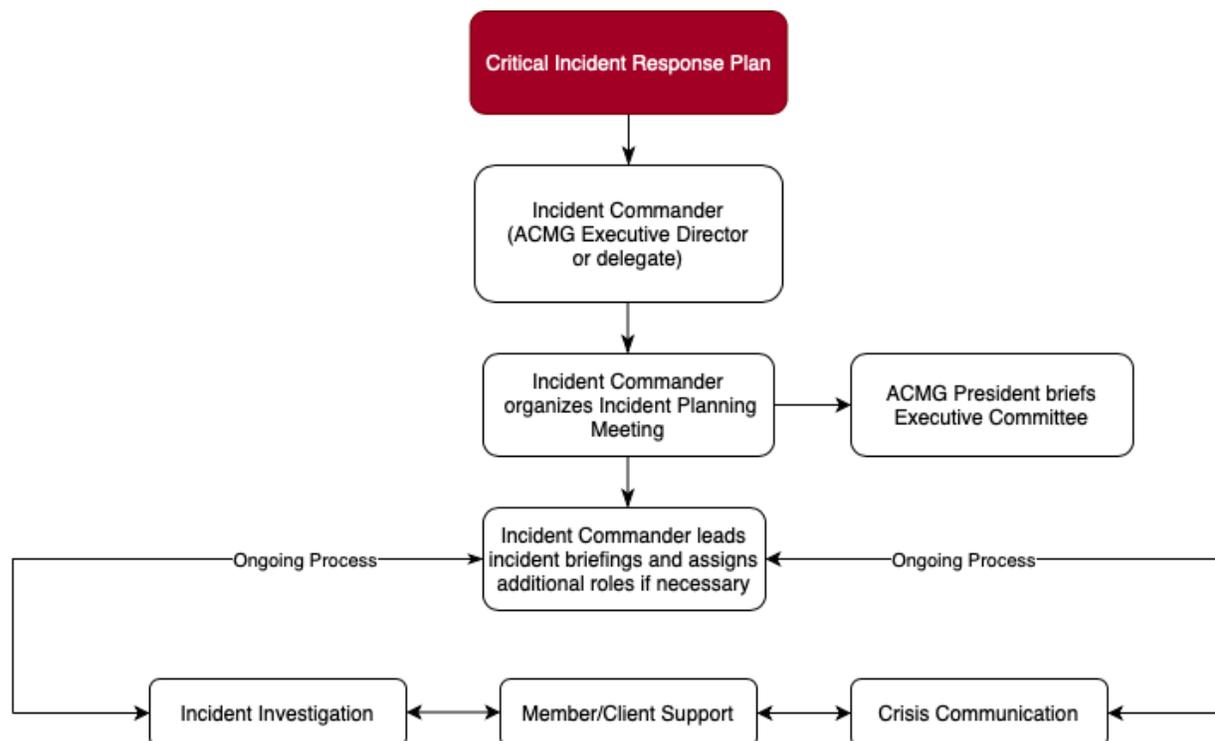
For the purpose of this policy, a critical incident is defined as a traumatic event that occurs during guided mountain travel or mountain adventure activity, or an ACMG sanctioned course, exam or event, which:

- resulted in a physical injury or fatality;
- required search and rescue or evacuation;
- could have resulted in injury or death (a near-miss); or,
- elicited an emotional response such as anxiety, confusion, shock, fear, or anger as a result of any of the above.

If a Member is unsure, they should contact the ACMG to help determine whether or not the event qualifies as a critical incident and the level of response required.

5. Critical Incident Response Plan

The figure below shows the ACMG’s workflow when responding to critical incidents.



Notification of a Critical Incident

In the event of a critical incident, the ACMG Member Duty Manager should be notified as soon as possible (contact information is provided in [Appendix A](#) to this policy document), who will inform the Incident Commander. If notification is via email or voicemail, the ACMG Member Duty Manager or Incident Commander will respond within 12 hours to collect the following basic information concerning the incident (see checklist in [Appendix B](#) and [Online Notification Checklist](#)):

- Name, phone number and involvement of the individual reporting the incident
- Type of incident (avalanche, fall, impact, collision, etc.) and location
- Date and time of the incident
- Number of individuals involved and number of injuries or fatalities
- Names of those seriously or fatally injured and emergency contact
- Status of the incident (ongoing or concluded)
- Rescue response (Search and Rescue, RCMP, Parks Canada, Alberta Parks, etc.)

The individual reporting the incident will be directed to complete and submit an ACMG incident report. Here are the links to the [ACMG Incident Report for Members](#) and [ACMG Incident Report for the Public](#).

Fatalities

In the event of a fatality, the Incident Commander will:

1. If the incident is ongoing, instruct those present to leave the scene and the deceased undisturbed until instructed otherwise by the RCMP, British Columbia Coroner or Alberta Medical Examiner.
2. Confirm the RCMP have been notified, who in turn will notify the Coroner or Medical Examiner.
3. Follow up with the RCMP to confirm that the next of kin has been contacted and advise the RCMP if a third party has already notified the next of kin.
4. Notify the ACMG's insurance brokers, who will contact the insurance adjusters and legal counsel.
5. Coordinate incident review with the ACMG Incident Review Lead, the RCMP, the Coroner or Medical Examiner and the ACMG's insurers.
6. Coordinate support with the Incident Support Lead for all involved, including the next of kin, once the RCMP has notified them.
7. Coordinate incident communication with the Incident Communication Lead, the ACMG's insurers, and legal counsel.

Incident Planning Meeting

Within 24 hours of being notified of an incident, the Incident Commander will organize an initial Incident Planning Meeting with the ACMG President (or delegate) and the Incident Review, Incident Support and Incident Communication Leads to determine the nature of the incident (critical or not) and the level of response required in each of the incident reporting and review, support, and communication processes respectively.

The President (or delegate) will brief the ACMG Executive Committee, and all other ACMG staff will be informed of the incident as soon as possible. The Incident Commander will lead incident briefings, assign additional roles (if necessary) and coordinate the ACMG's overall response to the incident.

6. TAP/CPD Critical Incident Response

Notification of a Critical Incident

In the case of a critical incident occurring during an ACMG sanctioned course, exam or event, the TAP/CPD Instructors or other participants, if necessary, will immediately contact the TAP/CPD Duty Manager (contact information is provided in [Appendix A](#) to this policy document), who will notify the:

- TAP/CPD Operations Manager;
- TAP/CPD Director of Operations, and;
- Incident Commander.

The following basic information should be collected when the TAP/CPD Duty Manager is contacted concerning a critical incident (see checklist in [Appendix B](#) and [Online Notification Checklist](#)):

- Name, phone number and involvement of the individual reporting the incident
- Type of incident (avalanche, fall, impact, collision, etc.) and location
- Date and time of the incident
- Number of individuals involved and number of injuries or fatalities
- Names of those seriously or fatally injured and emergency contact
- TAP course or exam or CPD field event
- Status of the incident (ongoing or concluded)
- Rescue response (SAR, RCMP, Parks Canada, Alberta Parks, etc.)

The individual reporting the incident should be directed to complete and submit an ACMG incident report. Here are the links to the [ACMG Incident Report for TAP/CPD Instructors](#) and [ACMG Incident Report for TAP/CPD Participants](#).

Incident Commander

The role of Incident Commander in the event of a TAP/CPD critical incident will be filled by the Executive Director (or delegate) with assistance from the TAP/CPD Director of Operations and TAP/CPD Operations Manager (the “TAP/CPD Management”). The Incident Commander or TAP/CPD Management will:

1. Contact the emergency contacts for those seriously injured and unable to do so themselves and inform them of the incident (RCMP will initially contact next of kin in the event of a fatality).
2. Decide if the course, exam or event will be cancelled and rescheduled.
3. Contact the instructors and ask that they inform the participants if the course, exam or event will be cancelled and rescheduled, making every effort not to traumatize those who are yet unaffected.
4. Contact the participants directly if the instructors are unable to do so, informing them if the course, exam or event will be cancelled and rescheduled, making every effort not to traumatize those who are yet unaffected.

Fatalities

In the event of a fatality, the Incident Commander and TAP/CPD Management will:

1. If the incident is ongoing, instruct those present to leave the scene and the deceased undisturbed until instructed otherwise by the RCMP, British Columbia Coroner or Alberta Medical Examiner.
2. Confirm the RCMP have been notified, who in turn will notify the Coroner or Medical Examiner.
3. Follow up with the RCMP to confirm that the next of kin have been contacted and advise the RCMP if a third party has already notified the next of kin.
4. Notify the ACMG’s insurance brokers, who will contact the insurance adjusters and legal counsel.
5. Coordinate incident review with the ACMG Incident Report Lead, the RCMP, the Coroner or Medical Examiner and the ACMG’s insurers.
6. Coordinate support with the Incident Support Lead for all involved, including the next of kin, once the RCMP has notified them.
7. Coordinate communication with the Incident Communication Lead, the ACMG’s insurers, and legal counsel.

Incident Planning Meeting

Within 24 hours of being notified of an incident, the Incident Commander will organize an initial Incident Planning Meeting with the President (or delegate), TAP/CPD Management and the Incident Reporting, Incident Support and Incident Communication Leads to determine the level of response required in each of the incident reporting, support, and communication processes respectively.

The President (or delegate) will brief the ACMG Executive Committee, and all other ACMG staff and instructors in the field will be informed of the incident as soon as possible. The Incident Commander will lead incident briefings, assign additional roles (if necessary) and coordinate the ACMG’s overall response to the incident.

Group Debrief

The Incident Support Lead will attempt to schedule a group debrief with a mental health professional within 72 hours of the incident and offer it to those directly involved and any who may have experienced secondary trauma. The debrief will be scheduled even if only one individual wants to participate.

The Incident Support Lead will activate the ACMG incident support process within 96 hours of the incident following the group debrief.

7. Incident Reporting and Review

ACMG Incident Reports

Under this policy, all ACMG Members and TAP/CPD Instructors involved in a critical incident while guiding, instructing climbing or instructing on an ACMG TAP course or exam or CPD event are required to submit an [ACMG Incident Report for Members](#).

Under this policy, ACMG Members and TAP/CPD Instructors are required to provide the ACMG contact information for clients or students involved in a critical incident and request that clients and students submit an [ACMG Incident Report for the Public](#).

ACMG incident reports should be completed and submitted within 48 hours of the incident. The Incident Commander or the Incident Report Lead will contact the Members involved in a critical incident after 48 hours to offer assistance if reports have not been submitted and to confirm that clients or students involved have been requested to submit reports. The information provided in ACMG incident reports will be used by the Incident Report Lead to review the facts surrounding a critical incident and by the Incident Support Lead to support those involved. Members working in as employees or contracted personnel should contact their employer before requesting that clients submit an incident report. If situations require additional confidentiality, the ACMG will collaborate with employers and modify our incident reporting requirements.

Confidentiality

The ACMG is committed to maintaining the confidentiality and security of personally identifiable information as required by the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), subject to any legal requirement to disclose the information. The PIPA provides for implied consent to the use of personal information if its use is reasonable and the use of personal information without consent if it is clearly in the person's interest or when it is necessary to respond to an emergency that threatens the life, health, or security of a person.

Purpose of the Incident Reporting and Review Process

The purpose of the ACMG's incident reporting and review process is to establish a factual account of the incident. Due to legal liability concerns, the review does not seek to pass judgment on the actions of any of those involved in the incident and is intended to be straightforward fact-finding and reporting only. The Incident Report Lead is tasked with confirming if all of the ACMG Incident Reports received are in agreement and, if not, determine what most likely happened (if possible). Before preparing their report, the Incident Report Lead may reach out to those involved in the incident to clarify some of the reported facts. The ACMG incident reports and the Incident Report Lead's summary report will be provided to the ACMG's

insurers in compliance with its liability insurance policy. The ACMG will use neither the ACMG incident reports nor the Incident Report Lead's summary report to trigger an ACMG conduct review.

The Incident Commander will provide those directly involved in the incident and next of kin in the event of a fatality with updates on the status of the review and a final summary report prepared by the Incident Report Lead once the review is complete. The Incident Commander and Incident Support Lead will make themselves available to discuss the summary report with those directly involved in the incident and next of kin in the event of a fatality. The Incident Commander and Incident Support Lead will follow the incident support process, focusing on peer support, Member and client or student access to mental health support and communication and reconciliation between Members, survivors of critical incidents and next of kin in the event of fatalities.

Shared Learnings

Although the primary purpose of the critical incident reporting and review process is to review the facts surrounding a critical incident and provide support for those involved, at a later date, once it is determined that no legal liability concerns exist, the results of the incident reports may be provided to the ACMG Incident Reporting and Learning Committee (IRLC). In addition, if it is determined that the nature of the incident is non-critical, the individual reporting the incident will be encouraged to complete and submit an anonymous ACMG Incident Reporting and Learning System (IRLS) report. The IRLC may create shared learnings from the incident reports and the IRLS to be used as an educational resource in case studies or to make recommendations for TAP courses and CPD events or changes to best practices or the ACMG Scope of Practice. These shared learnings will not reference a specific incident or the individuals involved.

8. Incident Support Process

The ACMG's incident support process attempts to provide a safety net for Members and their clients or students involved in a critical incident. It focuses on a peer support network, Member, client or student access to mental health support and communication and reconciliation between Members, survivors of critical incidents and next of kin in the event of fatalities. The primary objective of the incident support process is to help Members and their clients or students recover in the aftermath of a critical incident.

Within 24 hours of being notified of an incident, the Incident Commander will organize the initial Incident Planning Meeting with the ACMG President (or delegate) and the Incident Report, Incident Support and Incident Communication Leads to determine the nature of the incident (critical or not) and the level of response required.

The Incident Support Lead will attempt to schedule a group debrief with a Mental Health Professional or Canadian Mountain Community Critical Incident Stress Management peer support within 72 hours of the incident and offer it to those directly involved and any who may have experienced secondary trauma.

Mental Health And Psychological First Aid

Members of the PIMS committee and ACMG staff receive periodic training in Mental Health and Psychological First Aid, during which they learn how to anticipate stress and crisis whenever possible, equip themselves with the skill set to practice self-care and provide care for others during particularly challenging times. They can recognize signs that a person may be experiencing a decline in their mental well-being or a mental health crisis and encourage that person to:

- Talk about these declines in their mental well-being;
- Connect them with community and social supports;
- Discuss professional supports that could help with recovery; and,
- Reach out to these supports.

Those choosing to voluntarily provide Mental Health and Psychological First Aid have a duty of care to provide first aid assistance with reasonable care and skill. They breach their duty of care if they step outside what is reasonable care or their skill set. This is similar to when a physical first aider attempts to reset a broken bone rather than applying their first aid skills and waiting for appropriate medical help. Mental health and psychological first aiders must know their limitations and not provide advice or counselling beyond their skill set. They should advise individuals in distress to seek professional help if they present as a danger to themselves or others.

Critical Incident Stress Management

A traumatic event can cause physical, emotional, or psychological harm. The person experiencing, witnessing, or being exposed to the traumatic event may feel physically threatened or extremely frightened. They may feel afraid or that they have no control over what is happening. Normal coping mechanisms are overwhelmed, affecting them mentally, emotionally, physically or cognitively. One person's reaction may be completely different from another's.

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can occur after someone has been through a traumatic event. Anyone who has gone through a life-threatening event can develop PTSD. But people don't always have to see a traumatic event or have it happen to them to get PTSD. Sometimes learning that a traumatic event happened to a loved one can cause PTSD. It's normal for such events to make one feel scared, confused,

or angry for a while. If these feelings don't go away after a few weeks or if they get worse, they may need professional medical attention.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is intended to mitigate serious, ongoing psychological injuries that result from trauma. CISM comprises multiple components and applies a range of crisis intervention services, including pre-crisis training, individual crisis counselling, mental health and psychological first aid, peer support, and post-incident referral for those involved in a critical incident.

Canadian Mountain Community - Critical Incident Stress Management Program

The Canadian Mountain Community Critical Incident Stress Management Program (CISMP) was developed for members and workers of Canada's professional mountain community associations to manage stress symptoms following a critical incident. The CISMP mission statement is "To provide quality Critical Incident Stress Management interventions, debriefings, and education to members, workers and other associated individuals of the professional mountain community associations in Canada."

As one of the organizations supporting the CISMP, the ACMG is involved in the oversight and management of the CISMP. Many of the CISMP processes are similar to and will overlap those of the incident support process.

Peer Support

The Incident Support Lead will consult with Members of the PIMS Committee to identify a Peer Support Advocate to assist the Member involved in the critical incident by providing personal and logistical support to navigate the complex post-incident environment. The Incident Support Lead and the Peer Support Advocate will reach out to the Member and offer support. If the Member accepts, the Peer Support Advocate will provide the Member with support and resources to help them ensure the following essential tasks are completed (see checklist in [Appendix D](#) and [Online Peer Advocate Support Checklist](#)):

- Responding to interview requests from the RCMP, Coroner or Medical Examiner
- Completing and submitting ACMG Incident Report for Members
- Reporting the incident to non-ACMG LIP insurers
- Reporting the incident to WorkSafeBC/Alberta OHS
- Reporting the incident to ACMG Personal Accident Insurance (PAI) providers
- Preparing for and responding to media requests (see Incident Communication section)
- Communicating with those involved in the incident and next of kin (see below)
- Following return-to-work guidelines (see below)
- Ensuring business continuity (see below)

Peer Support Advocates will receive training in what is an appropriate amount of support. Just like with mental health first aid, they need to know their limitations.

Communicating with Survivors

Survivors of critical incidents include those who were involved in the incident, and family members of those both seriously and fatally injured. Meetings between the Member involved and the survivors can be among the most difficult undertaking of all post-incident actions; it is also the most important. These difficult meetings, which often include professional mediators, have proven to be one of the most important steps toward understanding, healing and reconciliation between parties.

In determining the appropriate time to contact the family, each case is different and depends on the nature of the critical incident, the age and independence of the injured or deceased individual, and the established relationship status with family members. Generally, contact should be made in critical incidents as soon as is reasonably possible while respecting the responsibility of the Coroner or Medical Examiner and RCMP to be first in informing families about the incident. The Incident Commander, Incident Support Lead, Peer Support Advocate and Member should consult and decide on timing to reach out on a case-by-case basis and certainty of contact information, relationship status, and sensitivity to cultural norms and expectations.

Every single critical incident is accompanied by its own unique circumstances. Nobody has the complete story; emotions are raw, tension is high and different people perceive the events differently. This sometimes leads to anger, and people's grief can cause them to lash out at others. Over time, as people begin to digest what has happened, cause and effect questions start to arise. The Member may feel guilt, grief, sorrow and maybe shame for what happened.

As the responsible leader of the party, the Member is often called upon to explain what happened. Silence is the wrong response and usually has unintended consequences. Opening up the communication channels between the member and the survivors contributes to healing for everyone involved. An ancillary benefit is that it also "turns down the heat" and reduces the likelihood of litigation. The messages would have to be controlled and managed, but this approach has little downside.

Apology Legislation

Apology legislation states that an apology does not constitute an admission of fault or liability and must not be taken into consideration in determining fault or liability. It is intended to allow parties to apologize "*whether or not the words or actions admit or imply an admission of fault*" without the apology being used in the litigation process as evidence of wrongdoing. It does not mean a person can no longer sue, just that the apology can't be used in the lawsuit.

In some cases, plaintiffs simply want some closure, some acceptance of responsibility and aren't necessarily looking for financial compensation. Apologies can have a significant impact on resolving conflict and restoring relationships. There is an emotional component in all disputes, and if that component can be reduced or satisfied, some of those disputes may be resolved without proceeding to court. Apology legislation aims to prevent litigation.

All Canadian provinces and territories have adopted apology legislation. The *Alberta Evidence Act* and *British Columbia Apology Act* define an apology as:

"an expression of sympathy or regret, a statement that one is sorry or any other words or actions indicating contrition or commiseration, whether or not the words or actions admit or imply an admission of fault in connection with the matter to which the words or actions relate" and that "an apology made by or on behalf of a person in connection with any matter does not constitute an express or implied admission of fault or liability by the person in connection with that matter... and shall not be taken into account in any determination of fault or liability in connection with that matter."

This legislation gives those involved in a critical incident the opportunity to reach out to others and communicate sympathy or regret, to apologize and say they are sorry for what happened.

Return-to-Work Guidelines

Depending on the severity of the critical incident, a Member may need to be off work. They may need time to process what has happened and to heal from physical and psychological injuries. This is particularly important for Members, who, by the very nature of their high-risk work, cannot have impaired judgment and must be physically and psychologically strong when leading clients or students. Returning to work is usually a graduated process with specific milestones, often supervised and usually in collaboration with a medical professional. Formal plans are sometimes developed between the medical professional, insurer, employer and worker.

If a worker has been injured on the job, then return-to-work support services are provided by WCB/WorkSafe BC and include wage support, medical treatment and a specialized team of return-to-work providers. Some extended healthcare providers also offer similar services. In the case of a self-employed ACMG Member with no insurance or WCB/WorkSafe BC coverage, these support systems may not exist. In this case, the Peer Support Advocate will provide the Member with resources to help them determine their fitness to return to work. Unfortunately, without wage support, the pressure to generate income may dominate the member's decision to return.

Members should follow the following return-to-work guidelines following involvement in a critical incident:

1. The Member should remain under the care of a medical professional during the initial return to work.
2. The Member should identify a mentor to collaborate with and debrief with one return-to-work progress.
3. The Member should work under supervision as described by the ACMG Scope of Practice (regardless of certification level) during the initial return to work.
4. The return to work should be graduated from low-risk supervised work to unsupervised work in collaboration with the mentor and medical professional.

Ensuring Business Continuity

Business continuity is a business's capability to continue delivering products or services at acceptable levels following a disruptive incident. A critical incident is, by definition, disruptive, and measures are necessary for Members to ensure their businesses can withstand a critical incident. Facing potential physical and psychological injuries, Members still need to ensure their businesses do not collapse.

Regardless of the size of their operations, Members should develop a business continuity plan to help to increase resilience and prepare the business with contingencies. This could be as simple as identifying a friend or colleague ahead of time which will step in and run the business functions, while the Member is absorbed by the critical incident, and providing them with a basic orientation to the business ahead of time.

If no business continuity plan is in place, the Peer Support Advocate will work with the Member on tasks such as communicating with clients, hiring replacement staff, rescheduling trips, cancelling bookings and issuing refunds.

9. Incident Communication

The incident communication section of this policy document describes the coordination of communications within the ACMG and between the ACMG and other relevant organizations, stakeholders, the media and the general public in the event of a critical incident. It provides guidelines for dealing with a variety of communication needs to ensure that staff and communicators are familiar with those procedures and their roles in the event of an incident. All ACMG staff and Executive Committee members working with the media or performing as a spokesperson receive periodic media training.

Controversial issues arising from a critical incident may include questions about the general safety of adventure tourism activities, the ability of Members to mitigate risk, the cause of the incident, and the process and outcomes from investigations. This section addresses media relations and communications issues and includes the methods for responding to these situations quickly and effectively.

Within 24 hours of being notified of an incident, the Incident Commander will organize the initial Incident Planning Meeting with the ACMG President (or delegate) and the Incident Report, Incident Support and Incident Communication Leads to determine the nature of the incident (critical or not) and the level of response required including:

- Identifying the parties that should be informed about the situation.
- Communicating facts about the incident as appropriate.
- Minimizing rumours or untrue comments in the media.
- Maintaining or improving public confidence in the ACMG.

Point of Contact and Spokespeople

The Executive Director is the ACMG's primary Point of Contact for critical incident media inquiries. If the Executive Director is unavailable, a delegated Point of Contact will be chosen, and contact information will be provided via an email auto-response or voicemail messaging.

The ACMG's Principal Spokespeople are the Executive Director and the President (or delegate). If the Principal Spokesperson feels they do not have the expertise to comment on a specific issue, they should authorize a Specialty Spokesperson. A Specialty Spokesperson has specialized knowledge or expertise and is qualified to comment on specific issues. The Principal and Specialty Spokespeople are authorized to speak on behalf of the ACMG in all matters identified as issues on which the ACMG will be able to comment on (see [Appendix M](#)).

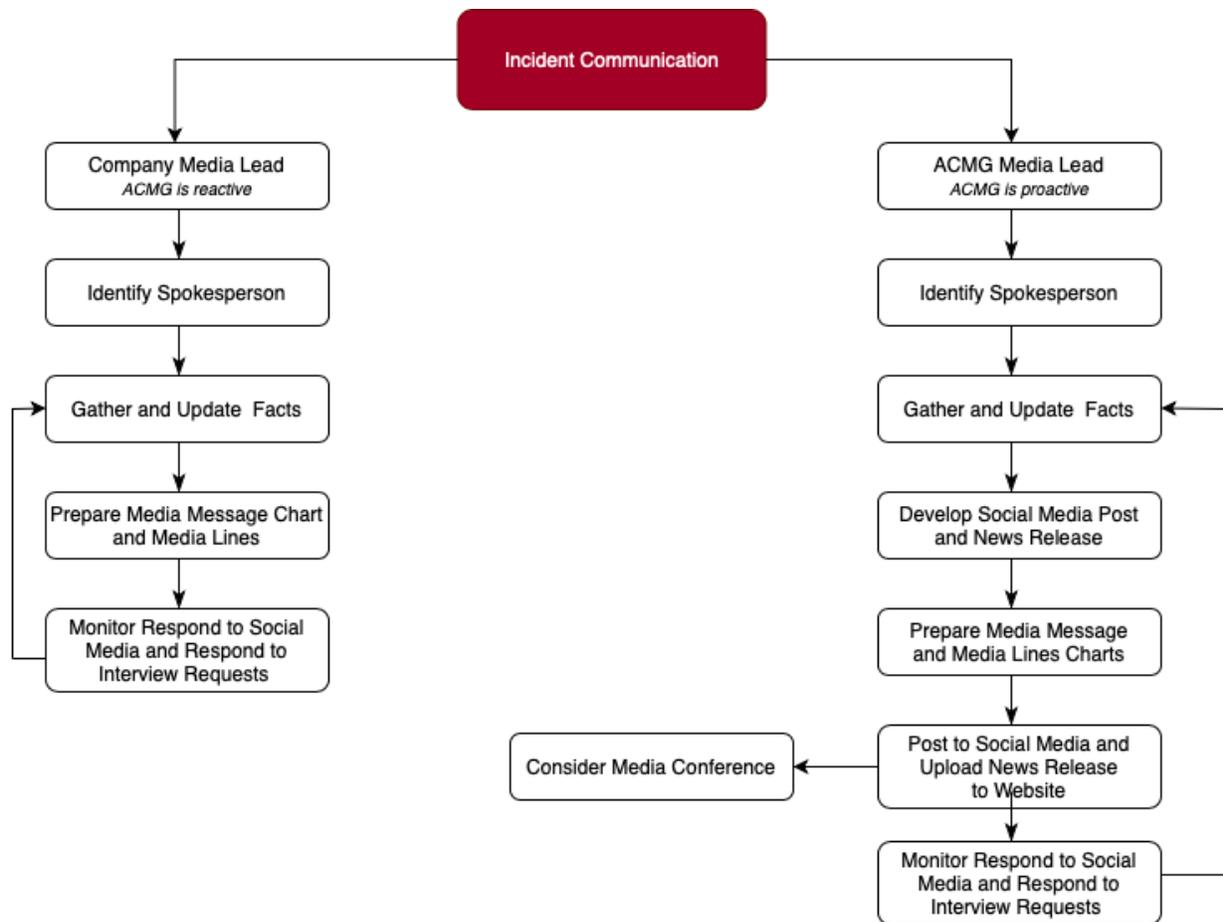
The Incident Communication Lead has responsibility for developing the response to all communications relating to the incident and works closely with the spokesperson. This includes responding to media inquiries, monitoring and engaging on social media, communicating with the ACMG membership, and communicating with authorities and next of kin in the event of a fatality. The Principal Spokesperson will approve and usually deliver any ACMG responses unless the task is handed over to a Specialty Spokesperson or Point of Contact.

Following a critical incident, the Incident Communication Lead will also monitor social media, acting as a gatekeeper to track media inquiries and direct them to the appropriate person. The Incident Communication Lead will also monitor Facebook and Twitter for erroneous or misleading statements and, if necessary, bring them to the attention of the Executive Director.

Incident Communication Responsibilities and Workflow

In many cases following a critical incident, the company that has had the incident will handle the incident communication themselves, and the ACMG does not need to be involved. In these cases, the ACMG will still be prepared to react in anticipation of being contacted by the media. In other cases, such as when a self-employed Member is involved in a critical incident, it may be necessary for the ACMG to take the lead on incident communication. The figure below shows the ACMG’s workflow of incident communication following a critical incident.

The ACMG will contact the Member or company involved in the incident to determine who will be the Media Lead. If the company has the skills and resources to take the lead role, then the ACMG can offer to support. If the company cannot take the lead, then with their permission, the ACMG will offer to be the Media Lead.



Critical Incident Media Response

Initial media inquiries will be directed to the Point of Contact, who will:

- a. Issue the preliminary statement if one already exists.
- b. Use a Media Request Contact Log form (see [Appendix E](#) and [Online Media Request Contact Log](#)) to record all telephone calls and emails from the media or other parties inquiring about the incident and obtain basic information from the person inquiring.
- c. Inform the person inquiring that a spokesperson will be back in touch with them. Ensure that a response from the ACMG comes soon, ideally within 30 minutes. If this is not possible, the person inquiring should be contacted with an update.
- d. Contact the Principle Spokesperson and provide them with the information about the person inquiring. The Principal Spokesperson will determine whether the ACMG should speak to the issues and questions from the person inquiring or refer them to another organization.
- e. Incident Communication Lead will post statements to the ACMG Facebook page and Twitter feed at the earliest available opportunity.

When an incident becomes known to the ACMG, the Principal Spokesperson, assisted by the Incident Communication Lead, will prepare a preliminary statement of fact. This statement will likely look similar to the following, with the details revised to suit the situation:

“We understand a ski mountaineering accident has occurred on Mount Athabasca in the Rocky Mountains near Jasper. To our knowledge, no ACMG members are involved in the accident, although members may be assisting in rescue operations. We have no further details at this point and cannot comment on the incident. Our immediate concern is for the well-being of everyone involved. Inquiries should be directed to the authorities in charge of the rescue operation, the RCMP and Parks Canada.”

If the issues and questions are ones that the ACMG cannot comment on, the Principal Spokesperson, assisted by the Incident Communication Lead, will prepare a secondary statement. This statement will likely look similar to the following, with the details revised to suit the situation:

“The ACMG sympathizes with the friends and family of any injured or deceased. We will offer assistance to the authorities if it seems our Members’ expertise might be of assistance. Inquiries should be directed to the authorities in charge of the rescue operation, the RCMP and Parks Canada.”

ACMG Media Message Chart

When responding to media requests due to a specific critical incident, the ACMG Media Message Chart should be used to outline three Key Messages and Supporting Facts. The Media Message Chart (see [Appendix F](#)) should be used as a starting point and adapted to fit the specific critical incident. The Principal Spokesperson should endeavour to connect answers to questions directly or indirectly to the Key Messages and Supporting Facts on Media Message Chart.

ACMG Media Lines Chart

When responding to general media requests, the ACMG Media Lines Chart should be used to outline three Key Messages and Supporting Facts. The Media Lines Chart (see [Appendix G](#)) should be used as a starting point and adapted to fit specific questions. The Principal Spokesperson should continue to make answers to questions connect, either directly or indirectly, to the Key Messages and Supporting Facts on Media Lines Chart.

Incident Communication with other Parties

A Member involved with a critical incident may need to give statements to other parties, which include the police, coroner, medical examiner, insurance adjustors, lawyers, and land managers such as Parks Canada or Alberta and BC Parks. The insurance broker's lawyer or investigator will likely be among the first to make contact. Coroner's and medical examiner's investigations can take years.

While the interest and motives of each party may differ, the manner with which the Member responds to the queries is the same. Say what you know. Talk about what happened. Stick to the facts, and don't speculate.

Appendix A – ACMG Contact List

Contact	Phone	Email
ACMG Duty Manager	403-678-2885	incidents@acmg.ca
TAP/CPD Duty Manager	403-679-9269	tap@acmg.ca
Incident Commander		
Executive Director (Kevin Dumba)	403-660-1387	kevin.dumba@acmg.ca
President (Sylvia Forest)	250-344-8238	sylvia.forest@acmg.ca
Vice President (Jordy Shepherd)	403-609-8561	jordy.shepherd@acmg.ca
TAP/CPD Management		
TAP/CPD Director of Operations (Derek Wilding)	403-679-9266	derek.wilding@acmg.ca
TAP/CPD Operations Manager (Geoff Osler)	403-431-1405	geoff.olser@acmg.ca
Incident Report Lead		
Technical Director (Mike Adolph)	403-846-6436	mike.adolph@acmg.ca
Assistant Technical Director (Evan Stevens)	604-848-5466	evan.stevens@acmg.ca
Incident Support Lead		
DEI Mental Health Services Manager (Aurora Borin)	403-678-2885	aurora.borin@acmg.ca
Insurance and Legal		
Kaerus Group Risk Solutions (Angela Mackenzie)	403-990-3810	angelam@kaerugroup.com
Legal Advisor (Kent)	604-328-7487	gwkent@shh.bc.ca
Emergency Response		
Emergency – RCMP (all areas)	911	
Emergency – RCMP (all areas via satellite phone)	1-800-663-3456	
Emergency – Kananaskis Country	403-591-7767	
Parks Canada Banff Dispatch	403-762-4506	Banff, Lake Louise, Yoho, Kootenay, and Waterton
Parks Canada Jasper Dispatch	780-852-3100	Jasper, Mt. Revelstoke, Glacier
Kananaskis Country	403-591-7767	
Post Incident		
RCMP Banff	403-762-2226	
RCMP Jasper	780-852-4421	
RCMP Golden	250-344-2221	
RCMP Revelstoke	250-837-5255	
RCMP Nelson	604-892-6100	
RCMP Squamish	604-892-6100	
RCMP Whistler/Blackcomb	604-932-3044	
RCMP Pemberton	604-894-6634	
British Columbia Coroner Service	1-866-200-2676	cronerrequest@gov.bc.ca
Alberta Chief Medical Examiner Office	403-297-8123	ocme_admin@gov.ab.ca

Appendix B – Notification Checklist

[Online Version](#)

Name, phone number and involvement of the individual reporting the incident:		
Name:	Phone:	
Involvement:		
Type of incident (avalanche, fall, impact, collision, etc.):		
Location of Incident:		
Date of the incident:	Time of the incident:	
Number of individuals involved:	Injuries:	Fatalities:
Names of those seriously or fatally injured and emergency contact:		
Name:	Injury:	Contact:
TAP course or exam or CPD field event:		
Status on the incident (ongoing or concluded):		
Rescue response (SAR, RCMP, Parks Canada, Alberta Parks, etc.)		

Appendix C – Emergency Response Plan

The TAP/CPD Duty Manager will monitor the tap@acmg.ca email account for Garmin inReach check-ins and emergency communications. While TAP/CPD Instructors in the field are responsible for managing any on-site emergency response and coordinating rescue, the TAP/CPD Duty Manager will be available to assist as needed. For all incidents requiring first aid or rescue, contact the TAP/CPD Duty Manager as soon as practical. The Duty Manager shouldn't be relied upon to assist with rescue response other than to initiate an emergency response as per the Late Group Protocol below and to provide logistical support to TAP/CPD Instructors and students during an ongoing critical incident. Their primary role in a critical incident is to initiate the ACMG Critical Incident Response Plan.

Late Group Protocol

TAP/CPD Instructors will establish a pre-arranged time for groups to check-in. TAP/CPD Duty Manager will arrange a check-in protocol with instructors working alone. If there is no communication with a late group by the pre-arranged time, the situation is to be treated as a developing emergency.

1. Ensure that radios and cell phones are on and phones have been checked for messages.
2. Make a record of late group details (names, routes, options, last communication, vehicles, etc.).
3. Designate two individuals to prepare for travel with a radio or cell phone in search of the late group.
4. Contact the regional rescue service or RCMP detachment to inform them of a potential emergency.
 - Emergency (RCMP) 911
 - Emergency via Satellite Phone (RCMP) 1-800-663-3456
 - Parks Banff Dispatch 403-762-4506 (Banff, Lake Louise, Yoho, Kootenay, and Waterton)
 - Parks Jasper Dispatch 780-852-3100 (Jasper, Mt. Revelstoke, Glacier)
 - Kananaskis Country 403-591-7767
5. Contact the TAP/TAP Duty Manager at 403-679-9269 to inform them of a potential emergency.

Initial Response to an Incident

1. Take charge of the situation.
2. Manage the risk of further exposure to hazards for the group and others.
3. Assess the situation and determine if the accident site is safe.
4. Determine the number and location of the injured.
5. Assess injuries and apply first aid and continue to monitor vital signs. Take note anyone refusing first aid assistance.
6. Complete records and reports required to maintain patient care (e.g. patient assessment form).
7. Provide food and shelter to injured and others if necessary.
8. Secure the scene and move the injured to a safe location to protect them from further hazards or complications as necessary.
9. In the event of a fatality, leave the scene and the deceased undisturbed until instructed otherwise by the RCMP. Cooperate with authorities. Do not conceal or alter facts.
10. Consider a self-evacuation plan (this should be carefully assessed in remote areas or in the case of serious injuries).
11. Consider the need for outside help and call for assistance if necessary (do not initially send people for help without careful consideration).

12. Collect witness statements, record the time of the incident, the individuals involved, and actions that were taken. Avoid speculation or determining fault. Take photos, videos, measurements, etc. Take note of witnesses that decline to make a statement.

If Outside Help is Needed

1. Prepare a communication message for outside help, including essential information (location, time of incident, site description, number of injuries).
2. If communicating via cell phone or radio, indicate it is an emergency call.
3. If out of cell phone and radio range, use Garmin inReach device to trigger an SOS.
4. Communicate the nature of the emergency and that help is needed.
5. State your intentions and request instructions.
6. Give your name, location, and phone number in case communications fail.
7. Take note of whom you are communicating with and how to re-establish contact if communications.
8. If there are no outside communications, make a plan to get to help, (route out, nearest access to communications, and emergency contacts). Manage the risk of further exposure to hazards for the group and others.

Appendix D – Peer Advocate Support Checklist

[Online Version](#)

Response to interview requests from RCMP, Coroner or Medical Examiner: <input type="checkbox"/>
Communication with those involved in the incident and family members: <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(See Communicating with Survivors section of CIMP)</i>
Submission of ACMG Incident Report for Members and response to inquiries: <input type="checkbox"/>
Reporting to non-ACMG LIP insurers and response to inquiries: <input type="checkbox"/>
Reporting the incident to WorkSafeBC/Alberta OHS: <input type="checkbox"/>
Reporting the incident to ACMG Personal Accident Insurance (PAI) providers: <input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare for and respond to media requests: <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(See Incident Communication section of CIMP)</i>
Following return-to-work guidelines: <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(See Return-to-Work Guidelines section of CIMP)</i>
Ensuring business continuity: <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(See Ensuring Business Continuity section of CIMP)</i>

Appendix E – Media Request Contact Log

[Online Version](#)

Media Request Contact Log	
Media Request: <i>(Name of Story)</i>	Date Received:
Reporter Name and Media Outlet: <i>(Include Contact Details)</i>	Sensitivity:
Deadline:	ACMG Spokesperson:
Context and Issue	
<i>(Describe the story and provide context)</i>	
ACMG Member Notification	
<i>(List the ACMG members who need to be notified of this story)</i>	

Appendix F – Media Messages for Critical Incidents

<p>Narrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our immediate concern is for the physical and psychological well-being of everyone involved. • An ACMG member's first priority is managing risk to a reasonable level. 		
<p>Key Message 1 (Caring)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our immediate concern is for the physical and psychological well-being of everyone involved. 	<p>Key Message 2 (Action)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are aware that a _____ accident occurred and we're doing our best to find all the facts. • Once all the facts are known we will publicly release the results of our review. 	<p>Key Message 3 (Perspective)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ACMG member's first priority is managing risk to a reasonable level for themselves, their clients, and students. To achieve goals, the risk of negative outcomes cannot be eliminated, and accidents can still happen.
<p>Supporting Fact 1.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACMG has a Critical Incident Response Plan in place with a team of people focused on supporting those involved. • <i>[Incident Commander]</i> will be your main contact as the situation unfolds and we learn more. 	<p>Supporting Fact 2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACMG has a Critical Incident Response Plan with a team of people focused to review what happened. • <i>[Incident Commander]</i> will be your main contact as the situation unfolds and we learn more. 	<p>Supporting Fact 3.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain travel involves hazards that have varying levels of uncertainty such as complex terrain, changing weather, group dynamics, other groups, and wildlife encounters. The risks associated with these vary, which guides assess and manage to stay within a reasonable level of risk.
<p>Supporting Fact 1.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team is trained to provide support and services to those involved through this crisis. • These include a review of the incident as well as interfacing with insurance, lawyers, counselors and media. 	<p>Supporting Fact 2.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACMG reviews facts surrounding all critical incidents involving our members. • We look at all contributing factors in order to understand what happened and why. 	<p>Supporting Fact 3.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is always risk in mountain travel. • Time is spent with clients and students in advance so they have a reasonable understanding of potential risks and how they may be managed.
<p>Supporting Fact 1.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team will help our member(s) navigate all the steps that lie ahead. • Critical incident support will also be offered to guests who were impacted by the incident. 	<p>Supporting Fact 2.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal will be to use the learnings from this review to improve upon our best practices for risk management in mountain environments. 	<p>Supporting Fact 3.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACMG members are trained and assessed to the highest standards in the world with respect to risk management. • The ACMG Code of Conduct requires that our members use these risk management skills to hold paramount the safety of their clients and students and, in so doing, reasonably manage foreseeable risks.

Appendix G – Media Lines for General Inquires

<p>Narrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) is an association of highly trained professional guides and climbing instructors. • Clients hire ACMG Members to achieve certain goals they cannot or do not want to take on themselves or in a recreational setting with peers. 		
Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ACMG's mission is to protect the public interest in mountain travel and climbing instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACMG Members are trained in Risk Management which is the process of identifying, assessing and avoiding hazards and minimizing risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACMG Members are also trained in Risk Communication which is the exchange of information, advice and opinions about the potential hazards, uncertainties, and risks individuals and groups may face in a given activity.
Supporting Fact 1.1	Supporting Fact 2.1	Supporting Fact 3.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We develop and administer rigorous standards for certification and professional conduct and are the only certification standard in Canada recognized by the International Federation of Mountain Guide Associations (IFMGA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal is to reduce risk to an acceptable level for those involved in a given activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This dialogue, between guides and clients or instructors and students, enables both to make informed decisions about risks they are willing to accept.
Supporting Fact 1.2	Supporting Fact 2.2	Supporting Fact 3.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We aid in the professionalism of our members through public advocacy and program delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the time, this is possible; sometimes, it is not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is paramount for guides, instructors, clients, students and other stakeholders to reasonably understand the risks involved in an activity and their own acceptance of that risk.
Supporting Fact 1.3	Supporting Fact 2.3	Supporting Fact 3.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We train and assess future guides and instructors to the highest standards of risk management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in mountain travel and mountain adventure activities must involve the acceptance of risk in order to achieve certain goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This understanding is achieved through honest, clear and candid two-way communication between the guide or instructor and their group.

Appendix H – Media Interview Guidelines

- 1) Communicate with the media. Talk to them as well as listen to them. During a crisis, one may learn a great deal from the media that can be useful in further dealing with the crisis.
- 2) Avoid antagonizing the media. A brusque tone at a press conference, during a phone call, or elsewhere can affect future relationships with an individual or other media who may hear the conversation.
- 3) Consider how the information released to the media may affect other organizations, agencies, businesses or individuals. If something is going to be said that may result in the media calling others, give advance notice.
- 4) When talking to the media, be sure to give credit to other organizations, agencies, businesses and individuals, working on the crisis.
- 5) If new information regarding the crisis is acquired, reach out to the media, be proactive.
- 6) Don't make false or misleading statements, be honest.
- 7) Have some key messages to fall back on to avoid the "no comment" response. For example:
 - "We know there was an incident, and our immediate concern is for the well-being of everyone involved."
 - "This isn't something that involved our members, so a better place for you to seek comment may be *Name of Organization*."
 - "We remind recreational backcountry skiers to be prepared and know the avalanche conditions before they head out. There are a number of sources of information people can access, and we're happy to provide those to you."
 - "The incident is under review and the information you are asking for is not yet available."
- 8) The appropriate response to "what if" or hypothetical questions is, "That is a hypothetical question, and I can't speculate."
- 9) On TV and with print media, time can be taken to answer questions. On the radio, questions should be answered more quickly so as not to leave "dead air".
- 10) Speak simply and succinctly. Be brief and to the point. Reduce complex matters to simple sentences.
- 11) Speak in short sentences. Do not ramble.
- 12) Every question does not need to be answered. Be prepared to say, "I don't have that information at this time, but I'll try to get an answer and call you back."
- 13) Don't speak "off the record", there is no such thing.
- 14) Always assume conversations are being recorded.
- 15) Look for ways to deflect a question that is difficult to answer. Move the question back to a key message or media line. "I don't want to speculate, but it's important to remember that there is only one internationally recognized guide certification in Canada."



Appendix I – News Conference Guidelines

- 1) When notifying the media of news conferences or availabilities, be sure to define what kind of event it is. News conferences are held to announce something for the first time. Press availabilities are held simply to make individuals available to answer questions.
- 2) Don't call unnecessary news conferences or availabilities. If it's not worth their time, the media will only be annoyed.
- 3) Check to see what else is happening in the organization or in the community before scheduling a press conference.
- 4) Consider whether other organizations and agencies should know a news conference is planned. Others may wish to attend or participate in the event.
- 5) When holding a news conference, inform the media in advance details of what will be announced.
- 6) Gauge the size of the crowd carefully when reserving a room; better to have too much than too little space. Make sure microphones, chairs, lighting and water are in place at least 30 minutes prior to the event.
- 7) Decide who will maintain control at the news conference, who will decide where cameras are set up, and who sits where.
- 8) If you are going to set restrictions on an event, such as limited photo access, try to put the restrictions in writing and communicate to the media at least 24 hours in advance.
- 9) Decide on the format in advance. Who will introduce the speakers, who will decide when the question and answer period starts and ends, and other details. Try to plan the length of the news conference, but be flexible.
- 10) Decide in advance whether handouts are needed. If the speaker is giving a talk for which there is a text, it may be better to wait and hand out material after the talk, so the media will stay and listen. However, it's advisable to tell the media if a text of the speech will be provided, so they are not irritated by having to take unnecessary notes.
- 11) Consider the time of the news conference. If you want to make the noon, 6 p.m. or 11 p.m. TV and radio news, you need to allow time for crews to travel and edit tape.

Appendix J – Common Questions and Key Messages

Following are some common questions asked by the media with some speaking points and sample answers. You need not use this verbatim, but the goal is to try and ensure that we present a consistent message to the media on certain common themes—so use the following as a guideline when composing your responses.

Is _____ a member of the ACMG, and what certification does do they hold?

- **Before you know FOR SURE who was involved:** I don't have confirmation of who was involved in the accident, so can't release any information at this time.
- **After you know FOR SURE who was involved:** Provide name and certification level of uninjured member(s) if asked.

How are guides trained?

- ACMG members are highly trained and rigorously assessed: The ACMG is the only IFMGA-recognized certification standard in Canada.
- Comment only about the ACMG TAP training and certification. "It is inappropriate for me to comment on other training or certification programs. I have/can get contact information for the organization that trains and certifies guides from...."
- To attain an ACMG-recognized certification, people apply to ACMG Training and Assessment Program (TAP) to enter the guide/instructor training program. There they are screened to ensure they have adequate personal skills, prerequisite training (e.g. 1st aid and/or avalanche), and an aptitude for guiding and/or instructing.
- In the Mountain stream, they then attend advanced guide training courses
- With a positive recommendation from the training, they then attend an Apprentice Guide Exam. Successful candidates are certified to work as an apprentice under the supervision of experienced and fully qualified guides.
- After a period of apprenticeship, during which they may need to upgrade or obtain further pre-requisite training (e.g. avalanche and/or 1st aid) they apply to TAP to challenge a final Guide Exam. Successful candidates are certified to work without supervision.
- All of above required for each of specialty of rock/alpine/ski.
- Rock, Alpine, and Ski training and certification is required for Mountain Guide certification.
- Average time required to attain a specialty guide certification = 3 yrs in the ACMG program.
- Average time required to attain a mountain guide certification = 5-7 yrs in the ACMG program.

Would you have gone where they went?

- Avoid answering this question directly.
- "Guides make decisions according to on-site conditions, information obtained from other guides, weather, clients, and various other factors. EACH DECISION is unique and largely independent. It's impossible for anyone to say with certainty that they would or would not have done what another person did in a given situation. I would have to have been there at the same time and under the same circumstances to make my own decisions."

Why did the guide go where they went at that time?



- Discuss generally how guides are TRAINED to make decisions and assessed in their abilities to make them. DO NOT GET SUCKED IN to discussing the actual incident or decision made by the guide in question.
- Guides receive both technical skills training and training in decision making which includes the effect of human factors.
- In the exam process, guide candidates' decisions are constantly assessed and reviewed in the field by a team of highly experienced examiners who come to a consensus decision about whether the candidate's **decision making process** and **final decisions made in the field** fit within the framework of common practice for our profession.
- Guides are taught and assessed on a well-defined process that helps determine actual decisions: guide meetings (numerous inputs regular basis, documentation and checklists, in a team/with peers etc.
- Guides are taught to obtain and share information on a regular basis to help in decision making.
- Guides are taught to review their decisions on a regular basis so they can learn from the past and improve in the future.

How do guides obtain and share information?

- Guides who work in a skiing-related operation that is an INFOEX subscriber may have access to daily reports from a variety of winter operations. I can give you the name and number of the Canadian Avalanche Association where you can get more information about the INFOEX system.
- Many of our members participate in the Informalex, which is an internet and email based information exchange system through which guides can exchange both formal and informal data about travel/climbing/skiing conditions, avalanche activity and other hazards, weather, and route information.
- The Mountain Conditions Report (MCR) consists of site-specific observations posted for public use by our members. These provide valuable localized information for all to use.

Can the public get access to the Informalex?

- The Informalex is not open to the public. Discussion and comments are often opinion-based and do not necessarily reflect the beliefs of the ACMG.
- The Mountain Conditions Report is information that ACMG members provide to the public on a volunteer basis. It includes much of what the Informalex contains but in less technical language.
- In addition to reports directly from guides who have been in the field, weekly summaries prepared by experienced guides are issued during the high seasons for climbing.
- The MCR was founded by the ACMG. In partnership with Arc'teryx, we have improved the technical platform and are working to make it an international information-sharing tool.



Should they have been doing what they were doing? Isn't the risk too high to justify?

- Guides assess and manage risk—they do not and cannot eliminate all hazards and risks.
- Our guests hire guides to attain objectives they cannot or do not want to take on themselves or in a recreational setting with peers:
 - The guide's first priority is managing risk to a reasonable level for themselves and their clients. To achieve goals, the risk of negative outcomes cannot be eliminated, and accidents can still happen. Guides share the risk with their clients.
 - Mountain travel involves hazards that have varying levels of uncertainty such as complex terrain, changing weather, group dynamics, other groups, and wildlife encounters. The risks associated with these vary, which guides assess and manage to stay within a reasonable level of risk.
 - Time is spent with clients in advance so they have a reasonable understanding of potential risks and how they may be managed
- Guides and their guests see significant rewards from both the attempt to reach and the attainment of sometimes difficult and risky goals.

Why didn't the guide follow the "rules" that are taught on any basic avalanche course?

- Basic avalanche courses are meant for recreationists without a large depth of knowledge. At the professional guide level, there is a higher depth of knowledge. ACMG guides are taught about decision quality to make more nuanced decisions under uncertainty.
- There are many more and varied factors that have to be taken into consideration when guiding a group of guests than when recreating with a group of friends, so the actions a guided group takes are often different than a recreational group.
- The ski guiding procedures used by ACMG guides are common, accepted professional practices, not only in Canada but around the world in countries where we have partner Associations in the IFMGA.

How do guides deal with minors?

- The ACMG recommends to our members who take minors into the mountains that they be familiar with and apply Parks Canada's guidelines for custodial groups. Even though these rules are currently aimed at winter activities in avalanche terrain, the principles can often be applied in other situations.
- I can give you contact information for Parks Canada who can provide more information or go to [www...](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

Does the ACMG have a process to investigate accidents?

- The ACMG has a Critical Incident Management Policy that describes the ACMG's response to accidents..
- The also ACMG cooperates with the RCMP and the Coroner's Offices or Medical Examiner, often providing experts to investigate in the field.

Does the ACMG have a process to deal with complaints, and/or discipline members?

- We have a Code of Conduct, a Conduct Review Committee and a process for handling complaints that follows the principles of natural justice.
- Many situations are better resolved through education and negotiation but the Conduct Review Committee is empowered to discipline members.

How does the ACMG feel about the Canadian Ski Guide Association (CSGA)?

- The ACMG is pleased that Heli-Cat Canada recognizes both the ACMG and CSGA ski guiding certifications.
- For many years, the ACMG was in discussions with the CSGA about creating a single, unified ski guide training and certification program. To date we have been unable to reach consensus on this issue.
- The ACMG is the only internationally (IFMGA) recognized guide training and certification program in Canada.

How does the ACMG feel about the coroner's/ medical examiner's procedures for investigating avalanche accidents?

- The ACMG supports the coroner's/medical examiner's efforts to improve the investigation of commercial ski guiding accidents.
- The ACMG has offered the coroner/medical examiner our expertise and is prepared to assist them in the investigation procedures.

What about the fact that the coroner/medical examiner is hiring investigators who are not avalanche or guiding professionals?

- The ACMG supports the coroner service / medical examiner hiring whatever experts they feel have the credentials and expertise necessary to carry out a comprehensive investigation.
- The ACMG has offered its assistance as a resource for investigators of commercial ski guiding accidents.

Is the ACMG concerned about the guiding profession becoming legislated?

- As a stakeholder in this process, should the government ever feel legislation is required, the ACMG would welcome the opportunity to participate in developing appropriate legislation.

Appendix K – Media Relations Reminders

How to prepare for Broadcast Interviews

- Prepare a "talking paper" on the primary points.
- Anticipate questions—prepare responses.
- Practice answering questions.
- Cover controversial areas ahead of time.
- Know who will be doing the interview, if possible.
- Determine how much time is available.
- Audiences often remember impressions, not facts.

Do's and Don'ts During the Interview Process

- Do build bridges.
- Do use specifics.
- Do use analogies.
- Do use contrasts and comparisons.
- Do be enthusiastic and animated.
- Do be casual and likable.
- Do be a listener.
- Do be cool.
- Do be correct.
- Do be anecdotal.
- Don't fall for the "A or B" dilemma. Feel free to answer with "C" or go to a "Key Message".
- Don't accept "what if" questions.
- Don't accept "laundry list" questions.
- Don't go off the record.
- Don't think every question has to be answered.
- Don't speak for someone else (beware of the absent-party trap).



How To Handle Yourself During A TV Talk Show Interview

- Use a regular voice.
- If makeup is offered, use it.
- Sit far back in the chair, back erect, but lean forward to appear enthusiastic and force yourself to use hands. Camera frames face, use high hand gestures, if possible.
- Keep eyes on the interviewer, not on camera.
- Smile, be friendly.

How To Respond During A Newspaper Interview

- Obtain advanced knowledge of interview topics.
- Make sure you are prepared in detail; print reporters are often more knowledgeable than broadcast reporters and may ask more detailed questions.
- Begin the interview by making your major points in statement form.
- Try to maintain control of the interview.
- Don't let reporters wear you down.
- Set a time limit in advance.
- Don't get so relaxed that you say something you wish you hadn't.
- Avoid jargon or professional expressions.
- The reporter may repeat themselves in different ways to gain the information you may not want to give.
- Don't answer inappropriate questions; simply say it is "not an appropriate topic to address at this time," for example.
- Be prepared for interruptions with questions (it is standard practice for reporters to do that).
- If what you have to say needs to be "off the record", it's best not saying it at all.
- Remember, the interview lasts as long as a reporter is there, even if cameras, microphones and recording devices are off.

After The Interview

- You can ask to check technical points, but do not ask to see an advance copy of the story.
- Never try to go over the reporter's head to stop a story.
- Do not send gifts to reporters--it is considered unethical for them to accept them.

Appendix L – Incidents That Lead to Media Requests

The following are some general categories of incidents that commonly lead to the ACMG being contacted by the media:

1) Incidents involving commercial activities where the guide or instructor is a Member.	
2) Incidents involving commercial activities where the guide or instructor is not a Member but is a:	
a. CAA member	c. Visiting IFMGA member
b. CSGA member	d. Foreign, non-certified guide or instructor
3) Incidents involving quasi-commercial activities, that is, the guide or instructor is a paid staff member, but their primary profession is not guiding or climbing instruction. (e.g. A teacher in charge of a school field trip, camp counsellor, etc.)	
4) Incidents involving volunteer-led, non-commercial activities. (e.g. Scouts, Alpine Club of Canada, hiking clubs, etc.)	
5) Incidents involving recreational activities (peer groups with no formal leadership).	
6) The above general incidents might involve some of the following activities:	
a. Mechanized Skiing	g. Expedition Climbing
b. Ski Touring	h. Recreational Avalanche Courses
c. Ice Climbing	i. Professional Avalanche Courses or Exams
d. Mountaineering	j. Recreational Climbing or Mountaineering
e. Alpine Climbing	k. Guide Training Courses or Exams
f. Rock Climbing	l. Custodial Care Groups (e.g. Minors under the care of a paid leader who is not a guide)
7) The ACMG might be called upon to comment on some of the following specific types of incidents:	
a. Avalanche	e. Helicopter accident
b. Fall into a treewell	f. Rockfall
c. Fall while skiing	g. Icefall
d. Fall while climbing	h. Crevasse falls (roped or unroped, on skis or on foot)
8) The following are consequences that might elicit a media response:	
a. Any accidents involving children, especially minors in custodial care groups	
b. Serious or fatal injuries to a client or student under the care of a guide or instructor	
c. Serious or fatal injuries to a guide or instructor	
d. Multiple serious injuries or fatalities	

Appendix M – Responding to Media Requests

The ACMG is able to comment on or respond to media inquiries about the following items:

1. Membership	6. Informalex Member Email Forum
2. Training and Assessment Program	7. Mountain Conditions Report
3. Continuing Professional Development	8. Professional Decision-making and Judgement
4. Professional Practice Requirements	9. Legislation and Regulation of ACMG Members
5. Procedures for Conduct of Conduct Complaints	10. Mountain hazard and risk management

The ACMG is not able to comment on or respond to media inquiries about the following items:

Refer media to the <i>Canadian Avalanche Association</i> for information about:
1. Professional Avalanche Training
2. INFOEX Information Exchange System
3. Avalanche Accident Statistics
Refer media to <i>Avalanche Canada</i> for information about:
1. Public Avalanche Forecasts and Avalanche Conditions
2. Recreational Avalanche Course Standards
3. AST Instructor Qualification Requirements
Refer media to <i>Helicat Canada</i> for information about:
1. Commercial Mechanized Skiing Standards
2. Mechanized Ski Guide Certification Requirements
Refer media to the <i>Backcountry Lodges of British Columbia</i> for information about:
1. Backcountry Lodge Operating Standards
2. Backcountry Lodge Ski Guide Certification Requirements
Refer media to the <i>Commercial Trip Operator</i> for information about:
1. Incident Specifics
2. Local Conditions
3. Local Terrain
4. Company Requirements for Guide Certification Requirements
Refer media to <i>Parks Canada</i> for information about:
1. Permitting and Licensing Requirements in National Parks
2. Custodial Group Regulations in National Parks
3. The Avalanche Terrain Exposure Scale (ATES)
Refer media to <i>Alberta or BC Parks</i> for information about:
1. Permitting and Licensing Requirements in Provincial Parks
2. Custodial Group Regulations
Refer media to <i>BC Land Tenure Branch</i> for information about:
1. Tenure, Permitting, and Licensing Requirements on BC Crown Lands