

CANADIAN AVALANCHE CENTER (CAC) SILENCE ABOUT THE CAC FLOYER REPORT

The CAC learned about our initial research demonstrating serious flaws with the Avaluator's prevention values in March 2008. Coincidentally, immediately, following the report on our research in the Red Deer Advocate (http://www.albertalocalnews.com/reddeeradvocate/news/local/An_avalanche_of_trouble.html), the CAC stopped publishing the CAC Board of Directors minutes on their website (see http://www.avalanche.ca/MemberServices_Information_BOD, accessed on January 9, 2009; the last BOD Meeting Minutes published are from March 10, 2008)

The CAC commissioned the Floyer Report shortly thereafter in July 2008. Dr. Floyer completed his report in September 18, 2008 (CAC Floyer Report).

Before August 5, 2008, we submitted the full text of our two most recent reports on the Obvious Clues to International Snow Science Workshop. Dr. Haegeli was a member of the Papers Chairs, and had immediate access to our ISSW 2008 papers (i.e., Uttl, Henry, & Uttl, 2008; Uttl, Uttl, & Henry, 2008)

According to Clair Israelson, Executive Director, CAC, on August 6, 2008, Drs. Haegeli, Jamieson, and Floyer (the author of CAC Floyer Report) met at the University Calgary "to explore options for developing a scientifically credible 'made in Canada' decision framework to replace the OCM in a future version of the Avaluator."

According to Clair Israelson, our research prompted a meeting between the CAC, National Search and Rescue Secretariat, and Parks Canada officials in Ottawa held on August 13, 2008. As a result of this meeting, the ADFAR 2 project has been amended to allocate more funds to the Avaluator projects to develop a "made-in-Canada" replacement for the Obvious Clues Method to be used in the future versions of the Avaluator. We presume the new research team that the CAC charged with the development of the new prevention values for the Avaluator may be Drs. Haegeli, Jamieson, and Floyer.

According to Clair Israelson, the CAC Board of Directors met on September 21st, 2008, reviewed CAC Floyer Report, and despite evidence that the Obvious Clues prevention values are grossly inflated, the CAC Board of Directors decided to continue to maintain that "public safety would not be compromised and that the Avaluator should continue to be used while the 'made in Canada' replacement for the OCM is developed."

On September 26, 2008, we presented our findings at International Snow Science Workshop 2008, Whistler, held from September 21 to 27, 2008. Session Chair, Dr. Karl Birkeland had to stop accusations leveled against us and stated: "Bob [Uttl] presented his results here professionally..."

Within 30 minutes following our presentation, Mr. Rob Rohn, Vice-President, CAC, made the public statement in which he expressed the CAC continued support for the Avaluator. Mr. Rohn concluded: "As such the CAC believes that even if it isn't perfect, the Avaluator is an effective tool for enhancing public safety in Canada and that in some role is better with it than it is without."

Mr. Rohn mentioned nothing about the CAC Floyer Report and its findings, conclusions, and recommendations even though as Vice-President, the CAC, he must have known or ought to have known that the CAC Floyer Report largely supported our criticisms, conclusions, and recommendations, including the recommendation not to publish the inflated prevention values in future printings of the Avaluator (the BOD Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2008 meeting are not available on the CAC website). Mr. Rohn mentioned nothing about the CAC persuading National Search and Rescue Secretariat to allocate more funds to the development of a tool that was supposed to be developed originally. No one else from the CAC present in the audience mentioned anything about CAC Floyer Report much less that it confirmed our criticisms. (text of Mr. Rohn's entire statement is available on www.docbob.ca)

For the record, the CAC never contacted us about our criticisms even though we contacted the CAA/CAC via email in May, 2008, and even though the CAC knew about our research. Dr. Floyer also did not contact us.

We discovered the existence of the CAC Floyer Report by chance on January 8, 2009 on the CAC website.

As recently as January 2009, Mary Clayton, Communication Director, CAC, interviewed by the media, continued to maintain that “[the Avaluator is] the best decision guidance tool available for amateur backcountry users”. We are concerned that Mary Clayton appears to have mentioned nothing to the media about the fact that two independent studies failed to replicate the Obvious Clues prevention values, that the CAC Board of Directors has decided not to print the future versions of the Avaluator with these inflated prevention values, and that current students of the Avalanche Safety Training courses are told not to take the prevention values in the Avaluator seriously.. (Risky Business, Red Deer Advocate, http://www.albertalocalnews.com/reddeeradvocate/news/local/Risky_business.html).

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