

MEDIA RELEASE

24th July 2009

MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE: Avalanche Advisory

After a long period of fine weather and relatively stable snowpack conditions, the weather has turned to a westerly pattern. This has transported significant amounts of snow in the Southern Alps forming slab avalanche conditions. Yesterday in Otago and today on a more widespread basis natural and human triggered events have release large avalanches that have run to valley floors. Reports of crown walls up to 3 metres in depth have been observed in the Mackenzie, in Mt. Cook village and at ski areas in the south island.

Mountain Safety Council avalanche forecasters have expressed concern and have placed the danger rating at 'HIGH'. This designation is defined as:

- 1.The snowpack is weakly bonded in most places.
- 2.Natural and human triggered avalanches are likely.
- 3.Backcountry skiing and travel should be restricted to low angled slopes; areas at the bottom of slopes may be hazardous.

Condition north of the Rakaia are forecast at 'CONSIDERABLE' with normal precautions advised.

MSC advises skiers, snowboarders, climbers and trampers to avoid backcountry travel until further notice. Up to date details about conditions can be found at www.avalanche.net.nz, MSC's public avalanche information website.

ENDS

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