

# Policy and Process for Reporting, Reviewing and Investigating Incidents and Near-Misses

## Policy

All incidents and near misses occurring on Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) trips and events must be reported to the ACC National Office using the online **incident and near-miss reporting form**. Section executives will receive copies of incident and near-miss reports pertaining to their section.

In addition to submitting the form, **serious incidents** on ACC trips and events (e.g. incidents that result in a fatality, disabling injury, or which are likely to result in media coverage) must also be reported immediately and directly to the Executive Director of the Alpine Club of Canada by the trip coordinator via email [ed@alpineclubofcanada.ca](mailto:ed@alpineclubofcanada.ca).

All incidents and near-misses will be reviewed and/or investigated as outlined in the process below.

All incident and near miss reports will be kept confidential. All identifying information will be removed from any documents that are made public.

## Purpose

The purpose of reviewing and investigating incidents and near-misses is to determine probable causes and contributing factors of the occurrence (incident or near miss), recommend improvements to reduce the likelihood of the occurrence happening again, and to share this knowledge with the general membership.

This document outlines:

- the different levels of review and investigation that may be conducted, and
- the process and responsibilities for each level of review and investigation.

National Office Staff, in conjunction with the Executive Director and the National Safety Committee, will determine what, if any, follow-up is required. Follow-up may include a formal investigation of the incident or near-miss.

The National Safety Committee will review incident and near-miss reports to identify any areas for improvement and lessons learned (if any). Recommendations and suggestions emerging from the Review will be compiled into an annual report to the Board, with supplemental reports produced as relevant to club safety. With approval of the board these reports will be shared with members and other relevant organizations.

## Definitions

**Accident** - see *Incident*

**Confidential** - Information provided on the incident report form will be kept private and will only be seen by those directly involved in the review and investigation of the occurrence.

**Event** - see *Trip*

**Incident** - Situation where an injury, illness, or behavioural or environmental event caused a disruption to an Alpine Club of Canada trip, or which occurred on a trip but are reported later. Incidents may involve one or more participants on the trip, may require outside assistance (e.g. emergency services), and/or may result in loss or damage to property. Incidents may present both safety concerns and concerns relating to the code of conduct([found here](#)). Incidents may range from minor to serious.

**Serious Incident:** Incidents that result in a fatality, disabling injury, or which are likely to result in a lawsuit and/or media coverage.

**Investigation** - Investigation is a formal process conducted by ACC management as it deems necessary, when requested by the Board of Directors, or when advised by the National Safety Committee. Few incidents are investigated; typically only serious incidents and those with a very high potential for learning may be investigated. Investigations are always documented in a report format. Types of investigation:

**Internal:** conducted and led by ACC members or staff as a delegated authority or an assigned responsibility.

**External:** empanelled by the ACC board or Executive Director and led by a non-ACC member and composed of majority non-ACC members. Used when neutrality or avoidance of conflicts of interest (or appearance thereof) are an overriding concern.

**Injury** - Physical or bodily harm that requires first aid or medical attention. Injuries can range in severity.

**Disabling Injury** - An injury that:

- Prevents the person from effectively performing all the duties connected with their regular life on any day subsequent to the day on which the injury occurred;
- Results in the loss of, or complete loss of the use of, a body member or part of a body member by an person;
- Results in the permanent impairment of a body function of a person.
- (e.g. broken limbs, concussion, major burns)

**Review** - All incidents and near-misses are reviewed for possible learning. Review is an expected task undertaken at or after the conclusion of any trip where an incident or near-miss of any magnitude occurs.

Types of review:

**Routine:** conducted at the level closest to the incident or near-miss: e.g. by the trip coordinator and by the National Safety Committee as part of a regular process. These are typically brief and documented in a few paragraphs or less via the **incident and near-miss reporting form**.

**Non-routine:** A non-routine review is one that requires some degree of follow up due to the severity of the occurrence, or due to missing or conflicting information. Follow-up will typically be conducted by a designated national office employee and will be documented in a report format. In some situations, a formal investigation may be requested.

**Near-miss** - An event that occurred during a trip which could have resulted in an incident, but in which harm was avoided due to preventative action or luck. Depending on the circumstances, the potential consequences of a near-miss can vary significantly. The near-miss would vary considerably in magnitude from a relatively minor near miss that results in a loss of time to near-miss that could have resulted in death or serious injury such as narrowly escaping rock fall or avalanche or, for example, a slip mid-crossing of a stream and total submersion.

**Occurrence** - Incident or near-miss

**Participant** - Any individual that has registered for, completed a Waiver, and participated in the ACC Event. Participants can be guests of ACC Members.

**Non-Participant** - Any individual that was involved in the Incident, but are not Participants. Non-Participants can be involved directly (e.g. dislodged a rock on a scramble that directly hits a Participant) or indirectly (provided assistance after the fact).

**Trip** - This applies to all trips and events organized by the Alpine Club of Canada or ACC sections. Trips commence when Participants arrive at the designated meet-up location (or when the participant joins up with the group), and ends when all return to the same point, unless any individuals have indicated to the trip leader/organizer/coordinator of their departure prior to this point.

**Trip Coordinator** - a volunteer or paid professional responsible for organizing and/or leading the trip on which the incident or near-miss occurred

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Trip Coordinator:

- Respond to the incident and near miss as appropriate during the trip (e.g. by providing first aid or summoning external assistance)
- Submit online Incident and Near-Miss Reporting Form as soon as possible
- In the case of a serious incident, notify the Executive Director immediately by emailing [ed@alpineclubofcanada.ca](mailto:ed@alpineclubofcanada.ca). Do **NOT** interact with the media or discuss the event with anyone.
- Let trip participants and others involved know that they can also complete the online Incident and Near-Miss Reporting Form if they would like
- Participate in the follow-up process as requested

### Participant:

- Participate in the follow-up process as requested

### National Office Staff

- Triage all Incident and Near Miss reports as they are received: routine review, follow-up required, formal investigation required.
- Acknowledge receipt of the incident report within 5 business days.
- Inform the Executive Director, National Safety Committee and Local Section Executive of the Occurrence.
- Conduct follow-up and investigation as required
- Prepare reports for incidents and near-misses requiring follow up or investigation (in the case of an external investigation, the investigator will prepare the report)

- Prepare an annual safety report detailing the number and type of occurrences, along with suggestions for improvements to safety.

### **National Safety Committee**

- Review occurrences on a monthly basis to provide guidance and oversight on triage, monitor trends, and provide suggestions for improvements to safety.
- Act in an advisory capacity for incidents requiring follow-up or investigation
- Review incident reports and the annual safety report before these documents are shared with the Board
- Prepare a precis of selected occurrences, including lessons learned and suggestions for improvements to safety, for sharing - with approval of the board - with ACC members and Accidents in North American Climbing

### **ACC Board of Directors**

- Approve any documents to be shared publicly
- Approve new or updated safety policies as recommended by the National Safety Committee
- May request a formal investigation for any occurrence

## **Incident and Near-Miss Reporting Process**

Following an incident or near-miss on a trip, the **Trip Coordinator** (and any Participant who chooses to do so) will report the incident or near-miss **as soon as possible** to the National Office using the online reporting form located <https://alpineclubofcanada.ca/mountain-safety/>. A printable document will be available on the same webpage and can be emailed to [safety@alpineclubofcanada.ca](mailto:safety@alpineclubofcanada.ca). The report should contain as much information as possible. If available, photos and additional documents can be uploaded.

**IMPORTANT: In the case of a serious incident the Executive Director of the Alpine Club of Canada must be notified immediately.** Authorities may be notified and anonymous Mountain Information Network (MIN) reports can be submitted to support public safety. **Do NOT make any comments to the media.**

The designated National Office Staff person will be notified as soon as the online report is submitted. Once the report has been received by the national office, the designated staff person will review the report and determine what, if any, follow up is required. In cases of uncertainty, the designated staff person will consult the Executive Director and/or National

Safety Committee for input. Incidents and near misses will be reviewed according to the relevant process outlined below:

1. [Routine review process](#)
2. [Follow up required](#)
3. [Formal investigation](#)

The designated National Office Staff person will email the person who submitted the report to acknowledge that the report has been received and inform you of any follow-up. If the occurrence took place on a section trip, the designated National Office Staff person will also provide a copy of the incident and near-miss report to the local section executive.

## Routine Review Process

Incidents and near-misses that have been well managed and well documented may not require any follow up. These occurrences will be recorded to understand trends and may lead to general recommendations for improving safety practices.

There are a wide range of relatively minor incidents and near-misses that may occur relatively frequently and which are resolved with only minor disruptions to the trip. These may include, but are not limited to minor injuries (e.g. minor cuts, sprains, blisters), gear failure, getting lost, etc. More significant near misses and incidents that are well managed and well documented may also be reviewed according to the routine review process.

For incidents and near misses where a routine review process will be applied the designated National Office Staff person will:

- Review and consolidate all submitted reports associated with the occurrence.
- Add the occurrence to the monthly incident and near-miss report for review at the next National Safety Committee meeting. This report will include the number and type of incidents and near-misses that occurred.

The National Safety Committee will, on a monthly basis, review recent incidents and near misses to:

- Provide oversight and guidance on how incidents and near misses should be triaged, and
- Identify emerging trends, lessons learned and/or suggestions for improving safety. These will be included in the annual safety report.

On an annual basis, National Office Staff will prepare an annual safety report for the board describing the number and type of incidents and near-misses that occurred and suggestions

for improving club safety. This report will be reviewed by the safety committee and shared with the board on an annual basis.

A precis of one or more occurrences, including lessons learned and suggestions for improvements to safety, may be prepared and - with board approval - shared with ACC membership.

## Process for follow-up and review

Some incidents and near-miss reports may warrant follow-up. Follow-up may be required if forms are incomplete, if multiple reports of the same incident provide conflicting information, or if the occurrence is of a more serious nature.

If incident or near-miss report warrants additional follow up (including, potentially, a formal investigation), the designated staff person will notify the National Safety Committee and Executive Director immediately to determine the extent of follow-up required. The designated National Office Staff person will keep the National Safety Committee informed of the follow up process. The National Safety Committee may act in an advisory capacity during the follow-up process.

The follow up process is iterative. Any of these steps can be revisited as many times as needed. As additional information emerges, it may become prudent to elevate the follow-up process to a formal investigation.

The staff person responsible for following up with the incident or near-miss may reach out to any members/trip participants and section executives involved with the occurrence to obtain additional information and to connect those involved with resources and support. This will be done as soon as possible to avoid memory distortion.

The staff person responsible for following up with the incident or near-miss will prepare a brief report outlining the occurrence. The report will include:

- Trip details,
- A chronological sequence of events leading up to and following the occurrence,
- Potential factors contributing to the occurrence, and
- And any other factual information relevant to the occurrence.

This report will be shared with the National Safety Committee for the purpose of identifying lessons learned and suggested improvements to policy/process. Suggestions for improvements to policy/practice will be integrated into the report by National Office Staff.

The report will be shared with the Board as part of the annual safety report or, if warranted, in a special report.

A precis of the incident or near-miss, including lessons learned and suggestions for improvements to safety, may be prepared and - with Board approval - shared with ACC membership.

## Formal Investigation Process

Serious incidents and those with a very high potential for learning may be investigated formally. A formal investigation may be conducted internally or externally. The process that will be used to conduct a formal investigation will be shared with the National Safety Committee, Trip Coordinator, and Participants.