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Follow-up meeting after IKAR

IKAR - International Commission for Alpine Rescue - held its delegate assembly in Coylumbridge, Scotland, in October 2003. As usual, the Norwegian Red Cross arranged a follow-up meeting where the Norwegian delegates reported from the assembly. Among the topics: There may have been a tendency in IKAR to downgrade accident prevention in relation to "direct" rescue work. It now appears, however, that accident prevention among rescue workers will be a main theme. A surprising number of rescue worker accidents were reported at the assembly.

After the Matterhorn accident in July 2003 the mountain was "closed". This raises the question: Who has the authority to close and to reopen a mountain? Who has the responsibility for route safety? Who pays?

The IKAR avalanche commission identifies and describes avalanche risk factors in order to make rescue workers able to recognize danger in time.

A Norwegian avalanche base is available on Internet, with maps and description of all types of avalanches.

The IKAR air rescue commission reported a large number of accidents in hoisting from ground to helicopter.

After the reports from the IKAR assembly some other presentations were made in the follow-up meeting. Frostbites are always a relevant topic in alpine rescue work. Danger signals, symptoms and outcome were dealt with. Amputation of fingers or toes often leads to psychological problems because the persons involved often are extreme sporters who have been depending on all fingers and toes.

The author presented the Norwegian Cave Rescue Service (NGRT). Apparently, the talk was of interest - many had never before heard of this service. The NGRT registration of near-accidents was much appreciated.