

WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF
Science City Davos

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International Snow Science Workshop (ISSW) coming to Europe for first time

The foremost event for snow and avalanche professionals, the International Snow Science Workshop (ISSW), is taking place in Europe for the first time, starting September 27 and ending October 2, 2009. It is organised by the WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF and Science City Davos. During the workshop, more than 500 experts are gathering in Davos (Switzerland) to address topical issues in the field of snow and avalanches.

Originating in North America, the ISSW is making its debut in Europe this week. The aims of this popular conference are to provide a forum for experts in the various disciplines of snow and avalanche science, foster knowledge sharing between practitioners and researchers and illuminate problems of practical relevance. More than 500 speakers and participants from all over Europe and overseas are travelling to Davos to attend the event, including mountain guides, representatives of safety authorities, engineers and researchers in a variety of specialist fields. They will be addressing a broad array of topics, such as avalanche formation, warning and rescue, education and training, snow as a natural resource, construction methods in permafrost, and many more.

A large part of the workshop is dedicated to avalanche protection and risk management. In the densely populated Alpine region, where avalanches often endanger settlements and transportation routes, this issue is especially relevant. Special methods of triggering avalanches artificially will be demonstrated, alongside presentations of computer software for producing hazard maps. Among the other technology to be shown will be new portable sensors for recording avalanche flow properties. A special topic of the workshop will be the role played by the "human factor" – feelings, intentions and attitudes – in decision-making while skiing in avalanche prone terrain.

Dr. Jürg Schweizer, who is co-chairing the event, comments, "I am looking forward to a lively exchange among the experts that prompts provocative questions and pioneering solutions in the field of snow and avalanches."

The workshop runs for the entire week. On the evening of Wednesday, September 30, 2009, policy-makers and opinion-formers will engage in a public panel discussion to consider the current situation and the value of safety precautions in the light of the extreme winter of 1999. The discussion will be chaired by Swiss current affairs TV anchorman Urs Gredig.

Further information is available at www.issw.ch/index_EN

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