Field trip during a course: a snow profile provides information about the snow cover, which is important for assessing the avalanche danger.
TRAINING COURSES  Better decisions thanks to solid knowhow. Every year, SLF gives courses on snow and avalanches to professionals and other people.

Should a road be closed or a settlement evacuated because the avalanche danger is high? The avalanche services in mountain regions are often confronted with such questions. They are responsible for the safety of the local population and tourists. One of them is Franz Baumgartner, a mountain guide and member of the Avalanche Commission in Frutigen. For him to be able to identify dangerous situations and take the right measures, he needs experience and reliable knowhow.

SLF runs courses on snow and avalanches for avalanche service staff and their advisors, as well as for SLF observers. They are the ‘eyes’ of the avalanche warning service in the field and provide up-to-date information. The courses focus primarily on observation and assessment, addressing questions such as: What influence does the weather have on the avalanche danger? How does the danger develop? Are roads or buildings at risk?

In addition, SLF cooperates with external experts, such as media trainers or lawyers. Franz Baumgartner is convinced that: “The courses help me review and build up my knowhow, learn about new findings from avalanche research and improve my decision-making skills, especially in unclear avalanche situations”. In addition, the courses offer field experts the opportunity to discuss their work and experiences.

But it is not only the participants who benefit. Lukas Dürr, avalanche forecaster and course instructor, says: “Through personal contacts, we get more feedback from people familiar with local conditions about avalanches and the snow situation.” Such information is essential input in avalanche warning for producing a reliable avalanche bulletin.

For Lukas, however, it is also important to find out what problems course participants consider crucial and which situations are particularly difficult for them to assess. Not only can such topics then be taken up in subsequent courses, but they may also be relevant for research and for developing new tools for the avalanche warning service.

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