



## REQUIREMENTS FOR ORGANIZED YOUTH GROUPS ENTERING NATIONAL PARK BACKCOUNTRY

### Fact Sheet

- Following a number of tragic avalanche deaths in and around the mountain national parks, an independent panel of experts reviewed winter backcountry risk in the mountain national parks in 2003. A key recommendation from this review was that Parks Canada require custodial groups traveling in avalanche terrain to use a certified mountain or ski guide.
- A "Custodial Group" means an institutional group where at least one person is below the age of majority and that minor is not in the company of his/her parent. Institutional groups include but are not limited to School Groups, Scout/Guide Groups, Church Groups, Cadet Groups and Community Youth Groups.
- Effective April 01, 2004, custodial groups planning backcountry travel in avalanche terrain between October 15 and May 31 in Canada's mountain national parks (Mount Revelstoke, Glacier, Yoho, Kootenay, Banff, Jasper and Waterton Lakes National Parks) must obtain a permit signed by the park superintendent.
- Conditions of the permit stipulate that the custodial group retain the services of a certified mountain or ski guide, with a maximum group size of nine (9) persons, not including guides.
- Permits will be issued following approval of a custodial group permit application. Permit applications must be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the proposed trip's start date. A custodial group permit application form can be obtained from:
  - Mountain park web sites
  - Parks Canada information centres or administration offices
  - Parks Canada's office in Calgary, Alberta (#1550, 635-8<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.W.)
- Information on hiring a mountain or ski guide can be found on the web site of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides at [www.acmgguides.com](http://www.acmgguides.com).
- Parks Canada also recommends that mountain guides leading custodial groups not enter avalanche terrain unless they determine the avalanche danger to be moderate or lower.
- Guides must also provide pre-trip backcountry safety training to their group, which includes: checking to ensure everyone has the correct equipment; basic training in the use of this equipment; and reviewing the group's abilities to ensure everyone has the skills for the trip.
- Pre-trip planning advice and information for visits to the mountain national parks can be obtained from park visitor centres. Links to specific parks can be made from the national Parks Canada web site: [www.parksCanada.gc.ca](http://www.parksCanada.gc.ca)

March 2004