

In memoriam, Tomaz Vrhovec (1959 - 2004)

Yesterday afternoon, Dec. 29th 2004, our colleague Tomaz Vrhovec died in a snow avalanche in Julian Alps, south of Lake Bohinj - the lake at which we had the MAP meeting a couple of years ago. It is almost unbelievable...

We all know that Tomaz was not only a meteorologist, but also a mountaineer. He spent a great part of his free time in mountains. That explains why he devoted a lot of his research and professional work also to snow and avalanches. As a mountaineer he was also a delegate of Slovenia in the Council of UIAA - Union International des Associations Alpinistiques.

I believe that most of you know that Tomaz's research in the last year was devoted to intense precipitation in the region of precipitation maximum in Julian and Karnic Alps - the work that has been connected to Mesoscale Alpine Programme - MAP. But a great part of precipitation in mountains is of course in a form of snow. And Tomaz liked it very much - especially on skies in the virgin landscape high out there.

But maybe some of you do not know that for last five years or so Tomaz was systematically measuring the profiles of snow cover (digging, observing, taking samples, measuring water content) just there - in Julian Alps south of Lake Bohinj. Partly aiming to prove the measured precipitation amount - being highly uncertain when wind swirls the snowflakes around the gauges. Partly to explain the water balance (precipitation, evaporation, accumulation and runoff) what is not a simple task in a limestone terrain. And partly to study the stability of snow cover and to understand the avalanche danger. So it not surprising that he published almost 30 scientific, professional and popular articles on snow and avalanches. Half of these tried to educate the public how dangerous avalanches might be.

Who knows what was the motive of his last climb - again to inspect the degree of danger of fresh snow that covered deeply Julian Alps in last week...?

It is, and it will remain difficult to understand that Tomaz will no longer be with us. Our deepest sympathies with his wife, two teenager children, his mother and brother. We will miss Tomaz a lot.

Prof. Joze Rakovec, University of Ljubljana, Chair of Meteorology, December 30th, 2004



Tomaz at the ALATNET seminar in Kranjska Gora in 2002



Tomaz climbing