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## "Couldn't have managed without the avalanche warnings"

*From Styggevatn, Luster, April 2015. NGI provided avalanche warnings for Statkraft's construction site until late June. Photo NGI.*

**Today, NGI opens this winter's season for daily avalanche warnings to the public and private sector in avalanche prone areas all over Norway. NGI, the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, covers local and regional snow and avalanche information and distributes daily status reports and warnings to local communities and enterprises in the transport, energy and construction sector.**

“Without the avalanche warnings we could not have continual construction through the winter,” says Ivar Wiik, site manager of Govddesåga Power Plant, Beiarn municipality, just above the arctic circle in the county of Nordland.

A 15 km long road leads from the fjord up the Arstaddalen valley, towards the Saltfjellet mountains, where a new underground power plant is being built. This is the third winter with continuous work and daily traffic between the living quarters and the construction site along the avalanche prone road from fjord to mountain.

“All our people receive daily SMS reports and warnings from NGI, and they know the procedures for the various levels on the European Avalanche Danger Scale. In addition, they have taken part in NGI’s avalanche course,” explains Ivar Wiik.

When he was a boy, in the 1960s, he happened to be in the area and heard the noise when a disastrous avalanche hit the living quarters for the construction of the first power station. Four men were buried by the snow, and only three of them survived. Therefore, Mr. Wiik had no doubt that a system for snow and avalanche control would be crucial for the safety of the workforce at the present site.

“Avalanches are triggered high up on the mountainside, impossible to see from the road. Every winter, there are avalanches and the road is unsafe. So we could not have managed without daily reports and warnings,” explains Mr. Wiik.

NGI provides daily avalanche information for Jernbaneverket covering the Oslo - Bergen and Dombås – Åndalsnes railway lines. Likewise, avalanche warnings are provided for the public road administration in the Sunnmøre region on the western coast, covering all 200 major roads.

Other customers include Mesta road maintenance, 16 municipalities in the North of Norway, and the Lyse energy group in the Stavanger region.

### Avalanche research since 1973

NGI started its avalanche research and snow information services in 1973. A permanent research station is operated on the Strynefjell mountain. The warnings are based on all available information, including weather data and field observations from a network of local informants.

A staff of 15 people work with avalanche related topics at NGI, including seven specialists responsible for the daily warnings. Two experts are on duty at any given time.

The season for avalanche warnings normally goes from early December till mid-May, but can be extended when needed. In 2015, the last warnings were circulated in late June.

Six persons died in avalanches last winter; five in mainland Norway and one in the Svalbard archipelago.

**For more information:**

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The Norwegian Geotechnical Institute (NGI) is a leading international centre for research and consulting within the geosciences. NGI develops optimum solutions for society, and offers expertise on the behaviour of soil, rock and snow and their interaction with the natural and built environment.

NGI works within the markets Offshore energy; Building, construction and transportation; Natural hazards, and Environmental Engineering.

NGI is a private foundation with office and laboratory in Oslo, branch office in Trondheim, and daughter companies in Houston, Texas, USA, and Perth, Western Australia. NGI was established in 1953.

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