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Patrouille des Glaciers: security and innovation thanks to Swisscom

The world's toughest ski mountaineering race is held in extreme conditions – but security will be provided by Swisscom equipment installed along the 53-kilometre course. This year, for the sixth time, Swisscom will once again be guaranteeing the communication for the Patrouille des Glaciers, and its mobile networks will enable all participants and organisers to communicate come what may. Thanks to an innovative system of cameras developed by Swisscom's radio- and TV-broadcasting subsidiary Swisscom Broadcast, spectators can watch the race almost as if they were there. The 2016 edition of the Patrouille des Glaciers will take place from 19 to 23 April.

Because of the challenging conditions of the Patrouille des Glaciers, participants must be exceptionally well trained and motivated. The combination of the altitude, hugely demanding Alpine environment and extreme weather conditions test participants to the limits, both mentally and physically. But even the racers' excellent training and boundless determination can't influence one crucial factor of the course: security.

Emergency calls

For their own safety, it is essential that participants could be located and reached along the entire route from Zermatt or Arolla to Verbier. They are therefore given a small mobile phone developed specially to withstand the extreme conditions encountered during the race. This can also be used to make emergency calls. A simple tap on the emergency button not only connects a participant to the emergency services by phone but also automatically sends out an SMS containing his or her exact GPS coordinates. This provides the teams with even more security.

Seamless mobile communication along the entire route

Just like two years ago, Swisscom is setting up two temporary networks along the 53 kilometres course of the Patrouille des Glaciers. These wireless networks will both allow information on participants to be transferred and enable the organisers to communicate with each other via mobile phone.



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Swisscom is working closely with the Patrouille des Glaciers command and the Armed Forces Command Support Organisation to set up the communication networks. After all, setting up a temporary network in the Valais Alps is a major challenge rather than merely routine, even for Switzerland's leading telecommunications provider. The location of the race in the high Alps makes it harder to transport the equipment, which must also function reliably at all times, even at very low temperatures. Planning and preparing for the event therefore takes several months. About 20 military personnel assist the Swisscom specialists setting up the network on site. More than three tonnes of equipment – base stations, antennas, repeaters and other telecom equipment – is transported up into the mountains. During the race, 30 Swisscom specialists, some on site, others at a technical centre in Sion, will also be monitoring the two mobile networks so that teams can be helped quickly if necessary.

Closer to the action

This year, Swisscom innovation will enable spectators to follow the action live and almost as if they were onsite. A system of high-performance cameras developed by the teams at Swisscom's radio- and TV-broadcasting subsidiary Swisscom Broadcast will enable images of the race to be beamed out no matter what the conditions. The compact yet powerful equipment is attached to a robust, weather-resistant mast located at the top of the Rosablanche corridor, a particularly difficult stage that climbs up to 3,160 metres above sea level. Thanks to the Swisscom Patrouille des Glaciers app, spectators can follow the racers in real-time, almost as if they were actually there. Those who are not able to attend the event will be pleased to watch it on television. Indeed, a live broadcast of the race is planned on 23 April. Canal 9 will feature live coverage from Verbier with link-ups to the Rosablanche from 8.45 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., while the RTS is set to broadcast a live link-up during its 12.45 p.m. airing. Both broadcasts are only possible thanks to Swisscom's innovative solutions.

Safety: just as crucial for visitors

Swisscom is at pains to ensure everyone's safety; the objective at the heart of its activities in relation to this event. App users who get into trouble can therefore also count on the reliability of Swisscom services to call for help at the touch of a button. For this, Swisscom has enlisted the



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services of Uepaa, a Swiss start-up which developed the first outdoor security app that enables users to call the emergency services wherever they may be.

The Swisscom Patrouille des Glaciers app was downloaded more than 70,000 times in 2014 and won the gold medal in the Best of Swiss Apps 2014 awards. The app is available from the App Store and on Google Play.

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