

EMPLOYEE HANDOUT

Snow Sports Injury Reduction (Part 1 – All Employees)

Two-thirds of employee injuries happen while the employee is skiing or snowboarding!

Ski instructors and patrol may lift, carry, reach, bend, and push/pull equipment and people during their work. You may be dealing with guests that are new to snowsports or may be experiencing some challenges. Take some time to warm up before jumping into your regular activities. Although skiing and riding injuries may be thought of as inherent risk of the job, these injuries can be reduced in number and severity, and in many cases can be eliminated. The following tips are based on the most common injuries in the industry.

Examples of Risk Factors

- Collisions with other skiers/snowboarders
- Fatigue
- Lift use – loading, unloading, awareness

Safety Tips

Maintain your own health and wellness at all times. Stretch your muscles before your shift to warm up your body and prevent strains. Get plenty of sleep and stay physically fit for the job.

Ensure you have plenty of water at your worksite, and healthy foods options.

Maintain a good ski posture to reduce strain.

Stay within your ability and the type of snow you are most comfortable in.

Be aware of other skiers on the hill at all times and check for blind spots.

Watch for vehicle traffic on the hill. Listen and watch for snowmobiles and snowcats.

Use modern ski or snowboard equipment and keep it in good condition. Maintain your equipment – edges, wax and proper binding release settings.

Take regular breaks and rest. Extreme weather may require additional time.

Listen to your body – use caution when skiing after work to avoid strains and overexertion.

If you are legitimately exhausted, sick or otherwise unfit speak with your supervisor - in some cases there may be alternative duties available.

Common Injuries

- Knee
- Head
- Shoulder/Arm

If you are taking any type of medication, ensure that it will not interfere with your ability to perform your required duties (i.e. decrease alertness, increase drowsiness, etc.).

Know before you go! Get a detailed report on man-made snow or changing conditions prior to taking your class out on the hill. Early season unconsolidated sides may not be packed enough to hold skiers weight and the associated forces generated when skiing and snowboarding.

Additional Resources

- Your ski area policy and procedures.
- [Alpine Responsibility Code](#).
- [SkiRad](#) –Ski exercises. An app can also be downloaded from the app store.
- [Fit for Snow](#) – Health & Wellness program for the ski industry.
- WorkSafe BC – Helmets [OHS Guidelines G8.11 \(2\)-2](#).
- Safety Talk: Knee Injuries.
- Poster: “*Before you hit the slopes.*”
- Videos:
Injured worker: <https://youtu.be/yruBXg5k-EU>
- More Ski Area Safety Resources:
go2hr.ca/skisafety

Snow Sports Injury Reduction (Part 2)

Additional Safety Tips for Snow School Instructors and Patrol

-----Snow School Instructors -----

Common incidents: Getting hit by another skier (often student); incidents that occur while helping a fallen skier.

When stopping with a group ensure each person stops beyond & below the person in front of them.

Do not allow students to stop in blind spots or in the middle of runs.

When positioning yourself on the hill, have room to move out of the way of a student who loses control.

Keep a safe distance so students cannot grab onto you as they fall.

Teach students how to get up on their own to avoid back injuries from trying to help them. Adult students should not be lifted.

Use caution when skiing backwards to observe a class.

Set yourself and your students up to succeed. Start slow!

Ensure the terrain is suited to you, your class, and the progression that you are expected to teach. Gauge the ability and comfort level of your students before proceeding down any run.

Do not ski with student between your legs.

----- Patrol Section-----

Common incidents: Carrying loads, reaction while skiing/snowboarding.

Use headlamps when needed in early morning or late runs.

Use extra caution and consideration of routes when skiing with a toboggan (with or without a patient on board). Don't hesitate to ask for a tail roper when conditions dictate.

Carry only appropriate loads for you and limit the excess gear in your patrol pack.

For Code 2 or 3, the patroller does NOT have to ski as fast as they can to get to the patient. Plan your trip accordingly. Take into account your level of excitement, adrenaline, fatigue, ability, and the travel conditions. Be sure you understand the description of the location and know the route to take.

Work within your training, ability and authority. When you receive a call, anticipate what you may encounter. Consider whether you need additional assistance or whether you are the appropriate person to respond to the situation.

Assess the scene for potential hazards (e.g. are you in danger of being struck from above?).

When you are relaying directions to dispatch, inform them of any potential hazards en route.

Teamwork:

Discuss a major incident and/or common incidents that have happened in your department and ways to prevent or minimize the incident(s).

Do you have a morning warm up routine? Develop a regular practice of group or self-directed warm ups, and discuss food choices that will give you energy for your day! Is there a go-to food item in the cafeteria or local store?