

Naval Support Activity Monterey /
Naval Postgraduate School



SAFETY GRAM

29 September 2014

SKIING / SNOWBOARDING SAFETY

Background

California's mountains host an extensive recreational skiing and snowboarding industry. Approximately 30 resorts draw skiers and snowboarders from all over the world. Recently publicized deaths and injuries of resort guests and personnel have drawn public attention to the industry's safety policies and practices. The vast majority of the public is poorly informed about serious risks facing the customers as well as employees at California resorts. The ski industry has no uniform safety policies, procedures, or signage, and those safety practices that are in place vary from location to location. Increased snowboarding presents unique safety issues and the need for specific new precautionary measures.



SKIER SAFETY TIPS

- **Exercise in advance.** You will have much more fun on the slopes if you're in good shape. Work your way up to skiing by exercising year-round on a regular basis.
- **Use proper ski equipment.** Don't borrow equipment. Rent from a ski shop or the ski resort. When buying equipment, make sure your ski boots are fitted properly. In both cases, make sure your bindings are properly adjusted.
- **Wear a helmet.** Wearing protective headgear while skiing makes good sense. The most important tip to all parents and guardians is to give a child no choice but to wear a helmet.
- **Prepare for the weather.** Wear layers of clothes and wear a helmet liner, a hat, or a headband. Wear gloves or mittens. Bring an extra pair in case the first pair gets wet.
- **Get proper instruction.** Sign up for ski lessons (either individual or group). Even experienced skiers polish up their skills with a lesson now and then.
- **Wear goggles.** Wear ski goggles that fit properly around your helmet. If you wear eyeglasses, buy goggles that fit comfortably over your eyeglasses or consider prescription goggles.
- **Take a break.** If you're tired, take a break and rest for a while in the lodge. While you're resting, make sure you eat and drink enough. Skiing burns a lot of energy! When it's the end of the day, there's no need to try and get in a last run, or two, if you are tired. It's better to quit while you're ahead and save your energy for next time.
- **Ski with a friend.** It's always safer to ski with a friend so he can watch out for you and vice versa. Prearrange a meeting place in case you get separated and use walkie-talkies to stay in touch.
- **Respect your limits.** Do not ski trails that are above your skill level. Trails will be clearly marked as to what level skier they are appropriate for. On a similar note, stay in control of your skis and

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focus on the trail you are skiing. Accidents happen more readily when we are distracted.

- **Follow the rules.** Do not go off-trail. Obey posted trail closure and other warning signs. They are there for a reason. Remember that skiers who are in front of you, and below you, on the trail have the right-of-way.



SNOWBOARDING SAFETY TIPS

More people are hurt snowboarding than any other outdoor activity, accounting for a quarter of emergency room visits. When snowboarding, always keep in mind the following:

- **Use the right equipment.** Buy or rent good snowboarding boots, an all-purpose snowboard, a helmet and wrist guards.
- **Pick the right time and place to learn.** Take lessons from a trained instructor in good weather (when there is good visibility and it's not too cold). Pick a skiing area that allows snowboarders. Use slopes that are not crowded and have packed snow. Avoid icy slopes.

Prevent Snowboard Injuries

Most falls in snowboarding are on the hands, buttocks and head and cause only bruises and soreness. You can do a few things to reduce your chance of getting injured:



- **Protect your wrists.** Most snowboard injuries are to the wrists. Wear wrist guards made for snowboarding or in-line skating. Don't break your fall with your open hands. Hold your hands in closed fists while you snowboard so you won't be tempted to break your fall with an open hand.
- **Protect your head.** Though you probably won't hit your head first, the back of your head may hit the ground at the end of a fall if you land on your buttocks. These head injuries usually aren't serious, but you can end up with quite a headache. Wear a helmet when learning, racing and snowboarding on unmarked trails. (Collisions with trees cause some of the most serious injuries in this sport.)

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Proper Snowboard Equipment

- **Boots.** Most snowboarders recommend soft snowboarding boots to start. It's not as easy to balance or to get up after a fall in hard boots. Moonboots and hiking boots are dangerous. Wearing them puts you at high risk of broken bones and ankle injuries.
- **Snowboard.** Start with an all-purpose snowboard. Later, if you are ready to race or do tricks, you can try a specialty board. Specialty boards are harder to turn and balance on.
- **Protective equipment.** Always wear wrist guards made for snowboarders or in-line skaters. Most racers and professional snowboarders wear helmets, wrist guards, arm guards and shin guards, as well as customized protective gear.
- **Ski poles.** You may want to use ski poles at first while you learn how to snowboard. Some teachers believe this is a good way for beginners to avoid wrist injuries. Learn how to use ski poles from a teacher who knows this technique because snowboards are not designed to be used with ski poles.



FINAL NOTE...Curb alcohol consumption. Skiing and snowboarding require your total mental and physical presence, neither mixes well with alcohol or drugs.

Popular California Ski locations:

Mammoth.....	www.mammothmountain.com
Heavenly.....	www.skiheavenly.com
Big Bear Mountain.....	www.bigbearmountainresorts.com
Kirkwood.....	www.kirkwood.com
Squaw Valley.....	www.squaw.com
Bear Valley.....	www.bearvalley.com
Dodge Ridge.....	www.dodgeridge.com
Alpine Meadows.....	www.skialpine.com
Sugar Bowl.....	www.sugarbowl.com
Northstar.....	www.northstaratah.com