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Introduction

This booklet is intended to provide skiers and snowboarders with a brief overview of Ski Patrol operations in Australian ski resorts.

Quality of Recreational Use

A most important element of recreational quality is the provision of a safe environment for skiing and snowboarding activities.

An issue of critical importance to skiing and snowboarding guests is safety. Safety is important not only for visitors to the resorts, but for resort staff also. A Ski Patrol performs a key safety role within resort operations.

What is a Ski Patrol?

A Ski Patrol is an organisation that is primarily concerned with the safety of visitors to the Alpine areas. This includes providing first-aid, ski slope monitoring and maintenance, public education on safety, policing the ski/board area for reckless or dangerous behaviour and assisting with search and rescue.

Overview of Ski Patrol in Australia

Ski resorts generally have a core of professional Ski Patrollers (paid staff) and a group of volunteer ski patrollers.

Ski Patrollers can be identified by their distinctive uniform identifiable by a prominent cross displayed on their uniforms. They are highly trained to deal with injured skiers and boarders, both within the resort and beyond the resort. Whilst the provision of first aid assistance and rescue from the mountain remain the core activities of the Ski Patrol, the experience gained in

undertaking these functions has led to more pro-active assistance to skiers and snowboarders through risk management.

Management of risk is an integral part of Ski Patrol through logical and systematic methods of identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating, monitoring and communicating risks associated with alpine activities such as skiing, snowboard riding and tobogganing.

The four main functions performed by Ski Patrol are:

- provision of first-aid;
- mountain safety – risk management;
- incident Investigation;
- customer Service.

Provision of First-Aid

First-aid assistance can vary from minor injuries, such as, cuts and bruises, to injuries involving major trauma.

Provision of first-aid assistance also involves retrieval of injured and distressed skiers and snowboarders from the mountain and evacuation to the Medical Centre.

Modes of transport for injured guests can include akja and cascade/sleds, over snow vehicle and in the case of major trauma, over snow ambulance.

Mountain Safety – Risk Management

A safe mountain is achieved mainly through constant surveillance of the slopes for changing conditions and reckless and dangerous skiing and snowboard riding.

Functions performed by Ski Patrol essential to the safety of skiers and snowboarders include but are not limited to:

- marking potentially dangerous areas or obstacles (hazard marking);
- constantly monitoring and reporting hazards and snow conditions throughout the day;
- avalanche and cornice control;
- control of reckless or dangerous skiers and snowboarders;
- after the lifts close, "sweep" the runs making sure that no skiers and snowboarders remain on the mountain.

Incident Investigation

All incidents are recorded and whilst most incidents require little or no further action, some incidents need more attention.

Incident investigation covers a variety of situations that occur without regard to severity or fault. The process is fact finding and can include taking statements from persons involved or witnessing the event, photos and diagrams of the incident site.

Statistics and information obtained from these investigations enable ski resorts to take a pro-active approach to risk management.

Customer Service

Helping guests navigate their way around the resort and answering a variety of enquiries from guests form part of a Ski Patroller's day as well as, in the case of incidents, reassuring injured guests and locating and relaying information to friends and family.

Mountain Safety

On Slope Marking (Hazard Marking)

On slope marking mainly consists of using orange conduit hazard poles (HP's), rope line, nylon fences, tower pads, caution signs, closed signs and slow signs to effectively and safety warn skiers and snowboarders of hazardous or potentially unsafe areas.

Boundaries are identified by rope lines and boundary signs such as "RESORT AREA BOUNDARY NOT PATROLLED BEYOND THIS POINT".

Avalanche Control

Snow avalanches are usually considered to be an infrequent problem in Australian ski resorts.

However, the potential for snow avalanches exists wherever snow falls onto steep slopes. Therefore, some avalanche danger exists in most Australian ski resorts.

Cornice Control

Cornices are formed by wind driven snow. Ski Patrol usually control cornices by ski cutting. This is done by traversing backward and forward along a chosen line to cut a groove with the ski to weaken the overhanging lip.

Mountain Awareness

The objective of Mountain Awareness is to educate and urge skiers and snowboarders to understand and obey the Alpine Responsibility Code and any applicable Lift Usage Policy ensuring an enjoyable and safe experience.

Skiers and snowboarders who:

- ski or snowboard in a dangerous or reckless manner;
- jump in obstructed areas without an observer;
- ignore or do not comply with the Alpine Responsibility Code or a Lift Usage Policy;
- ignore instructions from lift staff concerning loading, riding and other company policies;
- remove hazard markers, for example, hazard poles (orange conduit), fences and ropes; or
- otherwise "disregard accepted courtesy practices", which make the visit of our guests an unpleasant one, may have their passes cancelled or suspended.

Resort guests can help to make the resorts a safer place to ski and board by obeying the Alpine Responsibility Code and the Lift Usage Policy, and by reporting any unsafe skiing, boarding or lift usage immediately to any mountain staff.

Alpine Responsibility Code

Regardless of how you enjoy your snow sport, always show courtesy to others and be aware that THERE ARE INHERENT RISKS in all snow recreation activities that common sense and personal awareness can reduce.

These risks include rapid changes in weather and surface conditions, collisions with other people as well as natural and artificial hazards such as rocks, trees, stumps, bare spots, lift towers and snowmaking equipment.

Observe the code below and share with others the responsibility for a great experience.

1. Know your ability and always stay in control and be able to stop and avoid other people or objects. It is your responsibility to stay in control on the ground and in the air. 6. Always use chairlift restraining devices and always use proper devices to prevent runaway equipment. Ensure your equipment is in good condition.
2. Take lessons from qualified professional instructors to learn and progress. 7. Observe and obey all signs and warnings. Keep off closed trails or runs and out of closed areas.
3. As you proceed downhill or overtake another person, you must avoid the people below and beside you. 8. Before using any lift you must have the knowledge and ability to load, ride and unload safely.
4. Do not stop where you obstruct a trail or run, or are not visible from above. 9. Do not ski, snowboard, ride a lift or undertake any other alpine activity if your ability is impaired by drugs or alcohol.
5. When entering a trail or run or starting off downhill, look uphill and give way to others. 10. If you are involved in, or witness an accident, alert Ski Patrol, remain at the scene and identify yourself to the Ski Patrol.

KNOW THE CODE ITS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FAILURE TO OBSERVE THE CODE MAY RESULT IN CANCELLATION OF YOUR PASS BY SKI PATROL OR OTHER AUTHORISED PERSONNEL

Reporting an Incident

Crossed skis or a snowboard standing upright identify an incident.

If you are involved in or witness an incident:

place crossed skis in an "X" pattern, or stand a snowboard upright, in the snow above the incident or have someone else do this;

- do not remove the injured person's skis/board;
- do not move the injured person or attempt to treat them unless you are qualified in first-aid;
- remain at the scene and identify yourself to Ski Patrol;
- assist Ski Patrol with any enquiries. Alpine Responsibility Code, Point No. 10.

Raising the Alarm

Know the exact location of the incident.

While one person remains with the injured skier/boarder, make sure another person reports the incident to any Ski Patroller or skis or boards to the nearest lift station where the lift staff will be able to notify Ski Patrol.

The Ski Patrollers

Ski Patrollers work in all kinds of weather and are frequently exposed to severe conditions and incidents involving major trauma.

The ASAA and members of the Australian Ski Patrols hope this information helps you to understand more about the challenges of Ski Patrol as well as the goals that are strived for.

The Ski Patrollers will be out there seeking to provide a safe and happy experience.

Enjoy.