



It's National Safety Week On The Slopes

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The National Ski Areas Association encourages its member resorts to highlight safe skiing and snowboarding at all times, but sets aside Jan. 16-22 as a formal National Safety Week. NSAA states, "The National Ski Areas Association, along with the National Ski Patrol, the Professional Ski Instructors of America, the American Association of Snowboard Instructors, and Willis and AIG insurance companies, has created the Safety Initiative campaign to assist ski area operators nationwide address the topic of slope safety education for guests. The primary goal is to attempt to further reduce the frequency of accidents, and to unify the industry to focus on and communicate a proactive, strong safety message."

Most resorts across the region have various special programs, promotions, and activities this week to raise the awareness of safety among skiers and riders. For example: [Killington](#) and [Pico Mountain](#) are offering skiers and riders a midweek lift ticket when purchasing a new helmet this week. During the week, *Heads Up - Know the Code* and Smart Style stickers and cards will be available for guests. Information will also be displayed on café trays, at ticket sales points and participating area ski and snowboard shops. Mountain Ambassadors will be wearing bright yellow jackets that display important safety awareness messages based on *Your Responsibility Code* and *Smart Style*, a four-point safety awareness message about the use and progression of freestyle terrain at mountain resorts.

[Okemo](#) offers anyone who buys a new ski or snowboard helmet at the Snowports Shop will receive a coupon for 50 percent off a full-day lift ticket, off a full-day equipment rental or high-performance demo, or off a group lesson or specialty clinic. Some of the week's highlights include Okemo's Helmet Head contest, a visit from **Vermont's own PHAT (Protect Your Head at All Times/Protect Your Head on All Terrain)** team and a Safety Scavenger Hunt. Dr. Rob Williams, head of PHAT and doctor to the Smugglers' Notch Ski Patrol, has long advocated the use of helmets. He offers data that shows most head injuries can be reduced or minimized by helmet use, and has tracked the increase in helmet use at Smuggs over the years. NSAA data shows similar trends in helmet use nationwide, with 12 percent increase this season over last. The group's data shows:

- 48 percent of U.S. skiers and boarders overall wear helmets, up from 43 percent from the year before; in comparison, only 25 percent of skiers and boarders wore helmets during the 2002/03 season;
- 77 percent of children 9 years old or younger wear ski helmets;
- 66 percent of children between 10 and 14 wear ski helmets;
- 63 percent of adults over the age of 65 wear ski helmets;
- Helmet usage by skiers and boarders aged 18 to 24 is 32 percent, representing a 78 percent increase in usage for this age group since the 2002/03 season, when only 18 percent wore helmets.
- Overall ski helmet sales (adults and kids) have increased 43 percent over the past two years, dating back to the 2006/07 ski season. Sales of adult ski helmets alone increased 50 percent since

the 2006/07 season, according to the Snowsports Industries of America (SIA) annual Retail Audit.

- Notably, helmet usage increases with the skier's ability level. Twenty-six percent of beginners wear helmets, 38 percent of intermediates wear helmets while 55 percent of advanced skiers and riders wear helmets. In comparison, the National Traffic Safety Administration reports only 20 to 25 percent of bike riders in the U.S. wear helmets.

There's general agreement that helmets are a good idea, but also broad consensus that skiing and riding in control is the best way to minimize accidents.

The Responsibility Code embodies the principles of safety. The Codes states:

- Always stay in control.
- People ahead of you have the right of way.
- Stop in a safe place for you and others.
- Whenever starting downhill or merging, look uphill and yield.
- Use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.
- Observe signs and warnings, and keep off closed trails.
- Know how to use the lifts safely.

More information.

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