NSAA Honors Top Safety Programs
Four New Ski Areas Added to Winners List, Others Repeat

This year California’s Mt. Shasta Ski Park, Idaho’s Sun Valley Resort, Nevada’s Las Vegas Ski and Snowboard Resort, and Pennsylvania’s Whitetail Resort were honored with their inaugural NSAA Safety Awards. Nine other resorts, including California’s Heavenly Mountain Resort; Colorado’s Aspen Skiing Co., Beaver Creek Resort, Copper Mountain Resort, Telluride Ski and Golf Resort, and Vail Mountain; New Hampshire’s Loon Mountain, Utah’s Canyons Resort, and Vermont’s Killington Resort, won repeat awards. Here’s a closer look at the winning 2011/12 safety programs:

**Best Terrain Park Safety Program**

**KILLINGTON RESORT,**
Vermont

This season Jay Rosenbaum, parks and pipes manager at Vermont’s Killington Resort, developed a Smart Style quiz. The quiz was featured as part of Killington’s safety awareness education display areas set up at its Ramshorn Family Center and also at Pico base lodge during Safety Week. The display areas were staffed by mountain ambassadors, and everyone who took the quiz was eligible to win prizes, including stickers, tattoos, buttons, and more. As Jennifer Beliveau explained, the quiz wasn’t designed as a prerequisite to entry to freestyle terrain; instead Killington utilized it as an introductory teaching and training tool.

“Most of the participants were kids, however, many of them were accompanied by their parents and/or other adults, so we were able to target a pretty wide guest spectrum,” said Beliveau.

She estimated that approximately 100 guests completed the quiz during Safety Week.

This is Killington/Pico’s fifth safety award with previous wins in 2001/02, 2002/03, 2005/06, and 2010/11.

**Best Chairlift Safety Program**

**TELLURIDE SKI AND GOLF RESORT,**
Colorado

Colorado’s Telluride Ski and Golf Resort was recognized as having the industry’s best chairlift safety program during the 2011/12 season for its Chill on the Chair initiative. The resort included a chairlift safety station as part of its Passport to Safety program held during Safety Week. Guests were challenged to complete all six stations located at various points on the mountain. After collecting all six stamps, guests entered their completed passports into a drawing for a chance to win a 2012/13 season pass and other prizes. One of the five tenets of Chill on the Chair implores guests to avoid horseplay while riding the lift. Telluride reports that 283 guests earned their Passport to Safety. As Janice Todd, risk manager, explained, beyond its Chill on the Chair program, Telluride’s chairlift safety education messaging reaches hundreds of guests each day through signage on lift towers and banners at unloading areas.

This is Telluride’s second safety award with a previous win in 2008/09.
Best Helmet Safety Program

LAS VEGAS SKI AND SNOWBOARD RESORT,
Nevada

For the past five seasons Nevada’s Las Vegas Ski and Snowboard Resort (LVSSR) has held a month-long Lids on Kids campaign each January to kick off Safety Week. To date, LVSSR has provided more than 1,000 free ski and snowboard helmets to Las Vegas-area youth. In its first year of the campaign, LVSSR distributed roughly 95 helmets to local youth; this year more than 300 children’s helmets were given away.

Organizers report that the program’s increased popularity among older children and teens even required LVSSR to place a refill order midway through the month to ensure no child was turned away without a helmet. In order for children to receive a free helmet, parents and children were first asked to learn the seven points of the Responsibility Code, which was presented via a video. Following the video, volunteers then fitted each child for a helmet and educated parents on fit and usage, stressing that fit is critical to the helmets ability to perform its intended function in the event of an accident.

The program has gained traction by adding powerful community alliances, like this year’s partnership with Centennial Hills Hospital. Partnerships assist in underwriting the cost of the programs and provide additional volunteers to distribute helmets. In addition, LVSSR hosts ski and snowboard contests throughout the year with a portion of the event proceeds funding the Lids on Kids program. To add to the program’s growth, LVSSR implemented a traditional and digital public relations campaign that included television appearances and print coverage as well as outreach via Facebook and Twitter. Local media coverage included television news programs and popular TV talk shows, as well as print coverage in Las Vegas’ two daily newspapers and several local magazines.

This is Las Vegas Ski and Snowboard Resort’s first Safety Award.

Best Employee Involvement in a Safety Program

WHITETAIL RESORT,
Pennsylvania

During the 2011/12 season hundreds of guests at Pennsylvania’s Whitetail Resort enjoyed a “Play it Safe” mountain tour led by members of the area’s Mountain Safety Team. Guests toured patrol headquarters where ski patrol offered tips about slope safety. Meanwhile Whitetail’s park and pipe team held Smart Style activities in the Jib Junction Terrain Park, and ski school instructors and their classes made stops to the Play it Safe stations, where they were quizzed on various aspects of slope safety. Guests who participated were subsequently entered in a drawing for an eight-hour lift ticket. The week ended with one of the local TV stations doing a short broadcast segment on slope safety featuring live scenes of Whitetail guests enjoying a day at the resort.

“All the Whitetail departments contributed to the success of another slope safety week,” said Safety Director Mike Shuman. This is Whitetail’s first Safety Award.

Best Employee Safety Education Program

ASPEN SKIING CO.,
Colorado

The primary goal for the safety program this season at ski areas owned and operated by Colorado’s Aspen Skiing Company was to reduce the number of employee injuries and reduce the severity of those injuries.

“Aside from the financial implications of workplace incidents, the impact of those injuries on the employees is most important,” said Steven Howard, risk manager. “These employees experience a loss of income in some cases and a less enjoyable lifestyle while they are recovering.”
Howard explained that daily tracking and reporting enables all divisions to see the current status of their incidents and those of all other divisions.

Before the start of the 2011/12 season, each ski area division director was issued his or her accident history from the previous season. The directors were tasked with closely reviewing the incidents and ascertaining which incidents could have been prevented. Additionally, all supervisors were asked to review every workplace incident that had occurred within their department for the three previous seasons, and then identify the root cause of each injury and what preventative measures could have been taken to avoid the injury.

“In some cases it was a training issue, in others it was a workplace condition, and in others it was a decision made by the employee,” said Howard.

Supervisors were then directed to develop department-specific Safety Action Plans. As a result of these efforts, there were 37 percent fewer employee accidents during 2011/12, and worker compensation expenses decreased 60 percent, the lowest level in eight years despite increased health care costs.


Best Use of New/Social Media in a Safety Campaign

HEAVENLY MOUNTAIN RESORT, Calif.

Russ Pecoraro, communications manager at California’s (and Nevada’s) Heavenly Mountain Resort, reported that the area used all available means and “every snow reporting and employee communication outlet” in its effort to reach guests and employees with pertinent safety education information, particularly during Safety Week. Specific to social media, Heavenly’s daily snow blogs included information about on-mountain safety-related events and highlighted “Code of the Day” videos, based on one of the seven points of the Responsibility Code. The same videos were broadcast via Twitter, and the tweets included the “#Snow” hashtag, enabling the message to be directly fed and viewable on Heavenly’s Facebook page. A daily Safety Week photo was featured as a “Daily Photo” to online ski and snowboard website OnTheSnow.com.

“We used all of the same measures to communicate SmartStyle and emphasize helmet usage and other important safety information,” said Pecoraro.

This is Heavenly’s fifth Safety Award with previous wins in 2001/02, 2004/05, 2009/10, and 2010/11.

BY THE NUMBERS:

A Look at Heavenly’s Safety Awareness Week Efforts

1 resort
9 days – Jan. 14-22
30,000 visitors
1,500 employees
9,193 Facebook fans reached
76,770 Twitter impressions
3,800 blog views
30 motor room tours
40 helmet decoration artisans
150 marching in the Ripperoo Snow Parade
125 cups of hot cocoa awarded
131 helmets sold
1,000 granola bars distributed
60 pounds of candy distributed
20 safety poster coloring contest submissions
300 SmartStyle coloring contest submissions
500 “Safety is Heavenly” carabiner distributed
250 entries in the Operation Education scavenger hunt
1,500 food and beverage stickers awarded
1,692 Code of the Day video views

Best Safety Week Program

LOON MOUNTAIN,
New Hampshire

During the 2011/12 season in New Hampshire, Loon Mountain enlisted employees from various departments in its effort to spread the word about safety. For instance, during Safety Week Meg Clinton, Loon’s terrain park ambassador, offered terrain park safety tours and reminded guests to get their Park Etiquette and Education Program (PEEPs) pass. Recognized with a 2010 NSAA Safety Award, PEEP’s is an online interactive program that educates skiers and riders about freestyle terrain and signage.

Loon once again produced its Cash Cabin contest in which employees dress incognito and ride the area’s gondola. Skiing and riding guests are quizzed at random on a variety of safety topics. Contestants who answer the questions correctly receive...
safety initiative that focuses on recreating and working safely. Our campaign highlights the importance of safety through awareness, education, and reinforcement of positive behaviors both on and off our mountain. We ask that you take the time to read the information on our Mountain Safety website and pay attention to safety information around the resort.

Canyons’ website includes two safety quizzes, one for adults and one for kids. Those who successfully complete the quiz are able to print their certificate of completion and redeem it for a “Canyons Safety Approved” sticker. More than 200 guests took the quiz this year. This is Canyons’ third Safety Award with previous wins in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Best Community Outreach

SUN VALLEY RESORT, Idaho

As part of its community outreach, patrollers at Idaho’s Sun Valley Resort, in conjunction with the Blaine County Kids Ski Program, produced a safety presentation at four local schools that was designed to reach students with pertinent information before they arrived at the mountain. Patrollers were also on hand providing basic safety information and tips once the school groups arrived at the mountain for their day of skiing or snowboarding. In addition, manufacturer Smith Optics donated several helmets and goggles that were given to guests in need.

Sun Valley also posted Safety Week photos and other notifications to its Facebook page and utilized Twitter in broadcasting safety information to guests. Mike Lloyd, ski school director, reported that the area reached many new guests with its social media efforts and gained more than 1,500 new Facebook friends. Finally, the patrol was featured on the cover of the local newspaper, and a local magazine featured Sun Valley patrollers volunteering with the Veterans’ group Higher Ground.

This is Sun Valley’s first Safety Award.

Most Creative Safety Program

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo.

This season Colorado’s Copper Mountain wrote the book on safety, or at least a book on safety. Part of Copper’s safety award application came in the form of a 60-page hard-covered booklet that highlights a host of ongoing safety initiatives at the resort.
“At Copper Mountain, we strive to be the best and safest resort in the industry by implementing creative safety initiatives that engage both guests and employees,” stated Gary Rodgers, president of Copper.

Among new initiatives during 2011/12 was the Copper Critter’s Lift Safety Tips. Last fall Copper installed a new high-speed quad chairlift that services the resort’s West Village and much of the area’s beginner terrain. With the new lift, Copper implemented the new lift safety initiative highlighting essential steps in safe chairlift loading, riding, and unloading. The tips are presented by Copper’s own “critters” and posted at each of the resort’s beginner lifts, inside the ski and snowboard school building, and at other areas of the resort. In addition, Copper’s own lift department developed a video to help educate new and beginner skiers and snowboarders on how to safely get up the mountain.

This is Copper Mountain’s second safety award with a previous win in 2010/11.

Best Overall Safety Program (Up to 250,000 visits)

MT. SHASTA SKI PARK, Calif.

California’s Mt. Shasta Ski Park provides basic job safety training to all of its employees. A Safety Committee, made up of members from each ski area department, meets once a week throughout the season to discuss various safety issues. Committee members provide weekly training within their respective departments and also visit other departments to present safety topics and briefings.

Mt. Shasta made a mark in the industry during the 2008/09 season when it reportedly became the first ski area to require all ski patrollers to wear helmets, a decision that was made not only out of concern for the protection of staff, but also as a way to set an example for guests. In 2009, Mt. Shasta required “bump-caps” for lift operators, and last season, the helmet requirement was expanded to all on-mountain employees.

Also this season, Mt. Shasta developed and produced a snowmobile safety training video that provides an overview of resort policies and procedures. The video stresses that snowmobiles should be viewed as a valuable tool to be used only when needed, as opposed to being used simply as a convenience. Staff members whose duties may include using a snowmobile are required to complete a comprehensive snowmobile training program and demonstrate proficiency in basic and advanced maneuvers.

“We firmly believe that the use of this new video, as a component in our stringent snowmobile training and use policy, will enhance our overall safety program and ultimately provide for a safer environment for our employees and guests,” said Andrew Aguilera, president.

This is Mt. Shasta Ski Park’s first NSAA Safety Award.

Best Overall Safety Program (250,000 or more visits)

BEAVER CREEK RESORT, Colo.

During the 2011/12 season Vail Resorts firmly illustrated that it doesn’t play around when it comes to educating its guests and employees about safety by launching a companywide enhanced slope safety campaign, “Play It Safe, Play All Season.” While all of the company’s resorts implemented enhanced on-mountain Play It Safe messaging across a variety of channels, Beaver Creek was the first of Vail Resorts’ ski areas to install the new signage and even went a step further to brand its own safety messaging within the framework of the new campaign.

As Jennifer Brown, senior communications manager, said, the Play It Safe, Play All Season mantra weaves into every aspect of safety and has been used as a constant reminder with Beaver Creek staff and guests that a safe and injury-free ski and snowboard season also provides for a more enjoyable off-season of golfing, hiking, and other summer activities.

“It’s about all-around well-being combined with smart decisions,” said Brown.

Beaver Creek’s comprehensive safety efforts include all of the usual components – avalanche safety awareness, helmet
campaigns, a variety of employee initiatives, and community outreach that in 2011/12 included safety presentations to 3,416 local elementary and high school students.

Adding to this year’s effort, Beaver Creek’s Safety Team identified companywide assets and programs that could be tailored to deliver the resort’s safety message. For example, EpicMix Photo was used to promote safety during Safety Week and offered an interactive opportunity for guests to talk with and take photos of their Safety Week experience. More than 56,000 EpicMix users at Beaver Creek were awarded the “Safety Dance” digital pin.

In addition, Beaver Creek upped its effort to revoke skiing and riding privileges for all safety violators. “Given the lower-than-normal natural snowfall at the start of the season, many violators ducked ropes and made poor choices,” Brown said.

Through a more visible presence by the Yellow Jackets and Ski Patrol on hill, as well as monitoring key areas of the mountain, Brown reported that the resort restricted or revoked more skiing days in 2011/12 than in any other season.

Finally, Vail Resorts also enlisted Olympic and World Champion skier Lindsey Vonn, who shares the company’s safety vision, in creating a public service announcement safety video.

View the “Vail Ski and Snowboard Safety with Lindsey Vonn” video online at YouTube.com.

This is Beaver Creek’s tenth Safety Award with previous wins in 1999/00, 2001/02, 2002/03, 2003/04, 2005/06, 200/07, 2007/08, 2008/09, and 2009/10.