

NATIONAL
SKI AREAS
ASSOCIATION



For Immediate Release

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Skier/Snowboarder Fatality Incidents During 2015-16 Season

LAKEWOOD, Colo., Sept. 15, 2016—The National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) reports that during the 2015-16 season there were 39 skier and snowboarder fatalities occurring at U.S. ski areas, compared to the 35 that occurred during the 2014-15 season.

This is a slight increase from the previous season but remains right around the 10-year industry average of 38 fatalities per season (see chart). Based on 52.8 million total skier/snowboarder visits during the 2015-16 season, the fatality rate converts to less than one fatality per one million skier visits (or 0.74 fatalities per one million skier visits during the 2015-16 season, slightly above the 10-year average rate of 0.67 fatalities per million skier visits). A skier/snowboarder visit represents one person visiting a ski area for all or any part of a day or night. This includes full- and half-day, night, complimentary, adult, child, season pass, and all other ticket types.

NSAA collects fatality and catastrophic injury data from all U.S. ski areas annually, at the end of each season. NSAA compiles this data to provide information to the media and the skiing public that truly reflects the inherent risks to skiing and snowboarding guests at U.S. ski areas. The data reflects all incidents of fatality or catastrophic injury that occur within a ski area's boundaries (backcountry fatalities and catastrophic injuries are not included in these statistics because they do not reflect the risk of fatality or catastrophic injury at ski areas for the skiing public), and during normal operating hours (a sledding death after hours at a ski area, for example). Also, NSAA does not include fatalities that are related to a pre-existing medical condition, such as a heart attack or stroke on a chairlift). Similarly, this data also does not include fatalities or catastrophic injuries suffered by ski area employees while working—again, because an

employee's death does not reflect the risk of fatalities or catastrophic injuries to the public.

Gender continues to be a significant factor in ski/snowboard fatalities. Of the 2015-16 fatalities, 31 were male and 8 female. Equipment also plays a role in fatality data, with skiers accounting for 31 fatalities compared to 7 snowboarder fatalities (for one fatality, this was unknown). At the time of these incidents, 23 of the 39 people who died were wearing helmets, while 15 of the fatalities were not wearing helmets (again, for one fatality, it was unknown). Overall, 80 percent of all skiers and snowboarders wore helmets during the 2015-16 ski season, according to a separate annual helmet usage study conducted by NSAA. And for the last three ski seasons, there have been no fatalities related to in-bounds avalanches (see also NSAA Avalanche Safety Fact Sheet at <http://www.nsaa.org/press/industry-stats>).

Given this small data set, NSAA does not report fatalities or catastrophic injuries by individual state because of the wide variability of the data (Most states have one or two fatalities per season or fewer, making this variability even more pronounced.) Often, individual state ski associations compile and release their statewide fatality data separately from NSAA.

An average of 38 skier and snowboarder fatalities has occurred at U.S. ski areas in the last 10 years. Average skier/snowboarder visits during this same time period averaged 56.4 million. The 10-year fatality rate equates to 0.67 fatalities per million skier visits—again, well below one fatality per one million skier visits.

“It’s always tragic to report fatal ski and snowboard incidents,” said NSAA President Michael Berry. “We recognize that the fatality rate fluctuates slightly each year; however, one’s chance of having a fatal accident on the slopes remains less than one in a million.”

Berry pointed out that resorts continue to emphasize the importance of personal responsibility and that safety remains a top priority at ski areas. Many have developed comprehensive safety education programs and actively promote the seven points of *Your Responsibility Code*, as well as the tenets of the Smart Style freestyle terrain safety initiative promoted by NSAA and ski resorts. The industry continues to support the Heads Up, a safety initiative designed to promote on-mountain awareness, and each season ski areas across the country observe National Safety Awareness Month in January, a time that is dedicated to additional emphasis on guest and employee safety. NSAA

recently updated its Lids On Kids website (www.lidsonkids.org) committed to educating parents and children on the importance and proper use of snowsports helmets. In 2013, NSAA launched a new website Kids on Lifts (www.KidsonLifts.org) to educate parents and their children about important safety practices for riding, loading, and unloading chairlifts. Meanwhile, NSAA's Freestyle Terrain website (www.freestyleterrain.org) strives to educate consumers about the proper use of freestyle terrain features, with new, user-friendly signage for guests. For more information, visit the Safety & Education portion of www.nsa.org.

10-Year Fatal Incident Rate Per Million Participants

<u>SEASON</u>	<u>FATALITIES</u>	<u>SKIER DAYS (in millions)</u>	<u>RATE (per million)</u>
2015-16	39	52.8	0.74
2014-15	35	53.6	0.65
2013-14	32	56.5	0.57
2012-13	25	56.9	0.44
2011-12	46	51.0	0.90
2010-11	47	60.5	0.78
2009-10	39	59.8	0.65
2008-09	39	57.4	0.68
2007-08	53	60.5	0.88
2006-07	22	55.1	0.40

THE NATIONAL SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION, LOCATED IN LAKEWOOD, COLO., IS A TRADE ASSOCIATION FORMED IN 1962 FOR SKI AREA OWNERS AND OPERATORS NATIONWIDE.

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