Safety programs are ingrained into everyday ski area operations around the country. Whether this is on the hill, in the base area, or focused on employee wellness both in and outside of work, these programs are making a difference in the lives of your guests and employees. With the ever-increasing sophistication and effectiveness of these area-driven programs, it has become more difficult to pick a single winner in each category of the Safety Awards.

The awards, sponsored by Safehold Special Risk, recognize NSAA member resorts for their exceptional initiatives to educate the public and employees throughout the season.

**Best Overall Safety Program (500,000 or more visits)**

**Vail Mountain, CO**

Vail Mountain implemented safety programming targeting both its guests and its employees with the goal of creating a strong safety culture across the resort.

Vail’s approach to safety integrates three fundamental areas: Skill, Knowledge, and Desire. By looking at guest skiing and riding behavior in terms of these three essential elements, the Mountain Safety team sought to address the underlying reasons guests take unnecessary risks, and help people avoid them.

Starting with Skills, the team was proactive in identifying struggling guests without the necessary skills for the terrain they were seeking to ski and ride. Over 300 guests have appreciated the free lessons offered and the new abilities they gained. Now, instead of guests seeking terrain beyond their skill level, they have created safer skiers and advocates for safety.

The second element, Knowledge, brought forward training on the “20 Principles of Persuasion,” which helped the mountain safety team identify the overlaps between what the guests care about and what the mountain safety team desires. This provided insights into what is communicated to guests and how it is communicated. These shifts have resulted in more effective and positive interactions, such as giving out free hot chocolate and Vail Mountain Safety buffs and sunglasses, to recognize positive behavior with over 8,000 guests and other area users.

Desire is the third factor in the Safety Team’s approach. Meaning, the ski area wanted to create productive and encouraging interactions and help create genuine desire from guests to be a positive participant in slope safety. Desire was also targeted by the safety shadow program, giving skiers and riders with suspended passes the opportunity to spend the day with Mountain Safety and learn first-hand how their actions have an impact on themselves and other skiers and riders from a unique perspective.

Approaching safety with positive reinforcement and outreach to employees and guests, combined with operational changes like increased signage and managing skier flow, has allowed Vail Mountain to both educate guests about safety and improve guest satisfaction.

**Best Overall Safety Program (Up to 500,000 visits)**

**Stratton Mountain, VT**

Following a 2017/18 season debrief, the Stratton Safety Team re-focused its efforts on several key tactics to engage both its employees and guests in its culture of safety.

The ski area produced a video to support its Safety Passport program that explains best practices for staying safe on the slopes. This became required viewing for all Stratton employees as well as over 1,100 kids in the ski area’s multi-week programs. This enabled the most frequent users of the mountain to become ambassadors for ski safety.

Stratton used the video to enroll more than 4,000 new guests in their safety program and register their “In case of emergency” (ICE) contact information with a local clinic. The ski area distributed limited availability bear paw stickers to those who registered their emergency contact info as an incentive.
Stratton used on-site signage, targeted activities and guest outreach to promote the Safety Passport program throughout the season. The combination of these efforts helped expand the reach of the program and increase the participation of the ski area’s guests and employees in these important efforts.

**Best Employee Safety Program**

**Mammoth Mountain, CA**
Starting with the 2017/18 season, Mammoth Mountain embraced the “See something, Say something, Do something” mantra. This easily-understood message has shifted the culture at Mammoth, empowering the resort’s employees to take responsibility for their personal safety, that of their fellow employees, and that of their guests.

This message was driven home through consistent messaging and powerful video that leaves you thinking about your own responsibility when it comes to workplace safety. Rather than simply ignoring or working around a safety issue, employees are encouraged to stop work and to raise and discuss the situation without fear of retribution. This cultural shift and message from the video help remind employees that the loved ones waiting for them at home are more important than any task.

These messages were reinforced through over 60 hour-long trainings across the resort, focused departmental safety meetings, improved signage in employee areas and quantitative reporting of the year-over-year results of the program. As a result, this program has significantly reduced employee injuries and lost days.

**Best Guest Safety Program**

**Mountain Creek Resort, NJ**
With a high density of beginner-to-low-intermediate skiers and snowboarders, Mountain Creek Resort recognizes that education regarding safety is paramount to helping guests have the best possible time on the slopes. Mountain Creek formed a Safety Team comprised of representatives from risk management, patrol, public safety, resort operations, ski school, marketing and human resources.

In addition to reviewing incidents, the team is also tasked with making recommendations to improve safety across the resort. Mountain Creek reached out to employees from all departments to help identify education topics and areas where education could be passed to guests.

As a result, from the moment a skier arrives at Mountain Creek, safety messages alert them to changing snow conditions, slip-and-fall prevention, the importance of wearing a helmet, and the seven points of Your Responsibility Code. Messaging is visible at the entrances to the resort, at lift entrances, on pedestrian walkways, in buildings throughout the resort, and incorporated in digital signage.

The ski area enforced youth helmet use in conjunction with New Jersey state law, through posting the helmet law language, leveraging the Lids on Kids materials, including a free helmet rental with all ski and snowboard rentals, releasing a resort-produced video, and offering the guest additional benefits like retail discounts, partnerships and contests.

These efforts have reduced incidents by almost 10 percent from the prior year, and have contributed to increasing helmet usage across the resort to 94 percent.

**Best #RideAnotherDay Safety Program**

**Killington Resort, VT**
NSA’s newest safety initiative, #RideAnotherDay, has received widespread adoption by ski areas across the country. Killington Pico Ski Resort Partners embraced this program and took the initiative to engage the local skiing community in collision prevention education.

The resort hosted a #RideAnotherDay Slope Safety Meeting, bringing
in Kelli and Chauncy Johnson, founders of and champions for NSAA’s #RideAnotherDay program. This meeting included over 100 stakeholders, including KPSRP leadership, mountain staff, administration from the Killington Mountain School and other community members. By hosting the Johnsons, KPSRP created the opportunity for people to hear their compelling story in person, to reinforce the importance of each individual’s actions, and to learn about how decision making plays a role in preventing collisions.

As a result, Killington and Pico created a central rallying cry for mountain safety among their most active and closest stakeholders. Building from this momentum, the resorts will be rolling out a full-scale guest-facing #RideAnotherDay program for the 2019/20 season.

**Safety Champion**

**John Young, Telluride, CO**

In his 10-year career at Telluride Ski Resort, John Young has been committed to creating a culture of safety across the mountain.

Young took the initiative to develop several safety programs addressing different audiences and topics. In developing the Telluride Safe Kids campaign, Young focused on safe lift riding education for the youngest guests. He analyzed a decade’s worth of data to identify the locations of lift incidents and worked with other staff members to make operational and design changes at defined areas across the mountain. By making adjustments to the operations, ramps, and messaging, Telluride has reduced the number of incidents related to lifts.

One example is the creation of the “Point 7” Lift Safety Program. This effort promotes helpful tips and information about riding lifts to advance guest knowledge and ability when it comes to riding lifts safely. Young regularly speaks to departments around the resort, the local adaptive program, and the competition program, serving as an enthusiastic and positive ambassador for mountain safety.