

HELMET INFORMATION

With the increasing popularity of helmets during the past many years, people are considering a helmet for themselves and/or their children. The National Ski Areas Association (NSAA), together with the help of many others in the ski industry, has developed the following list of frequently asked questions to help guide you through the education process concerning helmet benefits and limitations. The NSAA recommends that parents, skiers and snowboarders make the right choice about wearing a helmet. Ultimately, the choice is one of personal or parental choice.

Q: Will I be safer wearing a helmet?

A: Helmets can make a difference in reducing or preventing injury from falls or other impacts. They are most effective at slower speeds. Be sure to have your helmet properly fitted if you decide that you should wear one. And don't forget to learn ski and snowboard responsibly and to be familiar with the "Your Responsibility Code," the seven safety rules of the slopes.

Q: Are there helmets specifically designed for snowsports or can I wear my bicycle helmet?

A: If you wear a helmet while bicycling, it's great to see that you're already safety conscious. Likewise, it's probably a good idea to wear a helmet on the slopes— it really comes down to your acceptance of risk. Ski and snowboard helmets are specifically designed for skiing and snowboarding usage. Wearing another sport's helmet may or may not afford you adequate protection.

Ski and snowboard helmets are built and designed for multiple impacts (the combination of a hard shell and the liner.) Bicycle helmets are generally built for single impacts. Ski and snowboard helmets are also insulated for cold weather and bicycle helmets provide more ventilation than ski helmets. A ski and snowboard helmet should provide better coverage and impact protection than a bicycle helmet.

Keep in mind that the risk of a potentially serious head injury on the slopes may be much lower than you think. Such injuries are actually less than 2.5 percent of all medically significant injuries in skiing, whereas for bicycle riders, the comparable number is 32 percent. However, the National Ski Areas Association encourages you to consider wearing a helmet on the slopes and to educate yourself about a helmet's benefits and limitations.

Q: How much protection can a helmet give me?

A: Helmets do have limits and users need to be aware of them. However, a helmet can make a difference in reducing or preventing injury and many skiers and snowboarders today are choosing to wear them. Helmets are designed to reduce the severity of head injuries, but they are most effective at providing protection from a direct blow to the head at speeds of 12 mph or slower. Keep in mind, if you lose control and hit a tree, object or another skier at moderate or high speed, a helmet may not prevent or reduce a serious injury. It's important that the user doesn't think that he can take more risks because he's wearing a helmet and therefore will be more protected. This is a false sense of security. Whether wearing a helmet or not, you should always ski responsibly and within your ability.

Q: If I fall or hit a tree or a rock while skiing, will a helmet protect me from getting hurt?

A: A helmet can make a difference in reducing or preventing injury and many skiers/snowboarders are choosing to wear them. Keep in mind, if you lose control and should hit a tree, rock, another object or another skier at moderate or high speed, a helmet may not always prevent or reduce a serious injury. It's best not to put yourself in a situation where you're depending on a helmet to avoid an injury.

Q: Is there a standard for manufacturing a helmet? How do I know if the helmet I wear will provide me enough protection?

A: When purchasing a helmet, read the accompanying literature to see if the helmet meets one of the three following helmet standards:

The Common European Norm (CEN) is a large European standard organization that develops hundreds of standards for various products used by the European Union. The CEN 1077 standard is the European ski helmet standard; it was issued in 1996. This European ski helmet standard was almost identical to a pre-existing ski helmet standard used in the 1980s. Compared with the other ski helmet standards, the CEN

The American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM), a not-for-profit organization that provides a global forum for the development and publication of voluntary consensus standards for materials, products, systems, and services, adopted a United States' recreational snowsports helmet F2040 standard in May 2000; it has become the standard to which helmets should be manufactured in the United States. Ski and Snowboard helmets manufactured in the United States should conform to the ASTM snowsports helmet standard. For more information about ASTM, log on to www.astm.org.

Lastly, the Snell Memorial Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to research, education, testing and development of helmet safety standards, develops helmet standards and operates test labs for testing and certification. Since its founding in 1957, Snell has been a leader in helmet safety in the United States and around the world. (For more information, log on to www.smf.org). The Snell RS-98 standard is the most stringent ski helmet standard in the world.

Note: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) endorsed the use of snowsports helmets in January of 1999. (For the document, go to www.cpsc.gov, under library/FOIA, click on consumer-related statistics, then click on skiing helmets, at bottom). The CPSC noted that while the then proposed ASTM standard (the ASTM Standard wasn't adopted until May 2000) and the CEN standard may differ in test parameters, a helmet that meets either of the standards "will provide adequate protection to reduce the risk of head injury." The Snell standard, presumably, would be considered adequate as well since it's the most stringent of the three standards.

Q: Why do helmets vary in cost so much? Is one helmet as safe as another?

A: Several factors affect the price of a helmet (\$60-\$150), including: materials, design, graphics and temperature maintenance systems. It's recommended that your helmet meet at least one of the snowsports helmet standards, which include CEN (Common European Norm), ASTM (American Society of Testing Materials) or Snell. All three standards require different test parameters and methodologies. None of the standards distinguish adult helmets from kids' helmets. The fit of the helmet is very important with regard to its providing the appropriate protection. At this time, ski helmet prices will continue to fluctuate because ski helmets are a fairly young industry in the U.S.. Over time, the price points will begin to better reflect the real differences in quality, comfort and style.

Q: Should I consider renting a helmet before purchasing one? Where can I rent one?

A: Many ski areas rent helmets (Roughly 160 of the National Ski Areas Association's member resorts do rent helmets), but not all ski areas. Therefore, you should contact the ski area you plan to visit in advance to see whether they provide helmet rentals. Likewise, many ski shops also rent helmets, but call first to confirm. Renting a helmet prior to purchasing one is a matter of personal choice. The benefit would be that renting a helmet would give you a feel and understanding of a manufacturer's helmet's performance features, as well as allowing you to make your own distinctions about the benefits. You can see how it feels to wear a helmet and if you're comfortable in doing so.

Q: Why should wearing a helmet be a matter of personal choice?

A: While helmets may help reduce the incidences and severity of head injuries in the event of a blow to the head, they shouldn't be perceived as a panacea for slope safety. What's most important is for you to follow the ["Your Responsibility Code,"](#) the safety rules of the slopes. Slope safety education and personal responsibility are the key to long-term slope safety.

The NSAA encourages guests to consider wearing helmets because they are often helpful in reducing injury. However, they should be viewed as a second line of defense. Skiing safely and in control is the first line of defense. Some data suggest that increases in helmet usage can actually increase overall injury rates, as users develop a false sense of security and take more risks. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission released a study in July 2001 finding that while bicycle helmet usage is up and ridership is declining, head injuries among bicyclists are increasing. The latest data on ski helmets shows that while usage is up, head injuries have not decreased, and the severity of head injuries is significantly greater among the helmeted population than the non-helmeted population.

Q: Are skiing and snowboarding as safe as they used to be? Few people used to wear a helmet. Is a

and snowboarders have less than a one in a million chance of being seriously injured or dying on the slopes. Serious head injuries account for only 2.6 percent of overall skiing/snowboarding injuries. Each skier or snowboarder's behavior has as much or more to do with the safety of the sports as does any piece of equipment. Following "Your Responsibility Code" is the key to promoting your and others' safety. If you choose to wear a helmet or use other types of equipment to protect yourself, be sure you understand the limits and proper use of that equipment. Don't let any safety equipment give you a false sense of security.

Q: If I buy a helmet, what are some tips to assist me in my purchase?

A: The most important consideration when purchasing a helmet is the fit. A helmet is not a piece of equipment that you want to purchase too small or too large to grow into. If a helmet doesn't fit correctly, it may not perform to its ability in the event of an accident. When shopping for a helmet, bring along your goggles, or borrow pair that matches your own from the shop. Make sure your entire forehead (above eyebrows to hairline) is covered by your helmet or goggles, because if there's a gap on your forehead between your helmet and your goggles, this exposed area can get cold and wet on snowy days. Unlike a hat, a helmet can't be amended or "pushed down" to keep your forehead warm. Look for a helmet that is engineered to work well with goggles or provides its own integrated goggles. It's important for a helmet to work with goggles and glasses to maintain vision, airflow and comfort. Lastly, make sure the helmet conforms to a ski/snowboard helmet standard (Common European Norm, American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) and/or Snell.) Ask an experienced ski shop associate to assist you to identify the best brand for your head and confirm a proper fit.

Q: Does the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA), the trade group for ski area owners and operators, recommend helmets for skiers and snowboarders?

A: The NSAA position is that the decision of whether to wear one should be a matter of personal choice. NSAA recommends that parents educate themselves about the benefits and limitations of helmets and then make the choice that's right for them.

Q: What Do You Need to Know About Helmets and Safety?

A: You should be familiar with and/or memorize the "Your Responsibility Code," the seven rules of slope safety. Slope safety and personal responsibility should be discussed prior to hitting the slopes.

- A helmet can make a difference in reducing or preventing a head injury from a fall or other impacts. However, no helmet can protect the wearer against all foreseeable impacts and injuries to the head. Put the emphasis on using your smarts and ski and/or snowboard responsibly.
- A helmet's fit is most important. It's helpful to have an experienced sales person assist your child the fit. Know your child's head circumference. You can learn this by using a tailor's measuring tape and measure your child's head above the ears and right above the eyebrows (widest part of the head from the front to the back). A properly fit helmet will be comfortable with no pressure points. A helmet is not an item that you want to grow into.
- When shopping for a helmet, bring your goggles with you to make sure they will fit with the helmet you choose.

When buying a helmet consider choosing one that has met established standards, such as the Central European Norm, the ASTM standard, which was adopted in 2000 or by the Snell memorial Foundation. The important thing to remember is that choosing an approved helmet helps ensure that it will be effective when you need it.