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Kirkwood and Dodge Ridge top safety rankings for Large Resorts

Snowsport Safety Foundation recognizes Kirkwood and Dodge Ridge for the highest two large resort scores on the Foundation's 2016 Safety Survey

Granlibakken Tahoe, Kirkwood Mountain Resort, and Dodge Ridge have the highest safety scores according to the newly released *2016 California Mountain Resort Safety Survey* by the SnowSport Safety Foundation.

“Granlibakken Tahoe scored a 8.68 out of a possible 10 and achieved the highest small resort (5 lifts or less) scores in both the 2010 and the 2016 Foundation surveys,” noted SnowSport Safety Foundation President Daniel Gregorie, M.D. “Granlibakken also raised its score by over 1.8 points from 2010 to 2016, demonstrating a significant commitment to improvement.”

Gregorie congratulated Kirkwood Resort for achieving the highest score, 6.83 on a 10 point scale, in the large resort category (more than 5 lifts) on the 2016 survey of 19 northern and central California ski resorts. He said the Foundation would also recognize Kirkwood for being the “most improved” of all the resorts, with an increase of 2.46 points, from the 2010 to the 2016 survey.

“Large mountain resorts have many more runs and much more diverse terrain. Therefore they have much more extensive operations to manage” said Gregorie. “We are especially pleased to note that Kirkwood not only scored the highest in the large resort category, but also appears to have made significant improvements to its safety practices since 2010 .”

Kirkwood mountain resort, operated by Vail Resorts Management Company, has 86 winter trails ranging from beginner to expert.

Dodge Ridge has the second highest score in the large mountain resort category. Family owned and located northeast of Sonora, Dodge Ridge also showed consistency in its safety practices by scoring 6.55 in 2016 and 6.53 in 2010. Dodge Ridge opened in 1950 and currently has 67 runs.

Richard Penniman, SnowSport Safety Foundation board member, ski safety expert, and member of the team that surveyed the mountain resorts said, “We created survey teams to anonymously visit California mountain resorts and evaluate them in two categories, impact protection and trail design and maintenance. Utilizing standardized criteria, we found significant variation in the safety practices between and even within the same resorts.”

The SnowSport Safety Foundation surveyed 19 mountain resorts and scored them according to 17 safety metrics. Several major resorts in the Tahoe Region received average scores of less than 6 out of 10 on two consecutive surveys (2010 and 2016), including Squaw Valley and Homewood. Three resorts consistently scored less than 5 out of 10 year over year-- Boreal Ridge, Donner Ski Ranch and China (formerly Sierra Summit). Northstar and Sierra-at-Tahoe both scored below 6 on the 2016 survey.

Areas of scoring included: padding and/or shielding of lift-related structures and outbuildings; marking and impact protection of snowmaking hydrants, guns, and pipes; identification and shielding of parked vehicles; elimination or impact shielding of trees on beginner runs; impact protection of obstacles below side-sloping trails; chairlift restraint bars; safeguards (e.g. advance warning signs, separation of merging traffic, speed controls) at blind intersections and intersections of advanced into lower ability runs; safeguards (e.g. warning signs, speed controls) at trail congestion areas; preventing inappropriate traffic through designated learning areas; controlling speeds through slow and family areas; marking and shielding surface hazards: preventing inadvertent entrance into extreme terrain and terrain parks; safeguards for moving hazards such as vehicles and low hanging chairs; and signage and fencing to prevent inadvertent entry into natural or unmanged areas.

Safety requires a partnership between the skier or snowboarder and the resort they choose. The SnowSport Safety Foundation's mission is research, education and publication of safety information to help consumers become more aware of mountain resort safety practices and to make better informed choices of resort partners. The availability of resort specific safety information will also assist resorts in identifying safety improvement opportunities.

Mountain resort safety practices are vitally important to public safety. More than 12,000 skiers and snowboarders end up in California emergency rooms and hospitals each year. The risk of death during one hour on the slopes is five times greater than one hour behind the wheel of a car. The Snowsport Safety Foundation's vision for the future is a snowport environment in which ski areas disclose and promote their safety practices and performance to well informed patrons who consider safety as well as snowfall and terrain in their choice of ski areas

Dr. Gregorie emphasized that the Foundation's survey results should not be considered a complete evaluation of safety at any resort. However, the results provide patrons some indications in terms of potential resort specific areas of concern and some guidance in seeking additional information from resorts and completing their own more extensive safety evaluation of the resorts they are considering for themselves and their families

Gregorie emphasized the Foundation very much wants to work collaboratively with the the resorts to help them identify opportunities for safety improvement, develop improved and standardized safety practices and to provide them independent recognition of their safety performance that they can promote to their patrons.. As evidenced by the two surveys, all the resorts have substantial opportunities for safety improvements that will save lives and reduce the number and severity of injuries.

Organizations endorsing the work of the SnowSport Safety Foundation include Sutter Roseville Medical Center noting a shared mission of reducing the number and severity of injuries from snow sports.

The full report is available at www.snowsportsafety.org.

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The SnowSport Safety Foundation is a not-for-profit charitable education, research and public information organization incorporated in California in 2008. Its mission is to encourage and enable ski area safety improvement through research, education and public access to reliable safety information. The SnowSport Safety Foundation envisions an environment where the ski resorts disclose and promote their safety practices and performance to well-informed patrons who consider safety in their choice of ski areas. More information may be obtained at www.snowsportsafety.org.