



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**During NSAA's Ski Safety Month Watchdog challenges ski areas to
adopt a *Resort Safety Responsibility Code***

The Snowsport Safety Foundation asks California and Nevada ski resorts to work with them to improve resort safety by committing to minimum safety practices and safeguards

According to Dr. Daniel Gregorie, founder and president of the San Francisco based SnowSport Safety Foundation (SSF), mountain resorts throughout the nation ask their patrons to abide by the “*Your Safety Responsibility Code*” written by the National Ski Area Association and posted at their member resorts. Now, the SSF has developed a proposed *Resort Slope and Trail Safety Responsibility Code (RSTSR Code)* and hopes the resorts in California and Nevada will also make it commonly available to skiers and boarders.

Gregorie notes January is National Safety Month and the president of the California Ski Industry Association has said resorts share responsibility for safety with their skiing and riding patrons. Now the foundation Gregorie leads is calling on the ski industry to make good on that statement by implementing a reciprocal responsibility code that lets patrons know what reasonable measures the resorts are committing to provide for the safest possible experience on resort slopes and trails.

Gregorie says the SSF will send the proposed *Resort Slope and Trail Safety Responsibility Code* to the California and western Nevada ski areas as well as the California Ski Industry Association and the National Ski Areas Association for comment and feedback. He emphasized, “We are seeking their review, comment and suggestions for improvement.”

SSF plans to finalize the resort responsibility code and promote it during the 2017 /2018 season. The proposed *RSTSR Code* is posted on the SSF website at www.snowsportsafety.org and will be publicized through the SSF Facebook page in hopes of gaining skier and rider comments and suggestions.

In December, SSF released the *2016 California Mountain Resort Safety Survey* that documented significant variability and inconsistency in the use of common safety practices and safeguards on the slopes and trails within and between resorts.

"During one hour on the slopes and trails of California ski areas there is five times or greater risk of death than during one hour behind the wheel of an automobile and fifteen times or greater risk of injury," says Gregorie. "Snowsports are a wonderful and exhilarating outdoor activity for individuals and families. Safety for many resort patrons is as important as a number of other attributes like snowfall, number of lifts and the variety of slopes and trails in their choice of a resort. Many parents particularly want to know what their preferred resort is doing to keep their children as safe as possible."

Gregorie notes "The skiing public is given absolutely no information about individual resort safety records or standards. So right now consumers are not able to consider safety when choosing a resort."

The SSF believes this resort responsibility code will provide skiers and riders a good overview of what mountain resorts should be doing on their slopes and trails to help protect patrons from preventable accidents.

"The *RSTSR Code* is not a comprehensive and detailed safety plan. It summarizes the minimum general safety measures responsible skiers and riders ought to be able to expect from a resort providing a reasonably safe and predictable environment," says mountain resort slope and trail safety expert and SSF board member, Richard Penniman.

The *RSTSR Code* covers 16 safety measures such as marking hazards for approaching skiers; warning and separating merging skier/rider traffic at blind and divergent ability intersections; clearly marking and signing resort boundaries and trails; standardizing signs, hazard marking and difficulty ratings; providing impact protection for man-made and other obstacles on or near slopes and trails; constructing and operating acrobatic terrain park features to professionally engineered standards; parking vehicles so that skiers/riders cannot encounter them; and equipping all chairlifts with restraint bars etc.

Penniman adds, "We understand many resorts already use a lot of the safety measures on the list --- but others do not. As a group, California resorts rated less than a "C" (70%) when our survey documented the consistent and proper use of these measures at each resort."

Added Gregorie, "We strive to find common ground with the California and Nevada resorts so we can work together to assure resort patrons they will have the most enjoyable and safest possible experience on the slopes and trails. Unfortunately, so far every outreach we have made to individual resorts and the California Ski Industry Association has been rebuffed. We will continue our efforts to engage and collaborate with the resorts. We urge the resorts to take seriously this call for public safety transparency so their patrons can consider safety in their choice of resorts and enjoy as safe an experience as possible."

Since 2008, SSF has advocated for the establishment of safety standards on the slopes and trails of ski resorts as well as public access to resorts' safety plans and accident statistics.

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 2016 *California Mountain Resort Safety Survey* and the proposed *Resort Slope and Trail Safety Responsibility Code* are 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.