



Child Ski Safety

Issue

Children are not adequately protected under current Colorado ski legislation. Both the Passenger and Tramways Safety Act (PTSA) and the Ski Safety Act (SSA) regard children as adults resulting in children being responsible for their own safety at ski resorts. This is developmentally inappropriate and causing a child public safety issue. Currently, there are no safety statutes or regulations to protect child skiers.

Background

On February 2019, a six-year-old girl fell 29 feet from a chairlift while in ski school. She was riding the lift with only another six-year-old child. The lift attendant did not follow regulated loading procedures. The parent community waited for an explanation for this accident. The parent community quickly learned that no one was legally responsible for this accident because every child is legally responsible for his or her own safety at ski resorts. Two days after the accident, Parents for Safe Skiing was formed. We are approximately 1200 members that love the mountains and love our families. We believe that both of these passions can coexist with reasonable ski-safety statutes and regulations.

Problem

Children are not developmentally capable of meeting the requirements of the PTSA or the SSA. Regardless of children's developmental limitations, resorts continue and provide ski school for children as young as four years-old knowing that legally children are responsible for their own safety.

The SSA *requires* children to:

- ◆ Evaluate their own skiing abilities, knowledge, and physical dexterity.
- ◆ Read and comprehend written directions.
- ◆ Know the limits of their own ability.

All of these requirements contradict the developmental capabilities of young children.

The PTSA *fails* to:

- ◆ Provide an age or height limitation to ride a chair lift without an adult.
- ◆ Enforce the responsibility of the lift attendant to assist passengers when loading the lift.
- ◆ Require young children to use a safety bar while riding a lift.
- ◆ Uphold transparency in incident reporting.
- ◆ Collect loading and unloading accident data.
- ◆ Require drug testing for lift attendants.

Solution

Amend both the Passenger and Tramways Safety Act and the Ski Safety Act to include special considerations for children that ensure their protection.

Myths and Realities

Myth: Children are sufficiently safe while skiing.

Reality: The minimal data available indicates that children are at a greater risk for injury while skiing. Children are over represented in chairlift accidents (PTSB, 2018). In 2018, 1/3 of chairlift accident were children; although, children represent fewer than one quarter of the overall ski population. Children seven-years-old and under are far more likely to fall from a lift than children older than 7 years-old (Glissmeyer, 2018).

Myth: Ski instructors are responsible for children's safety during ski school.

Reality: All skiers are responsible for their own safety regardless of their age or if they are in ski school.

Myth: Parents make voluntary and informed decisions when skiing with their children or enrolling them in ski school.

Reality: Parents are not able to make *voluntary and informed* decisions due to resorts' inconsistent safety practices, lack of informed risk, and the absence of accident data.

Myth: Parents are able to pursue redress if a resort violates their responsibilities as described in the SSA or the PTSA.

Reality: The ski waiver negates the SSA and the PTSA, making all safety statutes and regulations unenforceable.

Status

We are beginning the stake holding process. Please join us in making skiing reasonably safe for children.

References:

Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies. Passenger and Tramways Safety Board. Chairlift Fall Data. 2018.

Glissmeyer, Metzger, Bolte. 2018. Chairlift Falls and Injuries in Children. Pediatric Emergency Care. Volume 34. Issue 2. Pg. 106-108.