



NORTH CAROLINA SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION



SKI WELL, BE WELL

**NORTH CAROLINA SKI AREAS OPERATING BEST
PRACTICES**

WINTER 2020-21

FOUNDED IN 1976, THE NORTH CAROLINA SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION

serves as the state's trade association. Its purpose is to foster, stimulate and promote skiing and snowsports, as well as safety in skiing and snowsports in North Carolina and to encourage cooperation and assistance from State agencies. North Carolina ski area owners and operators have a long history of developing best practices for ski, snowboard, and lift safety. The Association supports the nationally-accepted Your Responsibility Code, which defines the basic tenets of slope safety.

OUR COMMITMENT

The North Carolina ski and snowboard industry values and prioritizes the health and safety of its guests, staff and local communities. We demonstrate this commitment by implementing the following operating best practices for the 2020-21 winter season, or for as long as needed, scaled appropriately in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Carolina ski industry leaders from all six resorts established these foundational best practices according to scientific guidelines put forth by infectious disease experts, including the CDC and WHO. North Carolina ski areas will comply with additional federal, state and local regulations as they are implemented.

Snowsports are a way for people to play in wide-open spaces, and to take advantage of the mental and physical health benefits of outdoor recreation. For decades, ski area owners and operators have managed skier numbers and safety in daily operations, collaborating with fellow industry experts to offer safe and memorable experiences. The North Carolina Ski Areas association is committed to providing outdoor recreation in ways that promote health and safety, and reduce the risk of infection.

"Our commitment to providing a healthy and fun environment is stronger than ever."

*Gunther Jochl, President,
Sugar Mountain Resort*

Ski areas are committed to supporting healthy and thriving local communities. We will continue to partner with local agencies to maintain the success and character of the places in which we operate.



THE NORTH CAROLINA SNOWSPORTS INDUSTRY

generates \$228 million annually toward the North Carolina economy, and supports over 1,500 jobs statewide. The six ski areas across the mountain regions of Western North Carolina are the primary drivers of their rural economies. A significant amount of revenues is generated during the winter season; for some NC ski area's the season can last over 140 days.

A LETTER FROM NCSAA'S PRESIDENT

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, the North Carolina ski industry leaders have listened and learned, and responded by implementing the guidelines outlined by Governor Cooper and the CDC to their summer and fall operations. The results are exciting and encouraging. Positive COVID-19 cases within the communities of all six ski areas continues to be significantly lower than the state average. Employment remains stable. Local businesses are operating within state guidelines and we look forward to continuing safe operation during the winter season. A refreshing level of respect and compassion is felt throughout North Carolina's outdoor community. Most importantly, we are committed to the health and well-being of those living in and visiting our mountain communities.

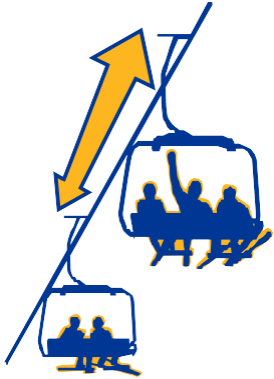
*Kimberley Jochl
President
North Carolina Ski Areas Association*



"We look forward to welcoming guests to the slopes this winter!"
Chris Bates, President, Cataloochee Ski Area

BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES OF SKI AREAS

Ski areas provide low-risk outdoor recreation opportunities for millions of Americans. Here's what makes the ski industry uniquely positioned to do so:



Space

North Carolina ski areas provide hundreds of acres of land for outdoor recreation. Ski area operators are experts at monitoring and managing the flow and volume of traffic in their outdoor spaces.



Natural Outdoor Environment

The majority of time spent at a ski area is spent outside in the fresh air, cruising down runs.



Standard Gear

Face coverings, including neck gaiters, goggles, gloves or mittens, and helmets are standard pieces of skiing or snowboarding gear.



Slope Safety Etiquette

Long-standing skiing and snowboarding etiquette requires guests to respect one another and give space between themselves and other skiers and riders. Safe skiers leave space between otherskiers.

"The ski industry plays an important part of the overall travel and tourism sector. Nationwide, alpine resorts provide a great opportunity for travelers to get outside and recreate in a mountain environment with wide open spaces."

Roger Dow, President and CEO of U.S. Travel Association

“Research is showing that being outside in a mountain environment can boost our immune systems as well as our mental health and well-being,” says Florence Williams, author of *The Nature Fix: How Being in Nature Can Make us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative*.



Health Benefits

Snowsports provide numerous proven health and wellness benefits to participants. According to the WHO, “regular physical activity benefits both the body and mind.” The organization says that physical activity increases strength and fitness, reduces the risk of cardiovascular and other physical ailments and improves mental health, specifically reducing the risk of depression.¹

¹ World Health Organization, Q&A: Be Active During COVID-19 (accessed August 2020)



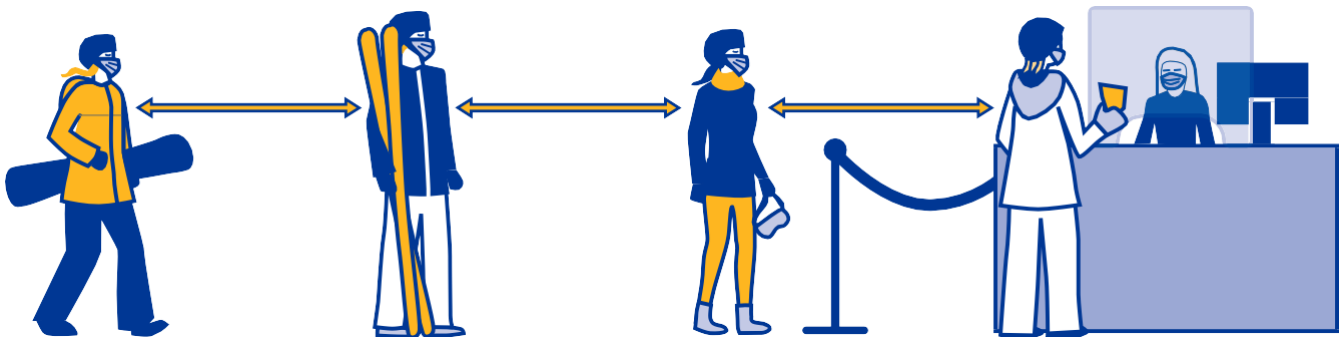
Shared Responsibility for Safety

It is up to every individual, both ski area employee and guest, to do their part to help protect the health and safety of our skiing and snowboarding community. Following requirements to mitigate the risk of infection is part of the social contract between ski area operator and guest.



Touchless Transactions

Many ski areas have adopted technologies to reduce personal contact between employees and guests. These include touchless payment and access technologies, such as RF (radio frequency) scanning of tickets and passes.



SAFE WORKING, SAFE RECREATING

Here is how North Carolina ski areas are helping to keep their employees, guests and communities healthy:

Face Coverings are Required

Ski areas will require face coverings that align with CDC recommendations whenever physical distancing cannot be achieved. This includes both indoor and outdoor spaces, except when eating or drinking.



Physical Distancing

Ski areas will create operational plans that allow for appropriate spacing between parties. This includes but is not limited to the following parts of the operation: lift queues, ticket queues, ski and snowboard lessons, employee spaces, and food and beverage outlets.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Ski areas will adopt cleaning and disinfection strategies for all areas of their operation, including high-touch areas such as restrooms, restaurants, dining facilities, ticket offices, and rental shops. All cleaning products used will follow CDC and EPA guidance on agents which are effective against COVID-19.



Operating Plans

Ski areas will review and amend both their overall and individual departmental operating plans to: comply with local regulations; maintain physical distancing requirements; and adhere to cleaning and disinfection best practices.

INDOOR SPACES: Ski areas comply with local regulations regarding the management of indoor spaces.

OUTDOOR SPACES: Ski areas have created detailed, scalable operating plans for the management of outdoor spaces including base areas, lifts and ski terrain.

“Enhanced health and safety measures are in place in every part of our operation” Brad Moretz, President, Appalachian Ski Mtn.



Communication

Ski areas will communicate their plans and requirements to guests prior to their arrival at the ski area, stressing the shared responsibility in keeping our slopes safe. Guests will be made aware of their obligations, including the requirement to wear a face covering whenever physical distancing cannot be achieved. Ski areas will also post on-site signage notifying guests and employees of required best practices to help stop the spread.

Reporting and Notification

Ski areas will comply with state and local public health orders and follow CDC best practices when reporting a positive case of COVID-19 at their resort. Employees will be trained in these practices by ski area leadership.



OUR INDUSTRY'S GOAL IS TO KEEP GUESTS SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING

Skiing is a weather-based business requiring the daily scaling of operations to respond to current conditions. As such, our industry is uniquely prepared to pivot its operations.

We are confident in our expertise of managing outdoor recreation spaces. Skiing and snowboarding

offer low-risk, high-value recreation and it is our goal to provide that to our guests, even if some indoor or close-contact activities have to be scaled back or put on hold. The ski industry is committed to a collaborative relationship with state and local authorities to work together for solutions to keep ski areas open, and to keep guests and staff safe.

Employee Training

Ski area employees are trained in COVID-19 safety and disinfection protocols, consistent with recommendations from the CDC.

Employee Wellness Checks



Stay home or go home when experiencing the following symptoms:

Ski areas perform daily wellness checks of all employees prior to the start of their shifts. Employees will be sent home or asked to stay home if they have come into contact with a positive COVID-19 case and/or exhibit relevant symptoms.

- muscle aches
- headache
- loss of smell or taste
- diarrhea
- cough
- sore throat
- congestion or runny nose
- nausea or vomiting

LIFTS

There are thousands of outdoor recreation options but what makes the ski industry different is its uphill transport: aerial ropeways like chairlifts, trams and gondolas, and surface conveyors. Of these, chairlifts are the most common.

The National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) serves as the secretariat of the American National Standards Institute Accredited Standards Committee B77, which develops design requirements, specifications for training, and operation and maintenance requirements for aerial ropeways.

NSAA believes that ski areas can effectively operate their ropeways without additional risk of infection by setting forth these best practices.

Face coverings will be mandatory on all lifts.



Lift Queues

Physical distancing in lift queues occurs organically due to the length of skis and snowboards. Ski area employees have vast experience managing queues and the expertise to ensure a consistent flow of appropriately-spaced traffic.

Loading the Chair

Guests will be asked to self-group and load the chair with their traveling party. Lift attendants will not require guests to ride a chairlift with people they do not know. High capacity chairlifts may be the exception, and may be loaded in a way that allows for physical distancing.



Riding the Chair

The average chairlift ride is 7 minutes, considerably shorter than most transportation activities such as riding a bus or taking a trip in an airplane. The average chairlift travels at approximately 5 mph, 7 feet every second, providing constant directional air flow. Chairs are spaced approximately 50 feet apart. Express lifts, found at many ski areas and resorts, travel at nearly 17 mph, with chairs spaced over 100 feet apart.

Unloading the Lift

Standard ski area safety rules and on-mountain signage require that people clear the unload area quickly after disembarking. Once clear of the chair, skiers and riders have wide open spaces on which to slide.



“We have every reason to believe that the success of summer season will carry over to our winter season.”

Ryan Costin, President, Beech Mountain Resort

Open Air Chairlifts

The majority of our lifts are open air chairs where the rider experiences a constant flow of fresh, clean air.



Chairlifts check the boxes for low-risk transportation and recreation.

- ☒ Face coverings required
- ☒ Outdoor environment
- ☒ Skiers and snowboarders will ride the lift with their traveling party
- ☒ Lift rides are generally 5-10 minutes, and almost always under 15 minutes
- ☒ Lift travel between 5 and 17 mph, creating constant one-way directional airflow
- ☒ Chairs are typically spaced 50 or more feet apart

The North Carolina ski industry is committed to providing outdoor recreation in ways that reduce the risk of infection.



ENDORSEMENTS

All six North Carolina ski areas have advised the creation of this document and endorse its contents

North Carolina Ski Areas

Association Board of Directors

President: Kimberley Jochl, Sugar Mountain Resort

Vice President: Chris Bates, Cataloochee Ski Area

Treasurer: Erich Schmidinger, Sugar Mountain Resort

Secretary: Ryan Costin, Beech Mountain Resort

Brad Moretz, Appalachian Ski Mtn.

Orville English, Wolf Ridge Ski Resort

Chris Green, Sapphire Valley Ski Area

Alpine Ski Center

American Association of Snowboard Instructors

Asheville Chamber of Commerce

Avery County Chamber of Commerce

Banner Elk Chamber of Commerce

Banner Elk TDA

Beech Mountain Chamber of Commerce

Beech Mountain TDA

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Haywood County Chamber of Commerce

Haywood County TDA

National Ski Areas Association

National Ski Patrol

Professional Ski Instructors of America

SIA Snowsports Industries America

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Village of Sugar Mountain TDA

Visit NC

Watauga County TDA

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