



Zero missed work days means uninterrupted opportunities to share the snowsports stoke with students.

RANDY BOVERMAN

HOW MT. HOOD MEADOWS HELPS PREVENT INJURIES AMONG INSTRUCTORS

By Stephanie Prince Alexander, with Jeremy Riss

Just as ski area managers take steps to help keep guests safer, preventing injuries among instructors is a top priority for ski and snowboard school directors and managers. To do this successfully, having data about when, where, and how injuries

most often to occur – or *almost* occur – is crucial. Here, Jeremy Riss, vice president of resort and commercial operations at Oregon's Mt. Hood Meadows, shares specific tactics the resort has implemented to reduce injuries among its teaching staff, which also translates into fewer lost working days. Don't miss out on these tips your ski and ride school could apply this season.



We've invested significant time and effort to reduce injuries to our instructors. Our data shows that since the

2009-10 season, 53 percent of our instructor injuries have been due to falls while skiing or riding, and 33 percent are caused by collisions. (Causes varied for the remaining 14 percent.) Early in this research, we realized that in addition to actual injuries, there were many more situations where an injury *could* have or almost happened.

In order to get more data we instituted a near-miss reporting system, recording information about situations that *could* have caused an injury just as we would for an actual injury causing incident. This gave a better idea of what was causing situations that had potential for instructor injury.

HOW MT. HOOD ACHIEVED ZERO MISSED WORKING DAYS

Focusing our efforts on reducing the falls and collisions that account for the majority of injuries, we found that the overwhelming

majority of falls happen when instructors are skiing/riding on green and blue runs, or helping students up. The revelation that the majority of the falls came on easier runs, not the steeper terrain, was very interesting as it indicated that the mishaps occurred because instructors were focused on other things besides their own skiing/riding when they fell. We reasoned that more difficult terrain requires the instructor to pay more attention to their own skiing/riding. To address this issue we started a program we call "Blue Run Blues" to remind our instructors and other on-hill staff to pay attention on easier runs.

We also educated staff about the high percentage of falls that happen when instructors attempt to physically assist students, and urged them to be cautious when doing so. We spent time in trainings discussing the best ways to



Calling all ski and ride school directors and resort management! **What's your resort or ski and ride school doing to prevent injuries among instructors and students?**



You all have valuable information to share and important questions to ask, so join the conversation on The Community at: <http://tiny.cc/jm7oeey>. And make plans to attend the Member School Management Seminar at PSIA-AASI's Fall Conference November 3-6, 2016, where you'll dive deep into topics with your peers that will help you be better managers and directors... and increase business. Register by October 10, 2016, at tiny.cc/502pey.

help students when physical assistance is necessary.

To create more awareness about collisions, we plotted on a large trail map all the collisions and near-miss collisions that occurred. During our instructor training, all our groups skied to each area where collisions were more likely to happen and discussed the reasons those areas were more prone to collisions, such as merging trails or variations in terrain. Trainees discussed different runs they could take to avoid those areas, and what instructors could do differently in those areas to make collisions less likely.

Upon applying these primary tactics to address the issue, the resulting reduction in instructor injury rate was significant. In the three seasons preceding our implementation of this program we averaged 175 working days lost per season due to injury. In the seasons since implementing this program we have averaged only 38 working days lost due to injury – a near 80% reduction. In our third season of the program, zero

working days were lost due to injury, which is very impressive for a school with more than 350 instructors.

NEAR-MISS REPORTING TAKEAWAYS


Overall, as a resort we found near-miss reporting to be key in employee injury reduction. The departments that turned in the most near-miss reports had the lowest rate of employee injuries.

The big takeaway from the near miss reports was that we asked employees in the given situation what they could have done different to avoid the injury or near-miss, even if the employee was not at fault.

STRIVE TO BE INJURY FREE, BUT JUST IN CASE...

Being vigilant when skiing or riding on all terrain (not just the steep stuff), and taking care when assisting students can go a long way toward preventing the injuries that can put instructors out of commission. But accidents do happen, which is why you might want to look into the policies available through Sports Insurance, which has partnered with PSIA-AASI to provide insurance policies for snowsports instructors. For more information, see the ad on page 117 and the Pro Offers available at TheSnowPros.org.

This gave us great ideas and information to share and discuss in department meetings with regard to employee safety, which is something we all greatly value.

View Mt. Hood's near-miss report on The Community at: tiny.cc/ybetey. 

Stephanie Prince Alexander is the PSIA-AASI special projects editor.

In addition to being the vice president of resort and commercial operations at Mt. Hood Meadows in Oregon, **Jeremy Riss** is a member of Northwest Division's Technical Team. He is also a division clinic leader and alpine examiner.



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