

winter sports safety

Balfour Beatty Communities

Hitting the Slopes Safely

For the winter sports enthusiast, a day without snow is not the end of the world. After all, you can't control the weather. Rather, the saddest day for skiers and snowboarders is when there is a lot of snow but they're forced to stay inside because of an injury. Skiing and snowboarding carry a fairly high risk of injury, but that risk can be greatly reduced if you:

- Make sure you and your equipment are in good condition before taking to the slopes.
- Take the time to learn about proper techniques and equipment.
- Learn and obey the unwritten code of responsibility for skiers.

GETTING PREPARED

Skiing and snowboarding are strenuous activities. They require agility and flexibility and put heavy demand on muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Aerobic exercise such as jogging or bicycling are recommended for getting in shape prior to and during the season. If you are in good overall condition, you will not tire as quickly and will be at less of a risk for injury. Before engaging in any sport, it is critical to do stretching exercises.

TECHNIQUES

Skiing and snowboarding are challenging and require physical skills that are only learned over time and with practice. Beginners should take a few lessons from a ski or snowboard instructor to learn proper techniques, including not only how to stay upright but also how to fall. Bad habits that are learned early on are difficult to reverse later. Once you've had a few lessons, start slowly. Know your skill level and stay within your limitations.

EQUIPMENT

Make sure your equipment is in good condition and is appropriate for your height, weight, and skill level. Boots and bindings should fit snugly and securely. Wear a helmet designed specifically for skiing or snowboarding. Dress properly for winter weather but in clothes that allow you to move -- multiple layers, ski pants and jacket, a turtleneck, gloves and goggles. Wear bright colors so others on the slopes can easily see you. Snowboarders are also encouraged to wear wrist guards and kneepads -- many injuries occur when trying to break a fall.

SKI RESPONSIBLY

Like all sports, there is proper etiquette to observe on the ski slopes:

- Give skiers or snowboarders below you the right of way.
- Stop on the side of the run and not in the middle and stay clear of others coming down behind you.
- Do not play games or roughhouse on the slopes.
- Do not drink alcohol and ski or snowboard; drink plenty of water and rehydrate often.