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COVER PHOTO:
KATIE YOUNG/KEystone RESORT

ABOVE PHOTOS (LEFT TO RIGHT):
KATIE YOUNG/KEystone RESORT
DMITRYART/123RF
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BACKGROUND:
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EXPANDING THE EXPERIENCE



Hello!
Welcome to the latest issue of *SnowOps*! There is something about this point in the season that always makes me step back and look at how far our industry has come. One thing I realized while working on this issue is that the resorts that are thriving are the ones thinking about what comes next. Whether that's who they're welcoming onto the mountain, how they're extending the guest experience or how they're adapting to increasingly unpredictable winters, intention matters.

Our cover story takes us to Keystone Mountain Resort, a venue that has been a pioneer in the Colorado Rockies since 1970. This year, Keystone is making history by becoming the first resort to host the National Brotherhood of Snowsports (NBS) Summit in back-to-back years. The NBS is a vital force in our industry, representing 60 member clubs and working tirelessly to develop athletes of color for international competition. Last year's summit at Keystone drew a record 1,500 attendees, and organizers expect that number to climb to 1,800 this year. Turn to page 8 to read more about this historic event and Keystone's commitment to inclusion.

On page 12, we explore how resorts are driving real results through after-hours programming. From night skiing to extended sessions for locals, our feature looks at how these programs are proving to be sustainable revenue drivers when built on operational clarity and repeatable systems.

We also take an in-depth look at North America's largest snow storage

project at Sun Peaks Resort in British Columbia. With shorter cold windows and unpredictable snowfall, snow storage is moving from a niche experiment to a core piece of mountain infrastructure. Using insulated mat technology from Snow Secure, resorts can now insure their season, guaranteeing opening dates even when the weather doesn't cooperate. Learn how this technology offers a feasible payback in as little as two years on page 23.

As always, don't forget to check out our events calendar and industry news for the latest updates, and stay connected through our Facebook page and monthly e-newsletter.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on these stories or any innovations you're seeing at your own resort. You can reach me at editor@snowopsmag.com.

See you on the slopes!



Ligia Braidotti
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2026 Snow Industry Events

Below is a list of events hosted by various organizations for the snow operations industry. For more information on any event, visit the organization's website.

If you have an event that you would like added to this list email SnowOps at editor@snowopsmag.com.

FEBRUARY

Feb. 3-4

2026 Eastern Winter Conference

Killington, Vt.

nsaa.org

MARCH

March 4-6

2026 BC Tourism Industry Conference

Kelowna, B.C.

bctourismconference.ca

APRIL

April 13-16

49th Annual Lift Maintenance Seminar

Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort, Mass.

ma-lms.org

April 21-23

Mountain Works

Bend, Ore.

pnsaaevents.org

April 21-23

Mountain Planet

Grenoble, France

mountain-planet.com

April 27-30

2026 CWSAA Spring Conference and Trade Show

Whistler, B.C.

cwsaa.org

MAY

May 4-7

NSAA Spring National Convention

Carlsbad, Calif.

nsaa.org

May 11-14

SAVMI Conference and Trade Show

Grand Junction, Colo.

savmi.org

May 18-21

RMLA 54th Annual Conference and Trade Show

Salt Lake City, Utah

rmla.org

May 25-28

ASSQ Annual Congress

La Malbaie, Que.

maneige.ski

JUNE

June 3-6

58th International Snowmobile Congress

Omaha, Neb.

snowmobilers.org

June 8-10

2026 ISAA Conference

Tamarack Resort, Idaho

isaa.org *



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KEYSTONE POISED TO MAKE

**Colorado resort the first venue to ever host
NBS in back-to-back years**

By Jim Timlick

Keystone Mountain Resort has continued to make history since it opened to the public in 1970. Nestled in the Colorado Rockies, Keystone was one of the first ski areas in the region to make its own snow, paying a then-princely sum of \$350,000 to install a

snowmaking system in 1972. It was also among the first U.S. mountain parks to introduce night skiing after building a mountainside lighting system in 1985. And did we mention the Keystone Conference Center was the largest venue built in the Rockies when it opened in 1989 at a cost of \$10 million?



History

Later this winter, Keystone will add another chapter to that history when it hosts the 53rd annual National Brotherhood of Snowsports (NBS) Summit from Feb. 28 to March 8. It will mark the first time in the event's history that it will take place at the same resort in back-to-back years.

PHOTOS: KATIE YOUNG/KEYSTONE RESORT



The NBS Summit brings together 60 member clubs and hundreds of supporters from around the globe. Its mandate is to encourage increased participation in winter sports while also supporting the development of athletes of color to compete on the international stage. The event will feature skiing and riding across Keystone's three peaks (Dercum, North Peak and Outback) along with racing, youth programming, cultural celebrations and a welcome parade.

Kate Schifani, Keystone's senior director of mountain operations, says staff and management are thrilled to be hosting the event for the second year in a row.

"One of the things I love about NBS is that they're just a fun group, really fun. The stroke is high. They bring some folks that don't even ski but just love ski culture and come hang out," she said.

"And being inclusive is one of our values as a company. We have a lot of outreach programs. NBS has been an awesome partner for our company in that regard. We believe that the future of our sport is inclusion and the more people that we can get excited about it, the better."

The previous NBS Summit at Keystone drew a record-setting total of more than 1,500 attendees, a figure that could be even higher for this year's summit as organizers are expecting about 1,800 guests.

Schifani says it's a distinct honor for Keystone to be the first venue chosen to host the event in consecutive years.

"Last year, I thought our team on the mountainside executed really well, and the hospitality side executed super well. Obviously, they decided to come back [this year], so hopefully they had that experience as well," she said.

"I think the big thing is [we provided] a comprehensive experience that is maybe unique out there. Besides the mountainside, we have a large hospitality footprint and that's everything from the lodge and spa to condos. We have a wide variety of options. What I hope is that [we] provided them with such a good time that they wanted to do it here again."

NBS president Henri Rivers says that his organization is excited to be returning to Keystone for its 53rd summit.

"Last year's event set a new standard, from the warm welcome of the resort staff to the incredible mountain experience on and off the slopes," Rivers said in a statement.

"Coming back reflects both our gratitude for that hospitality and our excitement to build on it. The Summit is where our community comes together to celebrate who we are, support our athletes and inspire the next generation of skiers and riders."

While the NBS Summit runs for just seven days, planning begins well in advance. In fact, Schifani says Keystone staff began planning for this year's summit within days of last year's event wrapping up.

That planning process involved virtually every member of Keystone's staff. That included the competition services, terrain park, lifts and ski patrols teams. The resort's food and beverage and hospitality teams also played a key role in preparing for this year's event.

Those teams have been meeting bi-weekly since 2024 to make sure everyone involved is on the same page and there are no unexpected surprises. They have also been meeting regularly with NBS officials to make sure any needs or concerns are addressed in a timely fashion.

That said, there's no need to reinvent the wheel, Schifani explains.

"We host and do events and fun activations fairly often through the season, so it's not doing anything super unique per se. We're just doing a lot of the things that we do all in one week," she said.

"I think that's maybe a little bit unique when you stack them all up like that. You just really want to make sure that the logistics of that are all fluid and there isn't any gap or break in what we're doing."

Although the same amount of planning has gone into preparing for this year's summit, Schifani acknowledges it has been a little easier with the gift of hindsight.

"I think we're in a little bit different situation this year because we've done it once, and we know what we want to make better," she said.

"We learned some things about the kind of races that we want to do and where we want to have a couple of race venues. It was like, 'Maybe if we moved this one from Dutchman to Go Devil.' We also learned some things with our hospitality team – what went really well and [what] we definitely want to repeat."

Perhaps one of the biggest logistical challenges in hosting an event like the NBS Summit is making sure that a large number of guests can move from one area to another with ease and the wait to access facilities is relatively minimal.

Schifani says that's why a considerable number of resources is devoted to getting the initial load of guests onto

the mountainside. That includes deploying a small army of staff to the lift area early on to keep lineups to a minimum.

"We're really fortunate to have a great lift system. And the mountain's pretty thoughtful in its layout. Once we're through kind of that initial load, we can spread people out pretty well," she said.

Grooming will be one of the top priorities for Keystone's mountainside staff during the NBS Summit, including first tracks and breakfast tracks and where to locate them to ensure some perfect corduroy for the day's first skiers. Staff will also work closely with the NBS team to address any grooming pattern requests they might have and how to improve the overall ski experience.

The resort's public safety and mountain operations teams will meet up with NBS officials in the weeks leading up to the summit to finalize a safety plan. Schifani says that the safety plan isn't likely to deviate much from what the resort normally does.

"One of the things I love about NBS coming back is that for this one-week period, our mountain looks different because we have this super high concentration of black skiers, which is amazing. To see the passion that they bring to our sport and the inclusivity and the way we connect to other communities in our area is fantastic," she said.

"And the great thing is we don't have to get NBS excited. They bring excitement at a level that we don't really see with other groups. It's such a huge honor that they trust us to do the summit again this year." *



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BEYOND THE SLOP

How after-hours programs are driving real results at ski resorts

By Ligia Braidotti

Many resorts are turning to after-hours programming to unlock incremental revenue and deepen guest engagement. From night skiing under bright lights to extended-hour sessions that let locals carve turns after work, these programs have become sustainable elements of the winter season, not just gimmicks.

What separates the successes from the rest is understanding that after-hours revenue only works when it's built on operational clarity. Here are some examples that show how it's done.

Mt. Hood Skibowl: The largest night skiing footprint in the U.S.

Some resorts dabble in night skiing on a few runs. Mt. Hood Skibowl goes big.

Located near Government Camp, Ore., Skibowl boasts the largest night

skiing operation in the U.S., with more than 30 lit runs accessed by four chairlifts, making up a significant portion of its 960-acre skiable area.

With so much terrain under lights, Skibowl's night sessions give guests full-mountain access after dark, rather than a limited or truncated experience. That sense of scale is reinforced by accessible pricing – night tickets are typically priced lower than full-day passes, making evening skiing an attractive, value-driven option for both locals and visitors.

Crucially, night operations at Skibowl, and any other ski area, need lighting infrastructure, patrol coverage and staffing built into seasonal operating plans and budgets, allowing after-hours skiing to function as a core part of daily mountain operations rather than a special event.

Skibowl's success shows that owning scale matters for night-skiing, not

just for guest appeal, but for staffing predictability and lift scheduling. Local operators can treat night runs as another shift rather than a departure from standard operations.

Brighton Resort: Expanded night terrain and evening lessons

In Utah's Brighton Resort, night operations have evolved beyond the basics.

Brighton turns on the lights from around 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. most evenings, spreading illumination across multiple runs and lifts.

Brighton's night operations are built around well-lit multiple lifts, with the resort continuing to expand its illuminated terrain in response to demand and encouraging repeat evening visits. The program is further strengthened by dedicated lesson offerings, including group lessons on Thursday nights,

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After-hours revenue only works when it's built on operational clarity, realistic terrain scope and repeatable systems.

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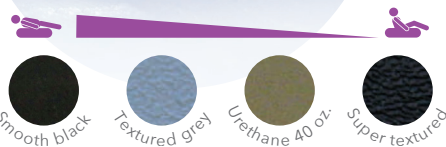
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which give locals a structured reason to stay on the mountain later and help keep the terrain active even after peak daytime crowds have thinned.

Together, these elements speak directly to the Wasatch Front's large population of after-work skiers and riders, positioning night skiing as a natural extension of Brighton's community-driven culture rather than a novelty.

Bogus Basin: Night skiing with strong local loyalty

Bogus Basin near Boise, Idaho, runs night sessions daily, often until 10 p.m., and lights large portions of the mountain.

Night skiing isn't reserved for holidays or weekends, it happens every night, which simplifies staffing, grooming rotation and safety planning. Bogus Basin's night season passes are priced to incentivize repeat visits, turning night skiing into a revenue driver and a loyalty builder.

Tyrol Basin: Small-mountain success with expanded tubing

Not every success story is about huge terrain under lights. Tyrol Basin, located in Mt. Horeb, Wis., mixes night skiing with expanded tubing and base-area amenities to draw consistent evening crowds.

The addition of snow tubing lanes and a new bar/concession building has turned Tyrol Basin's after-hours program into more than just skiing and into a social experience.

This matters because after-hours programming built around tubing and après options helps diversify revenue by extending per-guest spending beyond lift tickets alone. These offerings are family-friendly and approachable for mixed-ability groups, allowing resorts to attract a broader audience rather than relying solely on core skiers and riders. By concentrating activity in the base area, night programming can succeed without the need for extensive terrain lighting, instead thriving on a destination-style

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experience that encourages guests to linger, socialize and spend more time and money on the mountain.

Paoli Peaks: Midnight Madness and deep-night sessions

In Paoli, Ind., Paoli Peaks pushes night operations into fun territory with extended hours that have included “Midnight Madness” sessions lasting until 3 a.m. on select nights.

That kind of programming pulls in younger crowds and locals looking for something truly different, opens new slots for food and beverage revenue and creates stories that keep the resort top-of-mind for skiers.

From an operations perspective, these sessions are planned as occasional special events rather than nightly commitments, which helps manage staffing and safety without burning out crews or equipment.

Gunstock Mountain Resort: Glow events and terrain park culture

At Gunstock Mountain Resort in New Hampshire, night skiing combines with themed events to make after-hours programming memorable and profitable. Gunstock offers night skiing on its lower mountain, often supplemented with glow stick-themed terrain park competitions (Glow and Throw) that turn an ordinary night session into an experience.

Key success factors include themed programming that creates energy and buzz, events like glow park nights attract a social, experience-driven crowd and translate into both ticket sales and ancillary spending. Just as important is the focus on community and participation. These nights are designed to be fun first and profitable second, which strengthens guest connection and long-term loyalty. The scope remains manageable, with only a portion of the terrain lit enough to deliver a memorable experience without adding unnecessary operational strain. *

Common Traits of After-Hours Success

Across these varied ski areas, from large operations like Mt. Hood Skibowl to smaller hills like Tyrol Basin, a few patterns consistently emerge:

Predictable operational scope

Successful programs define exactly what's open and when, so grooming, patrol and lift operations can be scheduled with confidence.

Integration with staffing and safety

Whether it's consistent nightly operations or planned special events, after-hours offerings are woven into the operational calendar, not tacked on at the last minute.

Experience amplification

Glow events, tube park expansions and structured lessons during night sessions all broaden the value proposition, turning an extended day into a reason to stay later and spend more.

Revenue diversification beyond lift tickets

Ancillary sales – tubing, food and beverage, theme nights, passes – add robustness to the revenue stream while also offsetting operational costs.

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GROOMING *after* DAYS

How extended operating hours change grooming cycles, equipment use and next-day surface quality

By Ligia Braidotti

Bringing in after-hours revenue is a lot more involved than simply tacking on a few extra lift hours. Once a resort decides to keep more of the mountain open later, the entire equation for grooming fundamentally changes: the timing of the work, the amount of set-up time the snow gets, how aggressively machines can be operated and how the quality of the next morning's product is protected.

At most resorts, grooming crews get to work during the quietest, coldest hours of the night. That's when the mountain is empty and the temperatures are low.

But when after-hours operations are in full swing, the situation flips. The mountain stays busy much later into the evening, and the precious window for creating that signature morning corduroy grows narrower and narrower for grooming crews.

RK



When the mountain doesn't go to bed

Normally, when lifts shut down at 4 p.m., ski patrol sweeps the slopes, grooming teams get started, the snow cools and refreezes and guests wake up to a mountain covered in fresh corduroy. But when resorts extend those hours, the whole routine gets thrown off balance.

One thing that sometimes gets overlooked is just how critical set-up time is. Trail grooming can take anywhere from two to six hours, sometimes up to 10, for the trail surface to properly refreeze. The longer a freshly groomed run gets to rest before being skied, the tougher and longer-lasting that surface will be.

When terrain is open until 9 p.m., that set-up window starts much later, and that has consequences. There's less time for

worked snow to firm up before the morning rush, higher odds that first-hour skiers encounter harsh conditions if temperatures drop fast and more pressure on crews to finish faster, which can lead to quality slip-ups and risk-taking.

What changes when slopes stay open late

When slopes are open late, traffic patterns shift. Late-day skier traffic tends to be choppy, with more braking, more congregating in lit zones and higher concentration on a smaller footprint. Even if groomers are only operating a few trails under the lights, those zones take a beating.

Temperature patterns also matter. Freeze-thaw swings complicate grooming decisions. When temps fluctuate above and below freezing, some areas groom in late afternoon when the snow is softer, so it can set up overnight. The trade-off is that early morning skiers may experience icy corduroy before the surface softens later.

That's a real planning issue for after-hours programming. The snow that feels manageable at 6 p.m. can become a different beast by 7 a.m.

Rethinking grooming schedules

When groomers lose time, they have to get smarter about what they touch and when. Instead of waiting for full shutdown, some operations use touch-ups in high-traffic

corridors, park entrances, learning areas and choke points. The goal isn't perfect corduroy, it's risk reduction and flow improvement.

If only part of the mountain is open late, designate a piece of terrain that stays protected, so morning quality doesn't collapse. This is especially relevant when the brand promise includes premium early-day grooming. Because set-up takes time, it's better to groom the areas that need the longest refreeze earliest and leave lower-stakes zones for later.

After-hours operations often mean more machine hours or the same machine hours in a tighter window.

Public agencies that maintain large trail networks give a sense of how long grooming can take, even without late operations. Canada's National Capital Commission notes groomers work through the night and early morning in Gatineau Park in Quebec. On a good day, grooming can take six to eight hours per person, and on tricky days it can take up to 14 hours.

With late operations, there are fewer quiet hours, more frequent rework and less time for preventative checks.

Fatigue is a safety issue, not a vibe

Extended operations add labor cost and change fatigue patterns. Split shifts (late evening and early morning) are especially rough – sleep gets fragmented, reaction time drops and errors become more likely.

For night operations, safety planning also needs to be explicit about what happens when things go wrong. It is important to build a solid emergency action plan that accounts for power outages, lift evacuation in the dark, trail closings and a night-adapted sweep program.

Even if grooming teams aren't writing the emergency action plan, they're operating inside it, and they're the ones moving heavy equipment in low-visibility conditions around the same terrain guests just used.

When is after-hours actually worth it?

One of the most useful mindset shifts is to stop treating grooming as a cost centre and start treating it as product protection.

To evaluate whether after-hours revenue is worth the operational burden, track:

- Guest feedback and complaint patterns
- Surface failure points
- Machine downtime
- Crew fatigue indicators

The most painful failures happen when after-hours operations are promised first and operationalized later. Pre-season is when resorts decide which trails can handle late traffic, which runs must be protected for morning quality, what cut-off times preserve set-up hours and whether staff size supports safe rotation. *

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LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

Translating high-performance ski training into a high-performing ski resort

By Deb Draper

High-performance elite Nordic skiing environments continue to develop world-renowned athletes, skiers with exceptional physical fitness and technical mastery unrivalled in the sport. A holistic, science-based approach to performance brings together precise training schedules, comprehensive support systems, technical excellence and mental strength that can be translated into practical, operations-focused strategies for ski areas looking to improve and succeed.

Holistic development means looking at the big picture, seeing the resort as one integrated system, all processes working together to achieve a winning overall experience for guests, professional and effective staffing and peak performance from all equipment and operating systems.

The guest experience

Developing the skills of guests at all levels takes a dedicated coaching style like that of Nordic ski athletes. Instructors must be prepared to work with every

student's unique ability, encouraging technique but also looking at physical condition and mindset. Formal skill development programs might focus on specific alpine skiing techniques such as the five fundamental skills of balance, rotary, edging, pressure and coordination, bringing mastery and confidence.

Tim Gibbons has been a cross-country ski coach for over 25 years and has traveled extensively throughout North America and Europe documenting the developmental

FEATURE

stages, processes and systems of endurance athletes. He sees several ways that the Scandinavian model of coaching can be applied to ski resorts across North America aiming to achieve higher guest satisfaction and excellence in staffing and operations.

“You must have certified professional instructors who are very experienced,” said Gibbons. “But more than that, they must be able to help the beginner and intermediate skiers to enjoy skiing even more. Looking at the whole person is something the Scandinavian model has perfected. Learn what the problem is and then address it. Excellent guest experience means the staff is well trained to deliver services to guests of all fitness levels, ages and ski experience.”

Using games that reinforce techniques can help bring a fun atmosphere, while low-pressure, inclusive events help promote friendly competition. Family ski days and social interaction develop teamwork among skiers at different levels and a sense of community within the resort.

Just as with elite sport athletes, recovery is an important part of the overall guest experience. Good, healthy food and wellness options such as yoga, massage and a spa will soothe sore muscles and provide comfort finishing off a day of skiing and reinforcing the mindset of accomplishment.

Equipment rentals must be at peak performance standards for both the enjoyment of guests and to ensure longevity. Regular cleaning, waxing, inspections, repairs and proper storage must be a priority. Ski equipment tracking software can help streamline operations, maintain inventory and track the location of each item.

A digital concierge app can help get guests on the trails quickly with personalized maps, book lessons and rentals and deliver real-time answers to everything they need to know about the resort and its amenities.

The staff as a team

In a report in the *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, “The Coach as an

Architect of Danish High-Performance Sport Environments,” Danish elite sports coaches are depicted as leaders who facilitate teamwork and foster a shared vision, ensuring that all members of the environment are aligned. By taking this same approach in the management of staff, resorts can build a strong winning team held together with a commitment to excellence and personal achievement. According to the report, Danish elite sports coaches “strive not only to enhance athletic performance but also to stimulate the personal development and well-being of their athletes.” This holistic approach is essential for sustained performance and is easily translated into resort staff management and leadership.

Resorts must accurately assess the ability level of every employee at the beginning of the season to ensure they can safely manage the level of terrain their job requires. By offering free ski training for staff, a resort can improve safety and injury prevention, while data management programs can track



Please don't use generic LED lamps for slope lighting. They are not “sustainable.” The glare is dangerous to the eye, the “flicker” is dangerous for visual perception, toxic chemicals contained in the lighting elements and circuit boards are bad for the environment, the lighting element can accumulate snow and ice.

“Excellent guest experience means the staff is well trained to deliver services to guests of all fitness levels, ages and ski experience.”

– Tim Gibbons



PHOTO: TIM GIBBONS

staff training, safety training, schedule work hours and breaks, keeping everything running smoothly.

“I think a common mistake is not providing staff training that contributes to the experience of your guests,” said Gibbons. “Train employees in the ways you want things done. If there’s a problem, here’s how we address

it.’ Communicate and educate, don’t just order your employees around, because just as in elite sports, collaboration within the team leads to success. How can you engage your employees, so they know they are contributing? It’s about leadership that nurtures a culture of involvement in the staff.”

A positive work environment and life balance makes for better overall performance in all aspects of the resort and guest experience. Elite sports coaches strongly believe that good management and clear communication are the essential ingredients for an environment that will foster both personal and team achievement.

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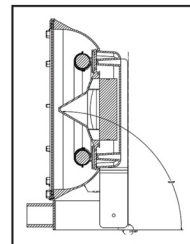
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FEATURE

Communication is the key. Seeing the individual within the team, providing good food, rest and recovery, stress management and social cohesion all make for a community of cooperation and pride in performance.

Operations and terrain

"In Elite Nordic skiing, high-performance operations mean you have the best-groomed trails," said Gibbons. "Eliminate icy trails using snowcats. Have lots of beginner and intermediate trails for a good experience for both novice and intermediate skiers.

"And remember the 1,000 yearly hours of training an elite cross-country skier does can be translated into all the hours used to train staff or the number of years of education and teaching required to become a highly qualified ski instructor. It takes a qualified snowcat operator to provide good grooming. You just don't go out there and drive a machine."

Advanced snow management is necessary to achieve peak performance: detailed course inspections, short- and



"I think a common mistake is not providing staff training that contributes to the experience of your guests."

– Tim Gibbons

long-term weather tracking and regular, timely maintenance routines on trails, equipment and infrastructure.

Precision snowmaking uses real-time weather information, moisture and terrain data to optimize water/air mix, not only ensuring perfect snow but also reducing energy and water waste. Smart snow guns carry sensors controlled remotely or automatically adjusted to the current and predicted conditions. Data-driven robots and drones take any guesswork out of precise grooming and snow distribution. Snowcats equipped with Global Navigation Satellite System receivers and LiDAR sensors can measure snow depth up to 165 feet from the front and sides. It's all about optimizing for the

enjoyment and satisfaction of every guest at every level.

Breakdowns on lifts and machinery can be reduced or even eliminated with the use of sensors that predict when maintenance is needed. Using AI to anticipate skier flow and bottlenecks at busy times and spread demand will maximize efficient lift usage.

State-of-the-art technology and analytics can optimize every aspect of resort operations, and the holistic, science-based approach of high-performance elite skiing can be achieved in finding the balance to meet every guest expectation, building a strong, coordinated team and achieving the highest quality of terrain and trail conditions. *

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INSIDE NORTH AMERICA'S LARGEST SNOW STORAGE PROJECT

**Now featured at Sun Peaks Resort in British Columbia,
Snow Secure's insulated mat technology is helping to
secure the future of winter sports**

By Paul Adair

Even though climate change has made snowfall increasingly unpredictable across the northern hemisphere, winter activities continue to rely on consistent and dependable snow conditions.

A smaller cold window across North America has ended up with resorts experiencing shorter ski seasons, higher costs for artificial snowmaking

and growing environmental scrutiny, as traditional snowmaking methods consume tremendous amounts of water and energy to work, straining both ecosystems and operational budgets. These challenges are beginning to reshape early-season planning, and more ski resorts are now turning to snow storage to supplement their snowmaking activities.

Once considered a niche experiment, snow storage is increasingly becoming part of core mountain infrastructure and is used to provide resort teams a predictable base they can count on for first tracks, race lanes, lessons and events.

"Think of snow storage like insurance that lets you guarantee you will be open when snowmaking isn't possible



and there's no natural snow," said Snow Secure CEO, Antti Lauslahti.

Headquartered in Finland, Snow Secure has emerged as a leading global snow storage solution for resorts looking for greater snow predictability. Founded in 2005, their patented insulated mat technology is specifically engineered and designed to protect

the stored snow from heat, sun, wind and rain, and ensure reliable early-season skiing without relying on costly artificial snowmaking. Snow Secure system also offers a tremendous return on investment over the approximate 10-year life of the product.

"One of our customers has calculated that they only need two extra

days of being open every year for our system to pay for itself," said Lauslahti. "That means if Snow Secure allows you to be open two or three weeks earlier on average and have more peak days every year, less than a two-year payback time on your initial investment is completely feasible. It's really a no-brainer."

How it works

It is important to note that Snow Secure – and snow storage in general – is not a replacement for a resort's existing snowmaking operations. Rather, Snow Secure is a system that allows resorts to think about snowmaking in a different way: preserving snow efficiently and responsibly so it can be deployed exactly when and where it's needed and then focusing snowmaking efforts on other areas of the park.

"We're proud to be the first ski resort in Canada to adopt this proven technology and to provide a reliable and resilient training facility for young athletes from around the world."

– Tim Foster, Sun Peaks Resort



Snow Secure's technology allows ski resorts to open early in the season



Snow Secure's insulated mats keep snow protected from heat, sun, wind and rain

Snow Secure works in four broad strokes:

- **Snow collection:** Resorts gather large piles of snow during optimal times.
- **Insulation system:** The snow piles are covered with Snow Secure's specialized insulated mats, which protect against heat, sun, wind and rain.
- **Monitoring:** A real-time temperature monitoring system ensures optimal storage conditions.
- **Deployment:** In the fall, the mats are removed, and the preserved snow is spread across slopes to guarantee early openings.

"Resorts can also get a step up on the next season by making snow when the temperatures are ideal and efficiency is highest, and then simply store it," said Sami Piana, sales and service for Snow Secure Canada. "If you have water and you have a place to store the snow, you may as well make as much snow as you can when the conditions are the best. You may lose a little to melt, but it costs

a lot less than when you are making snow when temperatures rise to just below freezing."

Results from resorts that have already incorporated this technology say that up to 80% of the snow remains under the insulation mats throughout the summer. In addition, snow piles that are built in the same place for a second year in a row tend to melt at a much slower rate than a first-time snow pile. This is because, during storage time, the snow compacts further and the soils underneath become colder.

"If you store the snow in the same place over multiple years, you develop something like permafrost underneath, which helps regulate the temperatures better over the warmer months," said Lauslahti. "Our system works great wherever it's used, but if you store your snow in the same location year after year, it works even better and with less melting."

Snow Secure's success has brought it to countries around the world,

including Finland, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Italy, the United States and – more recently – in Canada with Sun Peaks Resort.

Securing Sun Peaks Resort

Seeking to ensure its own reliable early-season alpine ski training, Sun Peaks Resort in British Columbia recently became the first ski area in the country to employ this one-of-a-kind approach to snow farming and storage.

Starting in April 2025, the \$180,000 Snow Secure project at Sun Peaks preserved a massive snow pile collected on the OSV (Österreichischer Skiverband) ski run on Tod Mountain. The snow pile measured approximately 300 feet long by 100 feet wide by 30 feet tall – enough snow to fill ten Olympic swimming pools.

"Sun Peaks was an ideal place for the Snow Secure product for a number of reasons," said Piana. "The resort focuses on early season training, is not

SNOW STORAGE

an especially high altitude, and it has the space available to secure the snow. Sun Peaks really checks all the boxes, and the results have been tremendous, allowing the resort to open early and consistently in a season where they may not have been able to do so without Snow Secure.”

Sun Peak Resort’s grooming team moved, shaped and covered the mountain of snow under the supervision of Snow Secure, which was on site to oversee the process. Deployed and secured in a single day, the 18 interlocking mats offered an estimated 75-80% snow retention rate for the resort. This also saved Sun Peaks approximately 1.5 million gallons of water that would otherwise be diverted to snowmaking.

The project also allowed Sun Peaks to open its Nancy Greene International Race Centre earlier than usual, providing reliable training conditions for athletes worldwide.

“This project is an important piece in our ongoing commitment to innovation and operational excellence,” said Tim Foster, chief of mountain

operations for Sun Peaks Resort. “We’re proud to be the first ski resort in Canada to adopt this proven technology and to provide a reliable and resilient training facility for young athletes from around the world.”

The snow storage project was completed in concert with the resort’s new multi-million-dollar investment in upgrading the existing Sun Peaks snowmaking system, which started in summer 2024 and will take place over the next few years. This upgrade includes adding new, more efficient snow guns into the fleet, employing on-board weather monitoring stations for automation and upgrades to in-ground infrastructure.

Recognizing innovation

In October 2025, Snow Secure was named among *TIME*’s Best Inventions of 2025, highlighting the company’s role in shaping a more resilient future for winter sports. Its adoption by major resorts across Europe and North America also demonstrates its scalability and adaptability for both

alpine and Nordic skiing facilities across varying altitudes and climates.

“*TIME*’s recognition underscores how snow storage has become a key factor in securing reliable winter operations, not only across Europe but now throughout North America as well,” said Lauslahti. “This isn’t a concept or a stunt – it’s an operational tool that resorts are using today to open earlier and reduce risk.”

The growing interest in Snow Secure innovation has led to more installations being planned for this year. These projects include early-season trail bases for public openings, race and training lanes and event snow surfaces.

As resorts are seeking to de-risk their season openings and protect the guest experience, Snow Secure represents transformation in traditional snow management. By combining innovation, sustainability and practicality, Snow Secure is ensuring that winter sports can not only survive but thrive in the face of climate change. *

PHOTOS: SNOW SECURE



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Creating Careers in the Ski Industry

The Pipeline Project's aim is to address workforce development gaps for the next generation of workers

By Lisa Kopochinski

With the goal of introducing students to the world of ski and mountain resort careers, The Pipeline Project is a growing workforce initiative designed to address ski resorts' labor shortages by connecting Career & Technical Education (CTE) students directly with mountain operations careers.

Led by former career technical educator Tiffany Whitcomb, founder and

educator of the Pipeline Project, and supported by partners like Prinoth, the goal of this growing workforce initiative is very straightforward: to spread awareness while also establishing connections through events, presentations, online coursework and helping fast-track graduating students to ensure the resort or industry partner reviews their resume or portfolio.

"The current focus is on high school students with a targeted audience of

CTE students, but the scope of work as the Pipeline evolves will encompass students of all ages," said Tiffany.

The industry gap that The Pipeline aims to fill is workforce development, particularly for the next generation of workers.

"Currently, there has not been a strategic or united approach when it comes to finding new, fresh and motivated workers," she said. "According to the [National Ski Areas Association



Tiffany Whitcomb, founder of The Pipeline Project and former CTE educator, discusses course offerings with third-party partners such as LVL UP Academy, Oregon State Lift Mechanic course and Colorado Mountain College to welding and heavy machinery students



Tim Brosnan, eastern general manager at Leitner-Poma of America, works with students on electrical panels, showcasing some of what it takes to become a lift mechanic



The Prinoth team talked to students about how every ski resort relies on their grooming teams and the types of Mountain Operations careers available in the industry



Dante Ristaino, Prinoth service manager, shows the proper way to enter and exit a snow groomer with three points of contact at all times before students climbed aboard the machine

(NSAA)]'s latest National Wage and Salary survey, there is an average of 21.3 open positions per resort, which showcases the immediate need for The Pipeline Project."

How it started

This initiative began after Tiffany, a former teacher, met her husband Jesse in 2014.

"He has worked in the ski industry his whole life and, after learning more about what he does and seeing my students hit the slopes on the weekend, I tried to introduce my business students to ski industry careers," she said. "However, as a teacher, I had a lot on my plate, and the idea remained just that."

Fast forward a decade to 2024, when the real initiative began.

"This is when I started talking with Earl Saline and Mike Lane from NSAA, asking about CTE at the high school level. I strongly felt every program had a direct path to a ski industry career. They connected me with Ski New Hampshire president Jessyca Keeler, who was very familiar with CTE and was hoping to find a way to get the attention of schools and students when it came to ski industry careers. In fall 2025, the Pipeline Project went from being a passion project with the financial support of Whitcomb Resolution to its own LLC."

What the program offers

The program's focus is to make students aware of ski career opportunities in the ski industry. Students can participate in events and presentations to learn more about ski careers and meet ski professionals.

The Pipeline works with the teacher or school contact and the student to develop a roadmap for the student during their high school tenure. This roadmap includes third-party coursework that the student can complete as well as work-based learning opportunities. As the student nears graduation, the Pipeline will help fast track the student's resume or profile to its resort and industry members.

"Schools are always looking to showcase diverse career fields for its students," said Tiffany. "By participating with The Pipeline, these schools are able

to showcase unique career paths that are in high demand.”

Resorts and industry partners benefit from being part of a strategic and united approach to workforce development. Currently, the approach tends to be siloed with each resort and partner working independently, which may or may not include a dedicated staff member focusing on this initiative.

“By working with The Pipeline, resorts [and] partners can now feel confident that best practices are being implemented and a pipeline is being created by an educational subject matter expert,” she said.

Rachel Templar, who works in Prinoth’s marketing department, says the company is very committed to the ski industry.

“It’s like a big family and we all need to rely on each other to be successful. The Pipeline Project is all about creating and nurturing relationships.”

Currently, Prinoth is one of two Black Diamond sponsors, along with Leitner-Poma of America.

“As a sponsor, we are providing funding to help get The Pipeline Project out into the world where students, schools and ski areas can connect,” Templar said.

As the world’s longest-standing manufacturer of snow groomers, Prinoth was founded in 1962 in the Italian Alps. Prinoth purchased Canadian manufacturer Bombardier in the mid-2000s. The company is constantly developing its

technology and is committed to producing the world’s best grooming vehicles.

“Because of this, we know that supporting training and educational initiatives is vital to the success of the grooming industry, and the ski industry as a whole,” said Templar.

“Operations staff need to understand the machines in order to utilize them to the fullest extent. When the groomers are operated and maintained properly, they are able to be used for thousands of hours to prepare slopes, parks and trails for thousands of happy skiers and riders.”

She says this initiative is important for manufacturers and suppliers, and Prinoth values working with its resort partners to make its grooming fleets better – from the machines to the operators to the technicians.

“We value our resort relationships and know that when a resort has a knowledgeable, qualified mountain ops crew, the end product for the guests is better. The more knowledge that employees have, the better they are at keeping the resort running regardless of what Mother Nature throws at them.”

Ski Exploration Day

The program’s first ski event wrapped up in Oct. 15, 2025, and included hands-on demonstrations, equipment showcases, career talks and exposure to operations. Nine schools attended, and Pats Peak hosted, while 16 member resorts and industry partners attended.

Approximately 120 people attended this impressive event.

Students participated in this exciting, no-cost event by rotating through four main events that included the following:

- **Resort tour:** Led by Matt Harvey and the Pats Peak team, this was a “go behind the scenes” to see various departments, from lifts to snowmaking and how they work together to keep guests happy and the lifts running.
- **Snowcat sit-in:** Templar, James Egan, Mark Palmateer and Dante Ristaino from the Prinoth team climbed aboard a real grooming machine with students to show how operators shape trails before dawn. Everyone learned about groomer safety, hydraulics and why grooming is both science and art.
- **Intro to ski lift electrical:** Tim Smith, general manager of the Waterville Valley Ski Resort; Tim Brosanan, Ian Pratt and Michael Manley from Leitner-Poma of America helped students understand the systems that power the ski lifts. Students engaged in a hands-on learning activity to understand the basics of lift electrical.
- **Careers Q&A and mock-job interview:** This session was led by Tiffany, with Mark Petrozzi from LVL UP Academy as moderator, and with multiple New Hampshire resorts and industry partners having authentic conversations with student and teacher attendees through mock job interviews and an intimate career Q&A session.

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Another way to connect ski professionals with local schools was through the networking luncheon. Schools and ski professionals were paired based on their proximity to each other to help encourage continued relationships long after the event.

At the end of this event, a closing ceremony featured students who were recognized as "gold goggle" winners for their exceptional mock job interviews. Students who received this status received certificates and had first dibs on ski swag.

All student attendees received a certificate of attendance to help the industry identify students who have taken steps to learn more about ski industry careers.

What's next

The Pipeline will run a spring Ski Career Exploration event in New Hampshire while continuing to work with students on their high school ski roadmaps.

"The Pipeline is also moving into Vermont to hopefully run a Ski Career Exploration event for next school year and in conversations with other trade organizations throughout the country," said Tiffany.

"There are 28 CTE centers in New Hampshire and 30-plus ski resorts, so it is a pretty safe bet to say that there is a nearby resort to many, if not all, CTE centers. All of these CTE centers will receive invitations for the next event. A limited number of student/teacher attendees (approximately 100) is allowed.

"Resorts can reach out to me to get involved. The Pipeline is trying to really focus on a united front with its workforce initiative in each state and having all resorts involved to better increase the exposure of our workforce needs."

She says that, according to cetonline.org, New Hampshire is not unique in its proximity to CTE centers. There are 8.3 million high school CTE

students across the country, which is encouraging, as there is most likely a local CTE program nearby every resort with students interested in ski industry careers.

"These students may have an interest in remaining local or looking to relocate somewhere else in the country, which is being seen currently by students in New Hampshire having a mixed interest in staying local and relocating out west."

She says that resorts interested in becoming a member to promote their resort as a career opportunity for The Pipeline graduating students and/or interested in collaborating to run a Ski Career Exploration can reach out to her directly to get involved.

"The Pipeline is trying to really focus on a united front with its workforce initiative in each state and having all resorts involved to better increase the exposure of our workforce needs," said Tiffany. *

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EMBEDDED SAFETY

Twiceme brings digital emergency technology into winter apparel

By Ligia Braidotti

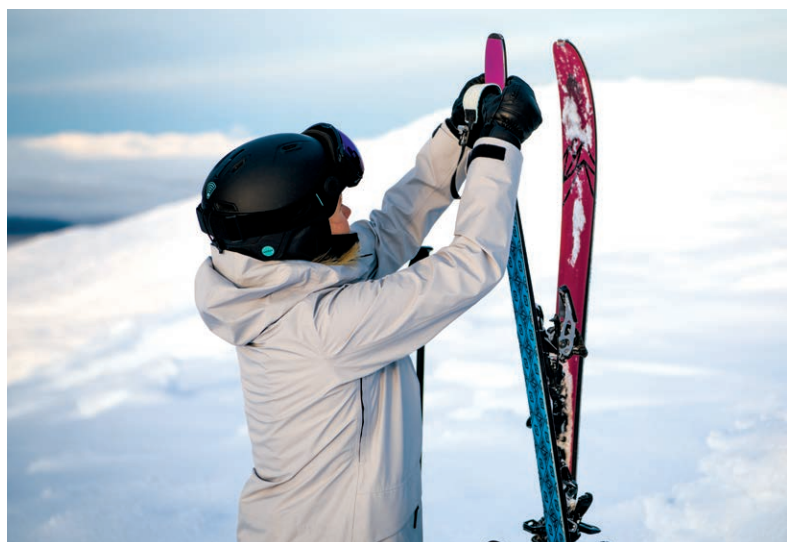
For years, Twiceme has quietly become part of the safety ecosystem on mountains and jobsites, embedding digital emergency technology into helmets and packs used by skiers, cyclists and industrial workers. Now, the company is taking its next step into winter apparel.

Through a new partnership with Haglöfs, Twiceme's NFC-based digital safety technology has been integrated into select ski touring garments, marking the first time the platform has been embedded directly into winter clothing. For mountain operations and rescue professionals, the move represents a shift into safety information that travels with the person, not just their equipment.

"We've always seen Twiceme as a platform that could go wherever people need protection," said Christian Connolly, CEO of Twiceme. "Over the past few years, we've heard from users and outdoor manufacturers asking why this technology couldn't be in more of their gear. Winter apparel was a natural next step because the conditions are often more remote and more dangerous."

Twiceme's system centers on the idea of giving first responders immediate access to critical information when seconds matter and communication may be impossible. By scanning the Twiceme symbol with a smartphone, responders can access a wearer's Medical ID, such as allergies, medications and emergency contacts, without unlocking a phone or removing gear.

In winter rescue scenarios, that access can fundamentally change how care is delivered.



"If ski patrol reaches an incapacitated skier, they can scan the Twiceme symbol on the helmet or apparel and instantly see critical details like a penicillin allergy or that the person is diabetic," Connolly said.

"That kind of information can fundamentally change the care given during an emergency, and before now, responders simply had to work without it unless someone in the group knew the person's history. It also prevents the need to remove a helmet to access critical information the wearer may have taped inside, as you never know when a head or neck injury may be present."

Embedding the technology into apparel adds another layer of redundancy. In cases where a skier is lying face-up and responders are trained not to move the head or neck, a jacket-mounted symbol can be scanned without repositioning the patient.

Twiceme also supports responders when they encounter an injured skier who can't call for help by themselves. By scanning the Twiceme symbol on a helmet or piece of apparel, users can alert ski patrol through the app and immediately share precise GPS location data, streamlining the response



process in areas with cell coverage. Even without signal, critical medical information remains accessible directly from the embedded chip, with location data automatically transmitting once coverage is restored. The system effectively bridges the gap between locating an injured person and getting the right help to them as quickly as possible.

Proactive safety, not just emergency response

While Medical ID remains the foundation, Twiceme has expanded into a suite of proactive safety tools designed to reduce reliance on chance encounters. Features such as Get Back Timer, Immobility Alert and Emergency Services allow users to set return times, detect potential incapacitation and automatically share location data with contacts or responders.

“These tools let people take ownership of their own safety rather than relying solely on someone finding them,” Connolly said.

From an operations perspective, location sharing removes guesswork during response. A bystander who finds an injured skier can scan the gear, trigger an alert and transmit exact GPS coordinates instead of attempting to describe terrain or landmarks under stress.

In the winter, cold drains batteries, dexterity disappears and technology often fails when it’s needed most. Twiceme’s reliance on NFC is intentional.

“Twiceme was founded by military personnel who experienced firsthand the consequences of not being able to access critical information or call for help in the field. Those real-world challenges, including harsh conditions such as extreme cold, shaped our approach from the start. We knew the technology had to work when conditions are at their worst, not just when everything is ideal,” Connolly said.

The embedded chip requires no battery, is always active and allows medical information to be accessed even without

cell coverage. Alerts and location data queue automatically and transmit once signal is restored.

“You scan, you get what you need and you act,” Connolly said.

Implications beyond the backcountry

Although ski touring and alpine adventurers are early adopters, Connolly sees broader relevance across resort operations. A medical emergency on a groomed run, involving someone with epilepsy or a severe allergy, presents the same information gap as a remote backcountry incident. In those moments, the first person on scene, whether patrol, lift staff or another guest, rarely knows the individual’s medical history.

“There are more people around in those situations, which is good, but whoever reaches them first still doesn’t know about that pre-existing condition unless the person can tell them,” Connolly said. “Having that information accessible with a quick scan changes everything about how bystanders and responders can help.”

The technology also has implications for the rescuers themselves. Ski patrol, mountain rescue and snow operations staff operate in high-risk environments every day. Having medical information accessible on their own helmets or apparel adds another layer of protection for those responding to emergencies.

There are already over two million helmets with Twiceme technology in outdoor recreation and industrial settings, protecting skiers, cyclists and professional workers. The challenge now is awareness. Some users don’t realize the technology is built into their gear, and not all first responders know to look for the symbol.

“The infrastructure exists,” Connolly said. “As that awareness grows, so will the stories of lives impacted. The potential is already built into the gear – we want to inform more people to activate it.”

Connolly also points to rental fleets as a future opportunity. Temporary Medical IDs on rental helmets or apparel could extend digital safety to first-time or casual skiers – often those least prepared for emergencies.

Toward a new standard

For Twiceme, the Haglöfs partnership is not a one-off but the beginning of a broader push into cold-weather gear. Just as digital safety has become an expected feature in helmets across multiple industries, Connolly believes apparel will follow.

“Success for us means this becomes a standard, not a premium exception,” he said. “When first responders know to look for the symbol and people set up their Medical ID as routinely as they buckle their helmet, we know we’ve done our job.”

For the winter industry, embedded digital safety may soon be less about innovation and more about expectation – a quiet but powerful shift in how mountains prepare for the moments that matter most. *

PHOTOS: TWICEME

NSP'S MENTAL RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

In partnership with the Cody St. John Foundation and Responder Alliance, the program provides stress awareness and resilience training tailored specifically to ski patrol environments

By Angela Altass

In a newly created partnership, National Ski Patrol (NSP), The Cody St. John Foundation and Responder Alliance have launched a mental health initiative focused on stress awareness and resilience training for professional ski patrollers.

Aiming to equip patrollers with the tools and training to manage stress, enhance patrol team wellbeing and build resilience, NSP has taken the lead in guiding the program. The Cody St. John Foundation is funding 10 scholarships for the 2025-26 season and Responder Alliance is delivering the coursework and facilitating training sessions.

"Ski patrollers are the backbone of mountain safety, often the first on scene in high-stress and high-stakes situations," said Stephanie Cox, CEO of NSP. "By supporting their resilience, we're also supporting the safety culture that defines our mountains. This new partnership helps our patrollers with skills and training that strengthen them mentally, emotionally and as teams."

Historically, the industry has underinvested in mental resilience, says Cox.

"Our patrollers are highly trained in medical and toboggan training, but there was very little structured training available in managing chronic stress in traumatic instances. "We recognized that this culminative emotional load needed to be addressed, so we went looking for a partner that had deep expertise in stress injury prevention, which is Responder Alliance, and also Cody St. John Foundation, which has been really important in supporting patroller education."

Responder Alliance's training program focuses on stress awareness, team-based communication and evidence-based resilience strategies, and is tailored for first responders in outdoor and emergency environments. The program aligns with international standards for stress mitigation and first responder health.

"It's powerful to see industry-leading organizations come together to support grassroots initiatives for patrols of all sizes, across the country," said Griffin Lawrence, director, Responder Alliance. "This new partnership brings our organizations into alignment around new industry standards, including stress mitigation training as part of risk management. Between our three

organizations, I think we've found a system where we can bring resources where they are needed and where funding is lacking. Investments like this result in longer careers, safer workplaces, improved guest experiences and increased career satisfaction."

The Responder Alliance program focuses on preventing stress injury, a term that Lawrence says may be new language to some people.

"Stress injury as a physical, predictable injury type is a language that is used in contexts like the military because it's a bit more accurate descriptor than vaguely talking about mental health," said Lawrence. "It recognizes that stress is an occupational hazard and has the potential to lead to measurable physical injuries. Because this was previously an unnamed risk, people didn't understand what was happening to them. Naming the risk and providing a science-based risk management protocol, including training and tools, is filling that gap for the first responders."

Ski patrollers can be exposed to potentially traumatic events, such as someone dying on a mountain or assisting someone who is seriously injured.

"Stress resilience are science-based best practices that first responders can use to recognize and communicate when they are being impacted by stress, and what to do about it so they can recover from it," said Lawrence. "The training for this initiative is all specific to ski patrol environments. There are factors that are unique to the ski patrol environment, as well as mountain rescue and other groups that operate in those environments. They can have unique impacts, some of which can cause patrollers to even lose their love for what they do. Training can help with that."

With the involvement of The Cody St. John Foundation, this partnership honors the legacy of Cody St. John, a ski patroller who died in a car accident and is remembered for his professionalism, leadership and compassion.

"Cody joined the ski patrol because he was called to serve others, including his fellow patrollers," said Corinne St. John, president of The Cody St. John Foundation. "Everything we do is a reflection of Cody's spirit. Through this partnership, we're carrying that same spirit forward, honoring his legacy, while

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SETTING THE STANDARDS

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collaborating with two incredible leaders within the industry. Both the NSP and the Responder Alliance are natural allies for our foundation, given the work we all do. While our missions differ in focus, the shared core of all three organizations is supporting ski patrollers and first responders.”

Mental health has become an increasingly hot topic within the ski industry, says Corinne, noting that the foundation is evolving with the times.

“For nearly two decades, we’ve focused on helping patrollers strengthen their medical skills,” said Corinne. “Now, we’re equally proud to support their resilience training. While our primary mission will always be to support medical training, we believe there is no better way to care for ski patrollers than by also investing in their resilience. These are skills they can carry with them not only on the mountain, but in their daily lives and long after their time on ski patrol.”

Alterra Mountain Company recently announced a commitment to stress and trauma training for its patrol teams, also partnering with Responder Alliance.

“Alterra has been a powerful example of industry leadership, recently committing to resilience programs at their resorts and supporting the wellbeing of their first responders,” said Corinne.

There is an emerging industry awareness about stress resilience, says Cox.

“It is now a topic of conversation at conventions and conferences, and I really think the industry deserves kudos for recognizing the need and doing something about it.”

When The Cody St. John Foundation invited ski patrol groups to apply for the 10 scholarships that are being awarded as part of this initiative, Corinne says the response was overwhelmingly positive.

“More than 30 groups applied, each at different stages of building their own resilience programs,” she said. “We are hoping that through this partnership, we will see greater awareness and broader acceptance of resilience training across the ski industry. We’re proud to help launch this initiative by providing the financial support needed to get it off the ground.”

Ski patrol teams who are not directly participating in this initial program, but are interested in resilience training are encouraged to reach out for further information.

“They can go to responderalliance.com and join in our free online community where we host monthly drop-in ski patrol meetings,” said Lawrence. “We are happy to meet with any patrol teams and help them come up with next steps that will work for their budget.”

This is a pilot program with all three organizations hoping to continue and expand it in the future.

“This partnership is the first of its kind,” said Cox. “Our hope is that after we go through this first season with these 10 patrol teams that we will continue to offer it annually and also expand it. We hope this will give patrollers the language and tools that make teams more operationally ready and more resilient, and that we see healthier teams with fewer sick days and less turnover from burnout.”

Patrol directors can contact NSP for more details on the resources available, including a Safety Culture for All handbook. *

PHOTO: NATIONAL SKI PATROL

IN THE SNOW

Nomination open for LMS awards

Nominations are now open for the Lift Maintenance Technician, Operator of the Year and Snow Maker of the Year awards, hosted by the Rocky Mountain Lift Association. Winners will be notified by April 1 and receive complimentary registration for the 2027 Lift Maintenance Seminar.

In addition, the winners will be formally recognized at the 2026 Lift Maintenance Seminar.

Nomination deadline is March 13. More information and forms can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/45ys3745>.

Vail Resorts appoints Celeste Burgoyne as chief revenue officer



PHOTO: VAIL RESORTS

Celeste Burgoyne, appointed as executive vice president and chief revenue officer for Vail Resorts, starting Jan. 26

Celeste Burgoyne, current president of the Americas and Global Guest Innovation for lululemon, has been appointed executive vice president and chief revenue officer, effective Jan. 26, to help drive the next chapter of growth for Vail Resorts. Burgoyne will oversee Vail Resorts' marketing function, lead all aspects of the guest journey and digital experience, and be directly responsible for most of the company's revenue.

"We are thrilled to welcome [Burgoyne], a proven business leader with a long track record of driving growth and long-term guest loyalty at lululemon," said Vail Resorts chairperson and CEO Rob Katz. "[Burgoyne]'s deep appreciation for the connection between brand, guest experience and revenue will be critical as we continue to reimagine how we connect with our guests, reignite our resort brands and accelerate growth in both lift revenue and our ancillary lines of business."

At lululemon, Burgoyne oversaw all channel and customer-facing aspects of the company's North American business, including e-commerce, customer relationship management, marketing, retail store experience and real estate, and was directly responsible for over \$7.5 billion in revenue. She also led guest experience innovation for lululemon globally and launched the company's membership program. Burgoyne joined lululemon in 2006 and held numerous leadership roles over nearly two decades. She began her career at lululemon as the first general manager of the U.S. business when there were less than 10 stores. From there, she played a key role in scaling the business and building the brand from its infancy to where it is today – more than 750 stores and over \$10 billion in revenue globally. Prior to lululemon, Burgoyne spent 10 years at Abercrombie & Fitch during a time of significant growth.

"It is an honour to join Vail Resorts, not just because of the respect I have for [Katz], the management team and this incredible business which has so much opportunity ahead, but also because of the passion that my family and I have for the experience it provides," said Burgoyne. "I have spent countless days enjoying Whistler Blackcomb, in both the summer and winter, so I know firsthand what the company's mission of Experience of a Lifetime means to skiers, snowboarders and all their guests. I look forward to being a

part of the Vail Resorts team and this next phase of growth and transformation.”

Burgoyne will be based in Vancouver, B.C., where she and her family currently reside.

Two electric snowcats launch the world's first zero-emission catskiing operation in Georgia

Swiss company powderproject.ch and Italian manufacturer Xelom join forces in the Lesser Caucasus to promote sustainable winter sports and eco-conscious freeriding. To mark its 10th anniversary, Georgian catskiing pioneer Ingo Schlutius and his company powderproject.ch are taking a bold step toward innovation and sustainability. Beginning this season, two fully electric snowcats built by the Bolzano-based Xelom will transport international freeriders and powder enthusiasts into the snow-covered slopes of the Lesser Caucasus mountains.

Schlutius invested approximately €1 million (approximately \$1.1 million) in two electrically powered snowcats from Xelom. With this investment, powderproject.ch becomes the first company worldwide to use electric snowcats for deep-snow catskiing.

The goal is to prove that these fully electric, nearly 700-horsepower machines, can handle the harsh winter conditions of Georgia's mountain terrain. Until now, catskiing operations around the world – in Canada, the U.S. and Georgia alike – have relied exclusively on diesel-powered vehicles. In mid-November, the two electric snowcats





embarked on a 3,200-kilometer journey by truck from Bolzano, Italy, to Bakhmaro, Georgia. They are being delivered with specially designed passenger cabins that can carry up to twelve freeriders comfortably, quietly and without emissions into the backcountry.

The Xelom e-cats deliver a peak torque of 27,600 newton-meters, providing full power instantly and at any speed. The expected operational range for passenger transport is around seven hours per charge. At the powderproject.ch hotel, The PIONEERS, a 300-kilowatts charging station has been installed, enabling the massive batteries to reach 80% capacity in just 50 minutes. To complete the sustainability cycle, all electricity supplied in Bakhmaro is generated almost exclusively from hydropower.

“This is a milestone for us,” said Schlutius. “We want to take responsibility and show that sustainable winter sports are possible even in high-alpine and remote terrain – without sacrificing the unique adventure that makes catskiing so special. Of course, the electric drive will be a completely new technical experience for us, but we gladly embrace the challenge because I’m convinced that the future of catskiing is electric.”

Erich Gummerer, founder of Xelom, is equally proud of the partnership and the upcoming deployment of his snowcats in Georgia.

“Making catskiing emission-free and nearly silent for the first time is a groundbreaking step into the future. Ten years after [Schlutius] brought the first cat skiers to Bakhmaro, he is now bringing the first fully electric snowcats to Georgia – an impressive testament to his visionary character.”



PHOTOS: POWDERPROJECT.CH AND XELOM



PHOTO: POWDERPROJECTCH AND XELOM

Xelom's fully electric snowcat

Keystone Resort first to open for the 2025-26 North American winter ski season

Keystone Resort is the first ski resort in North America to officially open for the 2025-26 winter season. Keystone kicked off the season on Oct. 25, 2025, with more than two miles of freshly groomed terrain on the Schoolmarm and Silver Spoon trails. For the first time ever, Keystone will start its season in the afternoon and ski and ride into the early evening under the lights in a nod to its signature night ski operations.

Keystone's opening day featured an early season hike-to terrain park under snowcat lights, a live DJ, and \$5.50 beers and hot dogs to commemorate the resort's 55th season. The festivities continued on Oct. 26 with Keystone's first full day of operations from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., featuring more music, free donuts, hot coffee and a warm welcome to winter.

"We're thrilled to kick off the season here at Keystone with over two miles of skiing and riding," said Keystone Resort vice president and general manager Shannon Buhler. "We know how much this moment means to our employees and community, and our team has poured their hearts into creating an incredible early opening celebration. We're just excited to be back on snow!"

Opening terrain was accessed via the River Run Gondola, with skiing and riding laps off the Montezuma Express lift.

At the end of the evening, guests downloaded the River Run Gondola back to the base of the resort. The resort will be open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with night skiing available until 7 p.m. on select Fridays, Saturdays and holidays.

Convenient touches like free parking in the River Run Gondola Lot and at Mountain House, including up-close family and carpool parking options, make Keystone Resort an ideal option for friends and family to hit the slopes.

Keystone's snowmaking team will continue working around the clock to make snow whenever weather allows, expanding early season terrain as quickly as possible. During early season operations uphill access remained closed and once open, will be permitted only on designated routes before and after lift operating hours.

Keystone's living room – Kindred Resort

River Run Village is getting a major upgrade this winter with the highly anticipated debut of Keystone's premier luxury development: Kindred Resort. Kindred will feature ski-in, ski-out lodging, a year-round heated pool with patio cocktail service, four new dining options, valet parking, valet ski, bike storage and an upscale full-service spa just steps from the River Run gondola. Kindred Resort will also be the beautiful new home base for Keystone Ski & Ride School, alongside a resort rental shop so guests can gear up before stepping outside.

PHOTO: KATIE YOUNG/KEYSTONE RESORT



Keystone Resort kicks off the North American ski season with more than two miles of skiing and riding

Events and fan-favorite activities bring the fun for all

Keystone is turning up the fun this season with new events like Snow Fort After Dark and Keystone's Military Winter Games. Returning favorites will keep the energy high all season long, including New Year's Eve fireworks, Women in Powder, Keystone Pride, Peaks & Beats and the signature Springtastic Pond Skim. Details about Keystone's full event lineup are posted on the resort's Signature event page. Fan-favorite activities return on and off the slopes, including the World's Largest Mountaintop Snow Fort, snow tubing, ice skating, night skiing, sleigh rides and more.

Re-announcing Keystone's Kids (always) Ski Free program

Easy on the wallet, easy on the rules, easy to get on the mountain. Keystone's long-standing Kids Ski Free program has been providing kids with free lift tickets since 2012. Kids 12 years old and younger ski for free at Keystone with no blackout dates when families book just two or more nights through Keystone Resort. Lodging accommodation options span from affordable hotel rooms to family-sized condominiums.

Connected Ski & Ride School in the My Epic App

Keystone Resort, along with Breckenridge, Vail Mountain and Beaver Creek, launched a new technology in the My Epic app this December that takes Ski and Ride School to the next level. With innovative new features, parents and students can easily check in for lessons, receive real-time updates and photos, track progress and celebrate milestones and skills with digital badges, all from the convenience of their phone.

Inside the training that powers ski patrol rescues

January is National Safety Month for the ski industry, and the National Ski Patrol (NSP) is highlighting the rigorous medical and rescue training that prepares patrollers and that forms the backbone of every safety response on the mountain.

With more than 30,000 members, NSP delivers one of the industry's most advanced education pipelines, one that prepares patrollers not only to respond to emergencies, but to help ski areas operate confidently in a high-consequence environment. Patrollers are trained as mountain-safety professionals, combining advanced medical skills with technical

rescue capabilities, operational awareness and risk-management expertise, which collectively enhance the safety of every guest on the slopes.

“A safe day on the slopes starts long before anyone puts on skis and a helmet,” said Stephanie Cox, CEO of the NSP. “Our patrollers put in hundreds of hours of training, so they’re ready for whatever the mountain throws at them. When a ski area knows its patrol is NSP-trained, they know they have a team prepared to handle complex emergencies and to help keep the mountain running safely.”

Patrollers train year-round to stay ready for avalanche work, gondola or chair evacuations, medical cases, search and rescue and unpredictable scenarios that are unique to winter operations. Their preparation includes a combination of technical coursework, hands-on drills and scenario-based training that reflects ever-changing mountain conditions. Key elements include:

- **Outdoor Emergency Care (OEC):** NSP’s flagship medical program, required for all patrollers, delivers a comprehensive curriculum built for the realities of winter terrain. OEC equips patrollers to manage trauma, environmental injuries, and medical crises in remote and difficult conditions.
- **Outdoor Emergency Transportation (OET):** Training focused on safe patient transport and toboggan handling across a mix of terrain, essential for handoff to higher levels of medical care.

- **Annual Refresher and Continuing Education:** Every NSP patroller completes yearly OEC and OET refreshers to maintain proficiency with the latest medical protocols, rescue techniques, and operational standards.

Beyond core training, NSP offers advanced and specialized education that directly supports resort operations and guest safety, especially in high-risk areas:

- **Avalanche education:** As a long-standing provider of avalanche education in the U.S., and title sponsor of the National Avalanche School, NSP trains patrollers in forecasting, mitigation and rescue, supporting both in-bounds control work and backcountry operations.
- **Outdoor risk management:** Instruction in liability, legislation and operational risk, preparing patrollers to work alongside resort leadership on strategic safety decisions.
- **Mountain travel and rescue:** Training for extended or remote responses, including navigation, survival skills and patient care in variable backcountry settings.

By continually advancing its education and training standards, the NSP reinforces its role as an industry leader of mountain safety and as an essential partner to ski areas nationwide.

“National Safety Month is not only about awareness – it’s about recognizing the patrollers and people whose training helps keep our mountains operating safely every day,” Cox added. *

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