

NEWS from CPSC

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CPSC Issues Safety Tips On Winter Sports

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Dec 16) --Winter wonderland means fun for millions, but for 183,000 Americans winter also may mean serious sports-related injuries.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 84,000 skiers, 30,000 skaters, 30,000 hockey players, 20,000 sledders and tobogganers, and 19,000 snowmobilers will require hospital emergency room treatment for injuries this year.

Proper and well-fitting equipment, physical conditioning, common sense, and good sportsmanship could eliminate some accidents. Injury data compiled by the Commission reveal major hazard patterns associated with various winter sports and indicate suggestions about how other accidents also might be avoided.

Skiing. Investigations of skiing accidents show that injuries occurred when bindings did not release and when the skier was going too fast, lost control, or hit a mogul. A number of accidents happened when the skier was tired.

Commission recommendations to skiers include:

1. Take lessons from an expert. Studies show that beginners are hurt more frequently, so advancement is desirable.
2. Use good quality equipment that fits well.
3. Be sure that equipment is clean--no dirt or salt between boots, bindings, and binding mechanism.
4. Proper adjustment of bindings could lessen the likelihood of leg injuries. Beginners might test abilities to get out of bindings with muscle power by standing in the skis and twisting and pulling to release the toe and heel pieces.
5. Approach tow lifts with caution. Beware of long scarves that could become entangled in the tow rope.
6. Never tackle a slope that is obviously beyond personal skiing abilities. Ski marked trails and observe ski trail signs.

Skating. Recommendations to skaters include:

1. Never skate alone. Insist that children skate with a friend or in a group.
2. Stick to shallow flooded fields and supervised areas. Never skate on lakes, ponds, or rivers until the ice has been tested by a local official. Never skate close to open bodies of water.
3. Keep small children off the ice except when closely supervised by adults.
4. Never build fires on ice. Avoid driving cars on ice.

5. In case of a fall into icy water, the National Safety Council suggests:

- Try to keep calm. Do not thrash around. Extend arms over edge of ice and kick vigorously to propel yourself onto the ice. A pocket knife, belt buckle, or keys might help to get a grasp. Once onto the ice, roll gently away from the break and do not stand up until on a firm surface.
- To rescue others. Do not walk up to the break. Move slowly and carefully and lie down flat on the ice to distribute weight. Use a reaching aid, such as a rope, board, blanket, sled, or jacket. If possible, form a human chain, each person holding onto the heels of the next person.

Hockey. Hockey-related injuries recorded by the Commission include ice, street, field, and gym hockey. A major hazard in injuries associated with hockey was poor or ill fitting equipment and, in some cases, no equipment at all. During practice and fun sessions, young hockey players did not bother to wear face masks, helmets, or gloves, and were injured seriously. Poor sportsmanship also played a prominent role in hockey injuries. Players hit other players and bystanders who happened to get in the way.

Sledding. Never sled on the street or on hills that lead directly into the street. Numerous accidents occurred when sledders hit bumps, curbs, or rammed a car. Also, never hook rides on the bumpers of cars.

Tobogganing. The most important advice for tobogganners is to keep hands, arms, and legs inside to avoid limb injuries.

Snowmobiling. More than 2.5 million snowmobiles will hit the open country of North America this winter. (1.5 million in the United States and 2 million in Canada). Commission staff have found that the majority of snowmobile accidents involved collisions with fixed or moving objects such as fence posts, barbed wire, trees, cars, and other snowmobiles. Last year, the National Safety Council recorded about 156 deaths associated with snowmobiles.

Fatalities have resulted from riding on thin ice, freezing when stranded after a breakdown, and decapitation by running through a barbed wire fence.

Contributing factors in accidents examined included excessive speed, product failure due to design or deterioration, darkness, bad weather, and the derring-do of some drivers.

According to the Commission's Bureau of Epidemiology, injuries associated with snowmobiles are relatively severe and drivers make up the majority of those injured.

The Commission makes the following recommendations to snowmobilers:

1. Follow local regulations and operation instructions.
2. Become familiar with the particular model of snowmobile before driving. A number of accidents involved veteran drivers accustomed to a different make or model.
3. Wear goggles, helmets with chin straps, and protective clothing.
4. Inspect the entire machine, brakes, throttle control, lights, and emergency shut-off switch before departing. Never start without a full tank of gas.
5. Take extra spark plugs, tools, a first aid kit, and other repair and survival supplies such as flares and matches.
6. Know the terrain. Know where fences, gullies, and rocks may be hidden. Beware of open bodies of water and thin ice.
7. Avoid driving at night and in bad weather. A single strand of barbed wire is hard to see.

8. Remember that the loud noise generated by the snowmobile may prevent hearing approaching trains and cars. Be alert.
9. On long trips, travel in groups. In case of emergencies, someone can go for help.
10. Never drink intoxicating beverages and drive at the same time.

[Send the link for this page to a friend!](#) The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from thousands of types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction. The CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard. The CPSC's work to ensure the safety of consumer products - such as toys, cribs, power tools, cigarette lighters, and household chemicals - contributed significantly to the decline in the rate of deaths and injuries associated with consumer products over the past 30 years.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's Hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270. To join a CPSC e-mail subscription list, please go to <https://www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.aspx>. Consumers can obtain recall and general safety information by logging on to CPSC's Web site at www.cpsc.gov.