

The Japan Association for Skiing Safety (JASS) consists of all groups related to skiing and snowboarding. JASS discusses and studies ways to enhance safety at ski grounds while providing guidelines on snow sports safety. Specific activities undertaken by JASS include making nationally unified signs and marks used at ski grounds, establishment of standards on snow sports safety, conducting surveys on snow sports injuries, and production and distribution of pamphlets and posters on snow sports safety.

Standards on Snow Sports Safety

Introduction

Standards on snow sports safety are a set of common rules that must be observed by skiers (Note 1) at ski grounds and parties in charge of managing resort (Note 2) for prevention of accidents in skiing. The rules are aimed at contributing to the sound development of snow sports (Note 1).

Snow sports are characterized by their relative freedom regarding where the sport is conducted, with the participant having liberty in choosing where to ski. However, this characteristic naturally entails risks of accidents. Therefore, skiers must ski down the slope on their own responsibility. In addition, they must observe the common rules set under the safety standards and respect other skiers while using a skiing ground, a public place.

The safety standards are interpreted and operated in consistency with Rules for the Conduct of Skiers and Snowboarder (hereinafter referred to as FIS Rules) (Note 3) set by the International Ski Federation (FIS).

The safety standards serve as a basis for judging whether or not the skier involved in an accident and the person in charge of managing the ski grounds are responsible for the incident. If either of them is judged as being responsible, the standards serve as a basis for deciding the degree of such responsibility.

The person in charge of managing the ski grounds and other persons related to the ski grounds are requested to implement measures to ensure the safety of skiers based on the safety standards, while disseminating the standards and educating people regarding snow sports safety. By implementing these measures, they should contribute to create safe environment for ski grounds.

Chapter 1 Dangers inherent in snow sports

Following are dangers inherent in snow sports

- 1) Dangers posed by irregular weather conditions such as snowfall, blizzard, rainfall and dense fog, including whiteout (a condition in which visibility and contrast are reduced by snowy weather)
- 2) Dangers posed by particular land conditions such as cliff, steep slope, ditch and mountain stream
- 3) Dangers posed by snow quality and snow surface conditions, such as icy slope, deep snow, crevasse and avalanche, including a tree well (void around the trunk of a tree enveloped in deep snow) and a tree hole (ground exposed around a tree following snow melting in early spring)
- 4) Dangers posed by natural objects such as a standing tree, a stump, thicket, rocks, exposed ground and waterway
- 5) Dangers posed by collision with artificial objects such as a support pillar of ski lifts, a snow-making facility, signs erected on ski grounds, ropes and mats
- 6) Dangers posed by collision with snowmobiles
- 7) Dangers posed by the use of snow parks
- 8) Dangers posed by excessive speeding by a skier
- 9) Dangers posed by fall of a skier
- 10) Dangers posed by collisions with other skiers
- 11) Health risks due to fatigue, drinking, drug and poor physical conditions
- 12) Dangers posed by the use of inappropriate ski gear
- 13) Dangers posed by other conditions similar to those listed above

Chapter 2 Responsibilities of skiers

1. Skiing

- (1) Skiers must recognize inherent dangers in snow sports and ski while avoiding such dangers.
- (2) Skiers must always move within the range of their vision and must stop or turn immediately if necessary.
(Note 3) If skiers ski in the manner as described above, they can prevent most of collisions with other skiers or objects.

2. Riding a ski lift

- (1) People using a ski lift include not only people on the lift but also those who are waiting for the next lift to arrive and people who have just got off the lift.
- (2) People using a ski lift must read a notice board and ride the lift in accordance with the notice. Skiers who feel insecure about riding the lift must report the problem to the person in charge and seek assistance deemed necessary.

3. Observance of rules and instructions shown in signs and others

Skiers must behave in accordance with rules shown in signs and notice boards, instructions issued via a public speaker set up on the skiing ground, notes and warnings shown on the trail map, and instructions issued by patrolling officials.

4. Prohibited acts

Acts listed below are prohibited.

- (1) Skiing outside the course
- (2) Stepping in or skiing on closed courses
- (3) Skiing near standing trees, the support pillars of the lift, snow-making facilities, nets, ropes and mats
- (4) Skiing near other skiers
- (5) Blocking skiing by other skiers
- (6) Moving close to snowcats (ski-trail groomers) and other vehicles moving on snow
- (7) Hampering operations of ski lifts
- (8) Skiing under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- (9) Standing or sitting on a ski trail for a long time
- (10) Engaging in acts similar to those mentioned above

5. Obligation to slow down

Skiers must reduce their skiing speed under the conditions listed below.

- (1) Where slow-speed signs are erected
- (2) When visibility in front is poor due to land situations, and natural or artificial objects
- (3) When snowfall is not deep enough for skiing at the beginning of ski season or in early spring
- (4) When visibility is poor due to falling snow, snowstorm, dense fog and sunset
- (5) When whiteout occurs (a condition in which difference in height and bumps on the slope are not easily visible due to snowy weather)
- (6) When the skier skis near natural objects such as standing trees, stumps, thickets, rocks, exposed ground and waterway
- (7) When the skier skis near artificial structures such as the support pillar of a lift, snow-making facility, nets, ropes and mats
- (8) Where the trail merges with other trail or the trail is narrow
- (9) When the skier skids off toward the side of the trail or the skier skis toward the end of the course
- (10) When the skier comes close to a facility where people get on or get off the lift
- (11) Where the course is crowded
- (12) When the skier skis toward an area for children (skiing slope for children)
- (13) When the skier comes close to patrolling employees on duty or encounters snowmobiles in operation
- (14) When the skier skis in areas where safe passage cannot be warranted without reducing speed

6. Obligations of skiers during skiing

- (1) When starting skiing, entering into the trail of the approaching skier or crossing the trail, skiers from an upper hill have priority of skiing down the trail.
- (2) While descending on the hill, the skier must look ahead and keep a proper distance with skiers skiing down in front of the skier to ensure safety.
- (3) When the skier stops skiing, climbing up or down on foot, he or she must use the side of the trail.
- (4) When the skier comes across patrolling employees on duty or snow vehicles in operation, he or she must stop or reduce the skiing speed to ensure their smooth passage.
- (5) While skiing, the skier must connect a leash cord between ski gear and his or her body to prevent other skiers from getting hurt due to the gear being unleashed from the skier.
- (6) While skiing on deep snow, the skier must keep his or her hands off the straps of ski poles to give the hands freedom in securing enough space for breathing in the event of being buried in the snow. In addition, the skier must not ski near big trees in order to avoid falling into a tree well.

7. Obligations of skiers regarding the use of snow parks

When skiing at a snow park, the user must observe rules listed below.

- (1) The skier must obey rules shown on signboards and other boards.
- (2) The skier must ski within his or her abilities and techniques.
- (3) The skier must begin descending after confirming the safety of an area around his or her destination.
- (4) The skier must wear a helmet and other protective gear.

8. Responsibilities of leaders and instructors (Note 3)

- (1) Leaders and instructors are those in charge of taking individuals and groups to a skiing ground and give instructions, supervise and provide necessary care and treatment to them.
- (2) Leaders and instructors must eagerly observe rules stipulated under the safety standards.
- (3) Instructors must teach skiers such rules and how to ski safety in addition to teaching them ski techniques.
- (4) Upon considering weather, snow and trail conditions when instructing people taking their ski courses, instructors must not impose inappropriate challenges on them or put them in a situation where they encounter serious dangers such as an avalanche.

9. Responsibilities of ski-school participants

- (1) People participating in a skiing school have no privilege regarding the use of the ground compared with other skiers skiing in the same area.
- (2) People participating in a skiing school must obey the instructions and orders issued by the person leading their group and the instructor, and behave in accordance with the rules stipulated under the safety standards.

10. Responsibilities of persons in charge of protecting children and persons accompanying children

- (1) Persons in charge of protecting children and persons accompanying them must know their skiing abilities and ensure that they would not encounter dangers.
- (2) Persons in charge of protecting children and persons accompanying them must teach them rules to be followed on the skiing ground.

11. Contestants

- (1) Contestants include not only skiers participating in a competition but also people practicing for a competition and those participating in a practice session before the competition.
- (2) Organizers of the competition have a responsibility to ensure the safety of contestants during the competition.

12. Obligation of skiers to rescue other skiers

- (1) In the event of an accident, all skiers must try to rescue the person involved.
- (2) The person responsible for causing an accident and those who have witnessed the accident must swiftly report the situation to officials on patrolling and other personnel on the skiing ground. In addition, they should cooperate in rescuing the person who was injured due to the accident.
- (3) The person responsible for causing an accident and those who have witnessed the accident must accurately explain the situation of the accident, and disclose their names and contact information in response to a request from officials on patrolling and other personnel on the skiing ground.

13. Search and rescue costs to be burdened by skiers

When the skier met with an accident while skiing outside the skiing course or other areas not under the management of the ski-ground operator in defiance of rules and regulations set by the operator, the skier must shoulder the cost for search and rescue operations.

14. Putting on a helmet and a ski cap

It is advisable for skiers to put on a helmet or a ski cap while skiing.

15. Recommendation of insurance

It is advisable for skiers to buy insurance policies against injury.

Chapter 3 Responsibilities of skiing-ground operators

1. Management of ski grounds

- (1) Facilities for aerial cable cars such as lifts and gondolas are managed by a business operator of aerial cable cars in line with safety management procedures set by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism for such operators, and the Railway Business Act.
- (2) Ski grounds are managed by a safety measures promotion committee set up by the skiing-ground operator. If such a committee does not exist, the skiing ground is directly managed by the skiing-ground operator.

2. Provision of information

(1) Preparation of a skiing ground map

The skiing-ground operator must prepare a skiing ground map, and it must be provided to skiers whenever they need it. The map is to contain information listed below.

1) Notices to skiers

- i. To those who ski on this skiing ground (notice)
- ii. Code of conduct to be observed on the snow ground
- iii. Rules regarding the use of lifts
- iv. Notes to skiers by the skiing-ground operator

2) Skiing area boundary lines, off-limit areas

3) Lift ticket booths, ski school desk

4) Skiing course, lifts, gondolas

5) Degree of difficulty for each ski course (green for entry level, red for intermediate level and black for advanced level)

6) Office for patrolling officers and its phone number

7) Toilets, restaurants, rest areas

8) Others

(2) If the snow ground is in irregular conditions, such as the need to close the skiing courses, issuance of an abnormal-weather warning and danger posed by an avalanche, the party in charge of managing skiing-ground operations must promptly convey the situation to skiers via public boards and in-house speakers, and must take adequate measures.

3. Posting of important information

The party in charge of managing skiing-ground operations must post information listed in Chapter 3, 2, (1), 1) above at lift ticket booths, skiing school desk and the departure point for skiers' first lift.

4. Management of snow parks

- (1) Snow parks must be distinguished from general skiing courses by using ropes and nets.
- (2) Snow-park areas must be shown on the ski-course map.
- (3) Rules to be observed inside the snow park must be explicitly shown at the entrance of the park or inside the park.

5. Signs showing there are dangerous objects

- (1) If there is a potentially dangerous object that cannot be recognized easily by skiers 30 meters away under normal daytime and night-time visibility (no rainfall and no snowfall), a sign board with phrases like "DANGER," "SLOW" or "SPEED DOWN" must be erected on the course or on the ground adjacent to the course to warn skiers of the danger.
- (2) If there is a danger that skiers may hit the object mentioned above and sustain a serious injury, the party in charge of managing the skiing ground must cover the object with shock-absorbing material such as mats.

6. Operations of snow vehicles

- (1) Snow vehicles are defined as vehicles moving on snow, including snowcats (ski-trail groomers) and snowmobiles.
- (2) Snow vehicles are operated in line with a safety-driving manual compiled for such vehicles by the Japan Funicular Transport Association (JFTA) and The Japan Association for Skiing Safety (JASS) .
- (3) Snowcats
 - 1) Devices equipped on snowcats
 - i. Headlamp
 - ii. Tail lamp
 - iii. Alarm
 - iv. Rotating warning light
 - 2) Operation of snowcats

When snowcats (ski-trail groomers) are operated, all the devices listed above must be activated. However, only the alarm system can be deactivated if it is judged that safety can be ensured without it because ski trails are closed or operation is during night time.
- 3) In principle, snowcats must be operated while ski grounds are closed. However, they can be operated while ski grounds are open, if operation is deemed necessary for such purposes as rescue operations and grooming of ski trails. When snowcats are operated, the party in charge of managing the ski ground must take measures listed below.
 - i. Announcement to skiers via a skiing ground speaker system that snowcats will be operated
 - ii. Closure of skiing courses
 - iii. Deployment of guiding staff for safety of skiers
 - iv. Other measures

7. Measures to ensure the safety of skiers in the event of an avalanche

- (1) If an avalanche occurs and its effects on the skiing courses are expected, the party in charge of managing the ski grounds must immediately close all or part of the skiing courses and guide skiers to safe places.
- (2) In order to be able to start rescue operations promptly in the event of an avalanche, the party in charge of managing the ski grounds must secure a sufficient number of staff and equipment.

8. Maintenance of order

If a skier causes trouble on the skiing ground and continues troublesome acts in defiance of staff's warning, the party in charge of managing the skiing ground can expel the person.

9. Investigation on the cause of accident

- (1) When an accident occurs, staff must immediately rescue skiers involved in an accident.
- (2) When an accident occurs, the situation that led to it must be recorded and retained, and if its disclosure is requested from relevant parties, the record must be submitted to them.
- (3) If the accident results in a serious injury or death, its cause must be fully investigated and preventive measures must be taken.

10. Limitations of abilities of skiing ground operators to take safety measures

Most of skiing-accident lawsuits filed by skiers against skiing ground operators involve defects in the installation or preservation of structures on land, which are covered under Article 717 of the Civil Code.

Safety measures are taken by skiing ground operators based on the assumption that skiers will behave while obeying the rules set under the snow sports safety standards. If the accident is caused by the skier's failure to follow such rules, the skiing ground operator is not liable for damages.

Chapter 4 Others

1. Provision of safe gear

Manufactures and providers of snow sports gear must ensure to provide gear that works safely.

2. Environmental preservation

Organizations, business corporations and individuals involved in snow sports must promote environmental preservation.

3. Consideration for handicapped people

Organizations, business corporations and individuals involved in snow sports must work on creating an environment in which all people, including the handicapped, can enjoy snow sports safely.

Notes:

(Note 1) Snow sports, skiers

Snow sports refer to sports conducted on snow and participating on snow, such as skiing, snowboarding and chair skiing. Skiers refer to all people engaged in these snow sports.

(Note 2) Parties in charge of managing ski grounds

The parties refer to those running ski grounds, and individuals, business corporations, municipalities and other entities which are tasked with maintaining and managing ski grounds on consignment from the parties.

(Note 3) Rules for the Conduct of Skiers and Snowboarder refer to 2002 FIS rules and detailed rules.