



### Lynn Easton

Writer Lynn Easton lives on a winding road in Maple Ridge. She tried out the new Winter Driving Safety course online and immediately put on her snow tires. Her family is breathing easier around icy corners.



### Lucy Hyslop

As a writer who teaches skiing and yoga, Lucy says she constantly reminds people about safety. “In writing for WorkSafeBC, it’s fascinating to see the creative ways employers bring safety to the forefront of their employees’ minds.”



### Gail Johnson

Vancouver-based journalist Gail Johnson was interested to learn that potentially dangerous workplace exposures are not limited to harmful substances like asbestos; they can also be in the form of noise, mould, and tuberculosis.



### Helen Plischke

Helen Plischke is a Port Moody-based writer and editor who found it heartwarming to learn about workers and managers who sought continuous improvement in their safety program, despite the compliance challenges they faced (see page 16).

# Ski hill injury sources: digging deep



### Patrick Davie WorkSafeBC regional prevention manager

Region: Kamloops  
Years on the job: 26

This month, we spoke with WorkSafeBC regional prevention officer Patrick Davie about using incident investigation reports to prevent injuries among ski resort workers.

## Q. What are the most common injuries among ski hill employees?

**A.** We keep seeing a lot of leg and knee issues, and wrist and shoulder injuries. The highest injury rates are among ski school, ski patrol, and ski lift workers. Most of the time, they’re getting hurt during their shifts — while they’re skiing or snowboarding.

## Q. We’ve heard of “remedial action plans.” What are they? And how can we use them?

**A.** Remedial action plans are developed from in-depth investigations into incidents that occur at your worksite. Incident investigations are a legal requirement at any active work location. They can have real value to any hill, big or small — you can apply them to any industry, really. The secret is to get as much value as possible from the investigation process. They’re really a long-term, rather than a short-term, solution to safety problems.

Sun Peaks Resort, near Kamloops, has really set the bar with these plans. They use their incident investigation reports as a starting point, not an end point. The investigation tells them what caused the incident. And, rather than just file the report, they’ll immediately use that information to plan how to prevent the incident from happening again.

Say, for example, a snow-making machine flips on a hill. The investigation might show that the machine flipped because it was going sideways on the slope or the worker positioning it lacked training. Knowing that, a remedial action plan might require a specific training session for operators, posting a reminder in the cab about safe operation, and monitoring the machine’s use.

## Q. We're following the regulations but still seeing injuries. How can we improve our safety record?

**A.** Well, remember that the regulations are the minimum requirements. You have to be as focused on worker safety as you are on customer service. Look at the injury mechanisms of the industry, not just those at your worksite. Never buy into the belief that certain types of injuries are not preventable and thereby acceptable. Speed, for example, can be a problem.

One hill rated the abilities of their ski patrollers and set clear expectations on where and how they operate while on the hill at the beginning of the season. After this review and training, the patrollers with less ability were prevented from going any faster than they should have been, and from going into areas beyond their current abilities.

You should also review work practices on your hill. Get out and observe. Watch for high-risk activities, like workers not paying attention while skiing down runs that intersect with other runs; that could cause collisions. Get your health and safety committee involved in a review of operations and use their experiences to promote innovation within your occupational health and safety program.

## Q. What are some safety-specific changes we can make to our work practices?

**A.** Teach ski instructors to avoid guiding students down the slopes between instructors' legs. Numerous injuries have occurred when students cross their skis, fall down, and take their instructors with them. It's safer for instructors to have students hold on to an outstretched ski pole. That way, if the student falls, the instructor won't.

For lift operators, keep in mind that a lot of them get hurt while skiing or snowboarding down the hill

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—**Patrick Davie**, Kamloops-based WorkSafeBC regional prevention manager

after their shifts. They often take an advanced run, which has more risk. Your policy should direct them to use your low-level runs or take the lift when they're finishing work or moving between stations.

For your new and especially younger employees, make sure they're trained; test their competency and supervise them. Set the expectations and lead by example.

Most importantly, give all your employees the support they need to do their jobs safely.

## Q. Where can we get more ski resort safety information?

**A.** Our safety officers have a lot of experience and knowledge that will help you. You'll also find great resources online, including the following:

- Ski resort industry best practices: [www.worksafebc.com/publications/health\\_and\\_safety/by\\_topic/assets/pdf/BestPracticesIndustryRecommendedSkiHills.pdf?\\_ga=1.51764585.1936147614.1446134705](http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health_and_safety/by_topic/assets/pdf/BestPracticesIndustryRecommendedSkiHills.pdf?_ga=1.51764585.1936147614.1446134705)
- Research on diet and exercise to reduce ski resort worker injuries: [www.worksafebc.com/contact\\_us/research/research\\_results/res\\_60\\_10\\_1360.asp](http://www.worksafebc.com/contact_us/research/research_results/res_60_10_1360.asp)

Looking for answers to your specific health and safety questions in *WorkSafe Magazine*? Send them to [worksafemagazine@worksafebc.com](mailto:worksafemagazine@worksafebc.com) and we'll consider including them in our next “Ask an Officer” feature. 🙋

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