

ENGLISH SKI COUNCIL

Assessment of Risk



Legal Framework

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, employees are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.

Employers are also under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of anyone else on their premises **or anyone who may be affected by their activities**.

Employees can be defined as anyone, paid or voluntary, who acts under the direction of an organisation or agency.

The management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1992, require employers to:

- assess the risks of activities
- introduce measures to control those risks
- tell their employees about those measures

Employees have a duty to:

- take reasonable care of their own and others= health and safety
- co-operate with their employers over safety matters
- carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions
- inform employers of any serious risks

These duties apply to clubs and regions when they arrange trips or camps at home or abroad and they have a duty to both coaches and participants to ensure that they are organised in a safe manner and risk is reduced as far as is practical.

Similarly, when clubs, regions or the ESC organise competitions, they have a similar duty to ensure the safety of spectators and participants.

Clubs and regions offering regular and frequent training camps may find they are affected by the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Packages Tours Regulations (1992). This is outside the scope of this briefing note.

Trips and Training Camps

Trips and training camps are normally organised by clubs, regions or ESSkiA. The ESC only arrange training and competition camps for members of the English squads.

Advice on the organisation of visits can be obtained from a variety of sources including local education authorities (LEAs), ESSkiA and schools.

In November 1998, the Department for Education and Employment issued a document entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits". Although the booklet is primarily for staff in schools and LEAs in England, much of it is equally valid for other organisations. The advice in it is useful for anyone organising a trip, visit, camp or exchange. References to teachers, governors, pupils etc can be changed and the legal status of clubs and regions is clearly different to that of schools and LEAs.

The committee of clubs and regions undertaking training camps should ensure that the arrangements are reasonable for the level of activity and of the age, number and ability of the participants, that they have suitably experienced leaders and that insurance and other elements are in place. They should develop processes for ensuring that they know and follow the various regulations, have emergency procedures and keep parents informed.

Clubs and regions developing their own packages, using their own transport and coaches will need to undertake different and more thorough processes than those using commercial tour operators and local ski schools.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment for an activity need not be complex but it should be comprehensive and thorough. It does not require specialist health and safety expertise but skiing, training and competing is a specialist area where the risks may only be identified by experienced staff.

Risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:

- what are the hazards?
- who might be affected by them?
- what are the risks and what safety measures need to be in place to reduce them to an acceptable level?
- can the group leader/organiser put the safety measures in place?
- what steps will be taken in an emergency?

Detailed advice on risk assessment can be obtained from the Health and Safety Executive, in particular the most recent version of the booklet "Five Steps to Risk Assessment" which includes processes to follow and suggested forms to use. A written record should be kept and circulated as appropriate.

Dry ski slopes in Britain should all have a written health and safety policy, have undertaken a risk assessment and have appropriate safety measures in place. These should include measures such as equipment maintenance and issue, staff training, first aid and the identification and minimisation of objective dangers such as lift pylons, trees, lift queues and so on. Groups visiting slopes should ensure that these arrangements exist and remain in force and that legal and appropriate insurance is in place.

Risk in ski racing and training is a combination of the activity, the venue and the participants. The inherent risk can be reduced by altering the level of difficulty and the type of activity to match the venue and the skill level and psychological and physical development of the participants. Before participating in the sport, all athletes are required to acknowledge the risks by signing the athletes' declaration. At each event, athletes are required to inspect the set course(s) for safety and ski-ability. They do this singly, with other racers or with their coach.

D Metters, Alpine Racing Key Committee Leader

29 January 2000

ENGLISH SKI COUNCIL

Assessment of Risk

Activity - Dry slope slalom, GS and Parallel slalom.	
Groups at risk-competitors, spectators, officials. Special risk for younger/less experienced competitors	
Potential Hazards - Venue	Objective hazards, e.g. trees, pylons, lifts, worn or unsecured matting, fences; Width of matting, run out at sides and finish area; Inappropriate profile and length of slope; Viewing area.
Controls in place	Venue safety policies and procedures; homologation of slopes by TD; procedure in place for review of homologation; TD report of event, collated by chair of Technical committee; annual TD forum discuss issues from reports; reports of previous event at venue sent to TD in current year
Action required	Annual review of events (in place), re-homologation in place after major change (in place)
Potential Hazards - Course	Collision with other racers (parallel slalom); inappropriate courses; broken poles; collision with hazards off course including spectators, other competitors and pylons; damaged/worn matting on racing line
Controls in place	International rules followed, modified for ski-ing surface; minimum width of slope for parallel slalom; course setters approved by technical committee; inspection of course and slope area by Jury for safety, legality and ski-ability; rules in place for course setting, including number/types of gates; course difficulty linked to relative ability of competitors; poles minimum height with capped tops; inspection by competitors and coaches for safety and ski-ability; ability cut off for competitors in Grand Prix races; national training for coaches and officials.
Action required	Annual review of events and rules (in place); review of international rules/guidance (in place)
Potential Hazards - Personal	Psychology of younger racers, collision with poles leading to front of face damage; collision with other hazards leading to skull or limb fractures or concussion; collision with spectators/officials leading to injury to competitor or spectators/officials; falls leading to cuts; injury to third party- uncontrolled skis; wounding- unguarded ski poles; knee damage- inappropriate equipment eg risers.
Controls in place	International equipment rules modified for British context; advice re helmets to coaches for children category; padding in place, hazards removed; officials with brief to move spectators away from danger areas; long sleeves/gloves required; ski brakes required; ski pole tip protectors mandatory from 2000; procedure in place to check risers against international equipment rules.
Action required	Annual review of events and rules (in place); review of international rules (in place); review of policy on helmets (see separate sheet)
Emergency Procedures	Required: First aid personnel in attendance; casualty evacuation procedure; accident reporting (all in place)

ENGLISH SKI COUNCIL

Assessment of Risk

Hazard	Level of risk	Action required	Target Date
Wounding/piercing by ski poles	Two known accidents in 10 years, none in competition.	All racers required to use ski pole tip protectors	May 2000
Face, mouth/teeth or front of skull damage due to slalom poles	Unknown/anecdotally a low but real risk	Review of TD reports where available 1999, 1998, 1997.	End March 2000
		Survey of coaches	End April 2000
		Survey international competition and equipment rules/CE certification	End March 2000
		Survey of slope injury reports	End March 2000
		Recommendation to ARC	May 2000
		Policy Decision ARC	May 2000
Skull damage due to impact	Unknown/anecdotally a low but real risk	Review of TD reports where available 1999, 1998, 1997.	End March 2000
		Survey of coaches	End April 2000
		Survey international competition and equipment rules/CE certification	End March 2000
		Survey of slope injury reports	End March 2000
		Recommendation to ARC	May 2000
		Policy Decision ARC	May 2000