



*In alliance with
The University of Vermont*



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NATIONAL SKI PATROL TEAMS WITH LEADING HELMET SAFETY PROGRAM

(Burlington, VT) The National Ski Patrol and PHAT, a ski helmet advocacy program supported by Vermont Children's Hospital at Fletcher Allen Health Care, have formed a partnership to promote increased use of helmets at the nation's ski areas. The National Ski Patrol (NSP) will assist PHAT (Protect Head at All Times) with distributing information explaining the benefits of ski helmets around the nation, and will include information about PHAT on its website. A study by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission found that nearly 8,000 head injuries each year could be prevented if all skiers and snowboarders wore helmets.

"In just a few years, PHAT has created an effective, non-coercive program to increase usage of ski helmets and raised the visibility of the issue across the nation. We're very pleased to be partnering with PHAT to help skiers and snowboarders of all ages have a safer experience on the slopes," says Tim White, Executive Director of the National Ski Patrol.

"I can't overstate the importance of the National Ski Patrol's help with this initiative. Our program is based on the use of role models, and research shows the public recognizes ski patrollers as leaders in both skiing ability and safety," said Robert Williams, M.D., a pediatric anesthesiologist at Vermont Children's Hospital at Fletcher Allen who founded the PHAT program in 2002. "Their example will help change the culture at ski resorts and establish the use of ski helmets as the norm."

The PHAT program has proven effective at ski areas in Vermont where its efforts have been concentrated. For example, at Smuggler's Notch Resort helmet use rates were approximately twice the national average for the 2007-2008 season.**

PHAT takes a non-coercive approach to increasing helmet use by encouraging ski areas to make sure all images of skiers depict them wearing helmets; distributing posters and stickers designed to appeal to young skiers and boarders; urging ski areas to mandate helmet use for employees; and using informational booths and drawings for helmets to attract attention to the issue.

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“In the past several years, the medical literature has made it very clear that helmets are effective in reducing the chance of a head injury while skiing or snowboarding. They certainly won't prevent all head injuries, but the time has come for all skiers and riders to wear a helmet every time they hit the slopes,” said Dr. Williams.

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*** A study released in 2008 by the University of Vermont shows that more than 80% of children (under 18) are now in helmets at Smugglers' Notch, up from 60% in the 2002-2003 season when PHAT started its program. Helmet use by adults at Smugglers Notch has nearly doubled, with almost 60% of adult skiers and riders now using helmets, up from 30% on the 2002-2003 season. The study, based on more than 30,000 observations of skiers and riders over four winters at the resort, shows that among children (under 18), female snowboarders are the least likely to wear a helmet while male skiers are the most likely to wear a helmet.*

About the National Ski Patrol

The National Ski Patrol is a Federally Chartered nonprofit membership association dedicated to serving the public and the mountain recreation industry. For more than 70 years, the NSP has been at the forefront of safety and emergency care education programs. The association's 27,000 members represent 98 percent of the nation's patrollers. For more information access www.nsp.org.

About PHAT

PHAT (Protect Head at All Times) is a helmet advocacy program created in 2002 by Dr. Robert Williams, a pediatric anesthesiologist at Vermont Children's Hospital at Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington, Vermont. PHAT has joined forces with the University of Vermont, ski areas and other partners to encourage all skiers and riders to wear helmets. In just a few years, the PHAT team has created an effective program to increase usage of helmets, and raised the visibility of the issue throughout the U.S.

About Fletcher Allen

Fletcher Allen Health Care, together with our partners at the University of Vermont College of Medicine and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, is Vermont's academic medical center. Our mission is to improve the health of the people in the communities we serve by integrating patient care, education and research in a caring environment. Fletcher Allen serves as a regional referral center -- providing advanced care to approximately one million people in Vermont and northern New York -- and as a community hospital for approximately 150,000 residents in Chittenden and Grand Isle counties. With more than 30 patient care sites and 100 outreach clinics, programs and services throughout the region, Fletcher Allen is committed to being a national model for the delivery of high-quality academic health care for a rural region. For more information about Fletcher Allen, visit our Web site at www.fletcherallen.org.