

Accident prevention in snow sport: knowledge and attitude of participants in snow sport and instructors

Over 50% of skiers and snowboarders attend an instruction course. Aspects of accident prevention could also be promoted in these courses alongside training in technique. Two studies show on the one hand how well informed snow-sportsmen and women are on this subject and on the other, the example set by instructors.



Problem and Objective

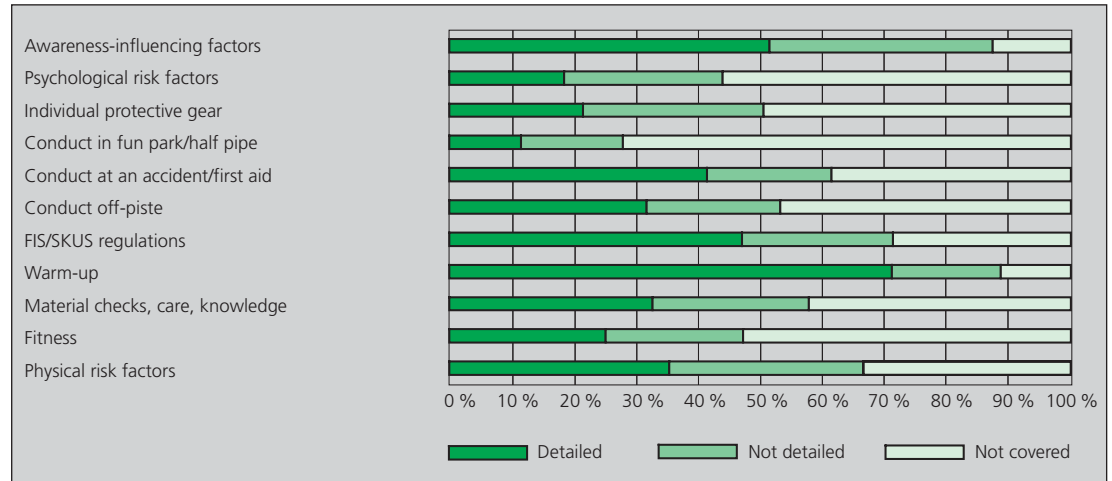
Most snow-sports accidents could be avoided if preventative measures generally known to be effective were implemented. The survey should discover the state of knowledge of sportsmen and women on selected aspects of accident prevention. A further survey aimed to demonstrate which content is promoted by instructors in courses and the behaviour of the instructors themselves in the context of accident prevention. In addition, an analysis of teaching material in snow sport should show which aspects of accident prevention are covered in teaching material.

Procedure

On one hand, 1075 skiers and snowboarders aged between 14 and 36 years of age were interviewed at ten Swiss snow sport regions on aspects of accident prevention. On the other, 557 instructors returned written replies to a survey on their conduct during instruction.

In a further part of the study, 25 examples of the most important teaching material used in courses for snow-sport instructors in Switzerland were subjected to analysis, with the focus on aspects of accident prevention.

Half of the skiers and snowboarders surveyed had attended a course or camp in the last five years. According to their statements (n = 548), aspects of accident prevention are currently seldom dealt with in depth during instruction.



Many of those questioned have more or less large gaps in their knowledge of conduct in terms of accident risk. Their knowledge is particularly vague on those FIS regulations relevant to avoiding collisions. Although the significance of a warm-up session is comparatively well-known, actual physical preparation for snow sport is unsatisfactory. It emerges that participants in snow sport who have attended a course of instruction in their chosen sport have no greater knowledge of accident prevention than their sporting colleagues without any specific instruction.

Analysis of the conduct of snow-sport instructors shows that present instruction courses pay too little attention to aspects of accident prevention. This is backed by the fact that although instructors largely recommend wearing protective gear, they do not set a good example themselves.

Analysis of teaching material used in snow sport reveals that accident prevention is seldom a topic and no teaching material covers the subject completely.

Conclusions

It is difficult to reach individual snow-sportsmen and women with the necessary information on methods of accident prevention. It is also difficult to achieve any lasting change in habits and attitudes with mere appeals. Direct contact with the sportsmen and women is needed to communicate information on accident prevention effectively. A large proportion of Swiss schoolchildren and young people who ski and snowboard can be reached through snow-sport instructors. The instructors are usually on the same wavelength as the youngsters and are often a role model in terms of sporting skills. It is essential to use this factor to promote the case for accident prevention. Snow-sport schools and associations should commit themselves to regarding accident prevention as an integral part of instruction. The various training institutions should appeal to the role model function of their instructors and also create compulsory safety standards for their courses. Comprehensive teaching material should be compiled to make it easier for instructors to integrate accident prevention into their courses. As an immediate measure following completion of the survey, the Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (bfu) has published comprehensive online teaching material that can be accessed under www.bfu.ch/snowsafety.

Source
 Brügger, O., Sulc, V. & Walter, M. (2005). Unfallprävention im Schneesport: Kenntnisse und Verhalten der Schneesportler und Ausbilder (bfu-report no. 56, with summary in English). Bern: Swiss Council for Accident Prevention bfu.