



COVID Response – Ski Area Safety Grants

Vermont Ski Areas Association

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The Vermont Ski Areas Association is a trade association representing 20 alpine and 29 cross-country ski areas across Vermont. Skiing is a significant economic driver in Vermont, particularly in rural areas, with two-thirds of the direct spending attributed to skiing occurring in the towns and communities surrounding the ski areas. In a typical winter season, the industry drives \$925M in direct spending, or approximately one third of the spending attributed to tourism in Vermont. Additionally, the ski industry creates approximately 13,000 jobs at full winter operation and supports many jobs in the greater tourism industry through the winter months, such as restaurant and hospitality jobs.

Ski areas will have significant costs specific to accommodating operating requirements due to preventing COVID spread, and this comes in a year when they have already suffered significant revenue losses. Through June, the Vermont ski industry's losses due to COVID were estimated to be \$100M due to the abrupt and early end to the ski season, soft spring season pass sales and a late start to summer operations. The losses continued to mount as the summer progressed with some loss of regular summer activity and lodging business and a near total loss of meeting and wedding business.

Ski areas will have to invest in many areas to facilitate recommended physical distancing and to enable guests spend more of their ski day outside, more comfortably. For example, the rental cost for tent structures that can withstand wind and snow loading for the core of the ski season is estimated at \$150,000 – 300,000 depending on the size, plus heating costs. One medium-sized ski area estimates their retrofit costs to be more than \$200,000.

The industry has worked collaboratively to create an overall winter operating plan that includes national industry best practices as well as CDC and state guidance and requirements. Ski areas are creating their own customized plans incorporating this guidance and these requirements to help their guests, ski area employees and their local communities stay healthy.

We appreciate the support of the House Commerce Committee and your Committee for recreation safety grants for ski areas and remain available as a resource for questions and information.