

In This Issue

Tobogganing Hills: Reducing their Danger

*"He who doesn't risk
never gets to drink
champagne."*

Russian Proverb

Volunteers: Asset or Liability?

Volunteers are the backbone of many public events. How well-organized is your volunteer management structure?

Tobogganing Hills: Reducing their Danger

With winter in progress in some parts of the county, it's time to reconsider how tobogganing on municipal properties can be kept as safe as possible.

Most people think all they need to do is grab their toboggan or sled and head for the nearest hill. They would likely be surprised to learn that tobogganing carries a significant risk of injury beyond simple bumps and bruises. There are some legal cases involving serious injury, and many anecdotal reports every winter.

Active recreation activities are touted to provide many benefits of physical and mental health. The possibility of injury should not prevent municipalities from permitting use of hills that have been pre-screened for safe usage.

Selecting a safe tobogganing hill

Some municipalities have taken pains to design and designate certain hills for safe tobogganing. The question is "How do we define a safe tobogganing hill"? Safe hills are chosen with (at least) the following features in place:

1. There are no obstacles that will present an obstruction on the hill. This includes trees, benches, water features, hidden drain pipes, rocks that can be hidden by snow, and so on.
2. The sled run requires a safe 'landing strip' that also has no obstacles and that doesn't end on a sidewalk or street.
3. Preferably, the run will face east or north to reduce the effect of the sun's warmth melting the snow layer quickly.
4. Sufficient width for tobogganers to safely walk back up the hill without impeding those riding downhill. The walkway area can be signified with the use of signs.

Post the location of designated tobogganing hills on the municipal website, along with current conditions up-dated daily. It is better to notify people that a hill is closed before they get to it. That allows them to choose one that is open and

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not be tempted to use it despite the 'closed' sign. A good example of this is on the City of Edmonton website: http://www.edmonton.ca/activities_parks_recreation/toboggan-hills.aspx .

Venue Inspections

As with all recreation facilities, regular inspections are necessary to a) manage conditions and b) demonstrate due diligence.

Depending on weather and hill conditions, plus history at the site, inspections should occur *at least* twice per week; I suggest on Fridays before the weekend and again on Monday after each weekend's use. More frequent inspections are important when weather conditions change rapidly due to temperature fluctuations when safe sledding conditions can be compromised. When there is little snow cover or icy patches, signs should be posted to note the hill is 'closed' to use due to unsafe conditions. It also has posted signs with safety messages including recommendations for the use of helmets.

Facility Signage

Signs have already been mentioned above for designating walkways. In addition some helpful points to include on signs are:

1. Recommend adult supervision
2. Recommend helmets
3. Make 'open' and 'closed' signs prominent
4. Mark the return walkway clearly

Cloutier Measuring Device

More and more municipalities are learning that this device provides invaluable evidence of height differentials when defending trip and fall claims. This *measuring device* is **proof you need** of the true height differential; get trustworthy evidence for only \$179.00, including shipping and handling.



FEATURES:

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