



National Ski Patrol Report 2009

Rob Decker. V.P. National Ski Patrol

The 2009 Snow season brought sufficient snowfalls to enable all resorts to function at capacity for most of the season. The workload for patrols began with early snowfalls seeing a number of resorts operational in some capacity on opening weekend. The early snow meant some National Patrol members from NSW were unable to attend the annual National AGM meeting in Corryong. While a date was set at this year's meeting for next year's National AGM as Saturday the 12th of June 2010 some concerns have already been raised as to its suitability, something I will address early next year.

The AGM in Corryong was once again well attended and continues to provide a good platform for all Patrols to attend and discuss the upcoming season. Glen McIlroy provided a brief report on the FIPS conference held in Sweden including the benefits of attending the FIPS event. Some of the recommendations and ideas brought forward at the AGM included the development of a National On-snow DVD with all resorts attempting to provide some footage of the disciplines. The DVD is a work in progress given the time and commitments already placed on patrols during the season. This will be followed up at the next AGM in 2010.

A general discussion on national competencies was raised including competency based marking. There is currently no recognised national standard as ASPA is the only organization in this field. Some competencies that could be included into ASPA's scope include casualty and patient transport and handling via cascade, AKJA and snowmobile. A general discussion ensued as to whether the National Patrol qualification should form part of ASPA's other competencies in the RTO system. The cost of developing the competencies and maintaining accreditations was discussed. It was generally agreed that until competencies are finalised, the current system of assessment be continued. It was agreed that the current National Patrol competencies be updated with this in mind.

It was agreed that a minimum of at least one interstate patroller is required to oversee the assessment of the National On-snow exam.

A motion was passed that the National Patroller qualification will be an on-going qualification, provided that there is a demonstrated, documented continuity of skills maintenance or with a demonstrated agreement or discussion with the resort patrol director or captain.

It was also agreed to include tail-roping into the Cascade skills.

In recent years it has been usual to conduct two exams, one in Victoria and one in NSW, however in 2008 one National exam was held in Falls Creek, this year saw a similar situation and a decision was made to hold a single exam at Perisher in NSW. This model of one exam alternating between the major resorts in each state seems to be more favourable and will be discussed at the National Patrol AGM in Corryong. The benefits of one exam lessens the burden on resorts to provide the time and cost of running the exam. This would see the National exam rotating between the five major resorts every five years (dependant on snow) rather than every two or three years. The cost of running the exam to resorts is considerable which includes the cost of lift passes, accommodation, grooming of slopes and staffing to cover those participating.

This year's exam was held in Perisher with ten candidates participating. It was one of the most successful exams for candidates with nine out of ten gaining there National Sled including one distinction and eight out of ten gaining there National Skiing including two distinctions. Glen Inches attained a National Distinction in both disciplines and has been invited to join the examining group as shadow examiner. The results were indicative of the hard work put in by all candidates and a well deserved reward for the commitment to training and to those that trained them.

A special mention has to go to Wayne Tuckwell and the Perisher patrol for their assistance for a well organised and professional exam, including all those behind the scenes that made it a great day in challenging conditions. A special mention also to the demonstrators that performed their task to a high standard and to Steve Wyn who got thrown in at the last minute, both were an integral part of the examining group. My appreciation also extends to the Perisher Resort and its management for their hospitality on the day. The discussions that continued after the exam demonstrated the commitment by all examiners to get it right at treat the candidates respectfully.

My thanks also to the Thredbo Ski Patrol through Mark Spilsbury who provided a professional cameraman for the day hopefully we will begin to archive some National On-snow footage that could eventually see the production of a DVD to circulate to all Patrols as mentioned.

On a personal note I am new to the role and my thanks to Dave Khun for the work he has done in the past and for his commitment to remain involved in the National On-snow group. I have a personal aim of seeing an increase in the number of national patrollers at Australian resorts. I am hoping that in the future a greater number of patrollers attain the national standard, this has been achieved at some resorts and I urge all patrol directors and captains to make time available to facilitate training where possible, it is an important aspect of our credibility both to the public and the Resort Managements. I am open to assist with questions or criticisms as they arise and welcome any feedback.

I would like to thank ASPA Committee, Mark Spilsbury, and the National On-snow Committee for their support.

Sincerely

Rob Decker
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