

# a bumpy ride

limiting liability on snow tube courses

by Jan Shaw

SnowTubing has become extremely popular, and as the saying goes, "Anyone can tube!" The 2009/2010 Winter season is turning out to be a banner year for snowfall. Tubing is on the rise as one of the top money makers for mountain resorts and snow sports facilities. However, like all snow sports activities, tubing has a dark side... the dreaded word... "Liability". High profit margins are tempered by the offset costs of both incidental and serious impact injuries. Having to answer even a single lawsuit can severely affect a resort's bottom line for the season. When you factor in medical payouts and defense, time and money spent on personnel and resources, and most importantly, the PR and income losses that occurs each time guests see someone seriously injured on property, providing a better impact system to mitigate potential serious injuries is the solution.

Impact injuries are the bane of most ski area managers. The frustrating question has always been, "What can I do about it?" There is only so much that can be physically done to control the environment to lower injury potential. From humps, ridges, to mats, and adjusting the speed of the riders at the end of the run helps, but when the winds pick up, and temperatures drop as the sun sets, the physics change, making for icier runs, higher speeds and increased momentum. There is only so much that can be physically done to protect the rider if they have to impact a structure. Most resorts have run the gambit for safety impact

protection, from installing netting, hay bales, or old style foam mats. But all of these have limitations. As many resorts and snow sports facilities have discovered, the old methods may help, but are not the solution. They are hard upon impact, and can sometimes be the cause of injury. So what do you do when you are limited by physics?

Well, fortunately, the folks at Sans Gear NZ have identified the need, changed the physics, and provided a solution. Sans Gear NZ is the North American distributor for Krush KushioNZ, an internationally patented and award-winning impact protection and fall landing system invented in New Zealand. "Krush KushioNZ is based on a proprietary scientific engineering approach for impact protection, virtually eliminating kinetic energy transfer, making it the #1 injury protection technology in the world," states Jim King CEO of Sans Gear NZ. "Short StopZ is simply the safest impact protection for sports on the market." Jan Shaw, President of Sans Gear added, "Short StopZ works on a constant airflow system, but it's not an inflatable. It does not have surface tension, so it does not bounce or reflect energy the way inflatables do. It is the only system in the world that is 8 years service proven to mitigate impact and fall injuries. Krush KushioNZ is a revolutionizing impact and fall protection system for Themed Attractions, Stunts, Sports, Extreme Sports, Recreational Play Equipment, Fire Rescue and Construction in over 30 countries."

Sans Gear introduced Short StopZ as an effective impact solution for Snow Tubing, the first in a line of impact protection products for snow sports. Short StopZ forms a wall of protection that is described as "pillow soft" upon impact. A wall of almost 100 feet of Short StopZ units were successfully installed at the base of Massanutten Resort's Peaked Mountain Express snow tube run for the 2009/2010 season.

Industry staple, Idaho Sewing for Sports, Inc. has signed on as an Authorized Dealer for Sans Gear NZ to bring Short StopZ to market. "We have been in the tubing industry since the first tube run was put in. The resorts have always had issues with the bottom of the tube runs. This product really looks to fit all the needs I have heard from customers over the years. We are excited to bring it to the resorts! It's a big win for the Ski Industry," says Gunther Williams, CEO of Idaho Sewing for Sports. "Teaming up with Sans Gear is a welcome addition to the Winter Ski / Summer Resort Industry. Someone's finally come up with a way to keep people from overshooting the runs in a safer way."

"The safest thing is for riders to never impact anything. But if they have to, Short StopZ is the best option. Although it is impossible to design for every contingency, the Inventor put a lot of effort into anticipating as much as possible for the safest result," explains Jim. "The Krush KushioNZ system can be built to suit any impact protection needs. It is highly customizable to fit the resort's environment, or designed for an event or competition." Sans Gear NZ won First Place Award, Best New Product: Technology Applied to Amusements for the Krush KushioNZ, IAAPA Expo 2007, has won several International Awards, and is service proven over 8 years for safety landing, fall and impact protection for the general public, worldwide.

**ipm**

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Snow tubing is fast becoming a popular option for people who don't always want to ski or snowboard. Photo courtesy of Will Sharkey.



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