

# **RISK MANAGEMENT DOCUMENT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Turoa and Whakapapa ski areas are situated on the southwest and northwest slopes of Mt Ruapehu, in the central North Island. Mt Ruapehu is the largest of the three volcanoes in the Tongariro National Park. The highest peak of the mountain is 2797 metres, while the ski areas are situated between 1530 metres and 2322 metres. The terrain consists of large lava flows forming bluffs and scree slopes. The surface is extremely rugged and vegetation is sparse.

The ski areas cover approximately 1000 hectares and facilities are widespread. Modern over-snow transport and high-speed lifts provide access during winter months. Whakapapa and Turoa are the largest ski fields in New Zealand and are operated by Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Ltd (RAL).

The ski areas are entirely within Tongariro National Park and are, therefore, subject to the provisions of the National Park Act 1980 and the Conservation Act 1987. RAL also complies with the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.

**“Ruapehu Alpine Lifts will endeavour to provide a full range of Ski Area Safety Services within the Ski Area Boundary”.**

RAL is committed to the protection of its customers from accident, injury or damage.

RAL is aware of the need to provide its customers with a safe and healthy place in which to enjoy recreation time. To this end, suitable staff training is given to employees who will encounter hazards in the course of their work and RAL takes all practicable steps to eliminate, isolate or minimise hazards.

Safety Services Include:

- Avalanche Control
- Terrain Hazard Strategies
- Trail Marking
- Boundary Signage
- First Aid and Rescue Services
- Fully equipped Accident and Medical Centres
- Trail and Lift Clearances
- Ski Area Sweeps
- Low Visibility Management Strategies
- Snow Surface Hazard Strategies
- Backcountry Advisory (Open or Closed)

## **EQUIPMENT STANDARDS**

All ski and snowboard equipment is subject to a pre and in season maintenance programme. This is carried out in accordance with industry and manufacturer guidelines. Each equipment component is inspected and evaluated by our staff.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION**

There are several different forms of information available to the public regarding the ski area operation:

**Mountain Weather Conditions and Ski Field Operational Status:** Snow and weather reports are published on our website [www.mtruapehu.com](http://www.mtruapehu.com) and sent out to various retail outlets, radio stations and local guesthouses. Information is available from 6.45am daily.

The weather on Mt Ruapehu is sometimes extreme and can change in a very short space of time. Always have adequate clothes available for ALL conditions.

Weather reports and daily snow reports are displayed in Customer Services, ticket booths, cafes and rental outlets. Please familiarise yourself with the current conditions before starting your day on the ski field. Trail maps are also available from Customer Services and our retail shops.

**Medium Range Weather Forecast:** Available on the ski area Information Boards in Customer Services and cafes around the mountain. There is also a weather link from our website.

**Backcountry Avalanche Forecast:** These are commissioned by the Department of Conservation and are displayed on information boards in Customer Services and the cafés. Information can also be accessed via the internet at [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz).

**Trail Information:** Trail maps are available from several locations around the ski area, including Customer Services and the retail outlets. They give the location of the cafés, ski patrol and toilets. Trails are colour coded as per international standards.

## **AVALANCHE MONITORING**

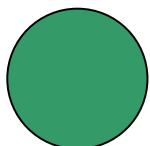
Ski Patrol monitors the weather and snow conditions and run a snow safety programme that includes avalanche control. Areas can be closed due to avalanche danger and use of explosives. The avalanche control programme does not operate out of ski area operating hours; therefore extreme caution must be taken if you are moving around the mountain at these times.

Always respect closed signs, roped off and restricted areas and follow the instructions of ski patrol at all times.

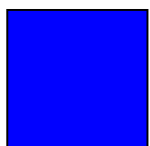
## **TRAIL INFORMATION AND BOUNDARY SIGNAGE**

RAL has adopted international symbols for trail marking on both their ski areas. They provide guidelines for snow users to differentiate between the perceived difficulty and suitability of trails within the ski area boundary.

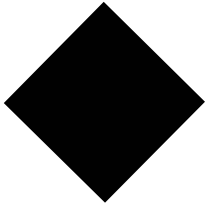
The definitions and marking guidelines are as below:



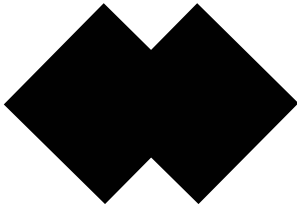
**GREEN CIRCLE**  
Signifies easiest terrain,  
most suitable for beginners.



**BLUE SQUARE**  
Signifies more difficult  
terrain, more suitable for  
intermediate users.



**BLACK DIAMOND**  
Signifies challenging terrain,  
more suitable for advanced  
users.



**DOUBLE BLACK DIAMOND**  
Signifies extreme terrain, not  
suitable for most recreational  
users.

At key exit points the use of large visible Ski Area Boundary signs are placed to warn users of the ski area limits.

The safety signs and banners used by RAL are employed to alert snow users to potential hazards and no-go areas. Where appropriate, international symbols are used to denote advisory, warning or danger signs and these have yellow, orange or red backgrounds with black writing.



**YELLOW BACKGROUND**  
Advisory Signage



**ORANGE BACKGROUND**  
Warning Signage



**RED BACKGROUND**  
Danger Signage

## **ACCIDENT REPORTING**

If you are at the scene of an accident you should:

- Ensure that the accident is reported to ski patrol. Ski patrollers can be identified by their red jackets marked with white reflective crosses. Other staff members can radio / phone them if necessary.
- If possible, cross a pair of skis above the site of the accident.
- Remain at the accident site until ski patrol arrives.

## **FIRE**

All buildings on Mt Ruapehu are required to meet standards as outlined in the Building Act 1992. They are also required to meet standards outlined in the Tongariro National Park Building Code. All Ruapehu Alpine Lifts buildings are facilitated with fire hoses and fire extinguishers.

## **LAHAR AWARENESS**

Turoa and Whakapapa Ski Areas are situated on the slopes of Mt Ruapehu, which is an active volcano. There has been volcanic activity as recently as 1995 and 1996, which came in the form of eruptions, lahars and ash fall.

There are no actual lahar paths going through the Turoa Ski Area, however, there are several through the Whakapapa Ski Area. There is an early warning system in place that warns ski area users of any lahar events that are in progress. A lahar event is a stream of mud, rocks and water that is ejected from the mountain and proceeds down the mountain following valley floors at a speed of around 60 to 90 kilometres per hour.

Recent lahar events have gone through Whakapapa Ski Area, causing damage to facilities. Parts of several lifts are in the path of lahar activity and there is a safety plan in place that is followed by all staff should an event occur. If the lahar warning system is activated a whooping siren will sound followed by a spoken message: "Eruption is imminent, please move to higher ground".

The safety plan is as follows:

- Lift attendants will stop loading passengers onto the lifts immediately.
- The chairlifts will increase to the maximum speed possible enabling unloading of passengers as quickly as possible. They will then be stopped and staff will move people to higher ground.
- All surface lifts will stop (t-bars, platters and tow ropes). Lift attendants will clear loading areas of people and move them to higher ground.
- All buildings are considered to be in safe zones so all those people in buildings should remain indoors.
- Hut Flat, the Rock Garden, Happy Valley and the Top of the Bruce Plaza are all safe zones. If you are in these locations, remain there and await instructions.
- Follow all instructions given by Ski Patrol and Mt Ruapehu staff. All staff members wear clearly marked uniforms.
- Please remember that lahars move along the valley floors so always move to higher ground as quickly as possible.

## **USEFUL CONTACTS**

**RUAPEHU ALPINE LIFTS:** 07 892 3738  
Whakapapa Business Line: 07 892 3410  
Turoa Business Line: 06 385 8456  
Whakapapa Medical Centre: Dial business line - ext. 847 or 880  
Turoa Medical Centre: Dial business line - ext. 675 or 621

## **DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION**

Ruapehu Area Office: 07 892 3729  
Ohakune Field Centre: 06 385 0010  
Emergency Line (24 hours): 0800 362 468

## **POLICE**

National Park Police: 07 892 2869  
021 454 627  
Ohakune Police: 06 385 0100