

# Thrill of sledding can often mean a trip to the ER

By Kathryn Reed

SPOONER SUMMIT – Despite the sounds of fearful screams echoing in the woods, the sledders jumped off the plastic speed bullets to hike back up the hill.

Clearly, the thrill of spinning out of control on a plastic saucer is addicting.

Reza Rahinzadeh likes going fast over bumps. At 4, he has learned going backward keeps the snow out of his face.



Reza  
Rahinzadeh, 4,  
likes to sled  
fast with his  
Aunt Angie  
Winkler.  
Photos/Kathryn  
Reed

The Redding youth was visiting his Aunt Angie Winkler of South Lake Tahoe this month. She knew just the spot to take the youngster for his second sledding trip – to Spooner Summit.

Winkler said it's her favorite spot to sled.

Tucked off the side of Highway 28 at the junction of Highway

50, there is plenty of parking, it's free to sled and the hill is plenty steep to get the adrenaline flowing.

Saucers of all colors, shapes and sizes abound. By the end of the season a pile of plastic debris sits at the bottom – signs of sledding gone wrong.

The Messoro family from Laguna Niguel didn't have to worry about buying an apparatus for their adventure. They were given items to slide on from the Stardust, where they were spending a few days. It was a recommendation from the concierge that got them up to Spooner.

Sledding opportunities abound throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin. Some are free, some you pay to play.

However, this is one of those sports – if it can be called a sport – that often ends in the emergency room.

“Sledding can cause compressed fractures in backs due to people sliding down a hill and flying up and landing on their backs,” Cynthia Burkart, registered nurse and interim director of the Emergency Department and director of Occupational Medicine at Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Besides back compressions, we do see a lot of broken legs and this is usually caused when parents ride in the front of the sled and try to stop. There are no breaks and they can be hard to handle.”

The South Lake Tahoe medical facility doesn't have stats on the number of sledding injuries doctors treat.

However, the Center for Injury Research and Policy in Columbus, Ohio, coalesced data from 1997-2007, which found there were 229,023 injuries serious enough for emergency room treatment for children younger than 19. This equates to about 20,000 hospital visits a year related to sledding – and that doesn't include adults.

The total medical, legal and liability, pain and suffering, and work loss-related costs were more than \$4 billion in 2007 for the 160,000 sledding related injuries for all ages, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

This group says most injuries are to kids younger than 14.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons says sledding for ages 5-14 results in more than 15,000 trips to the ER each year. This compares to skiing and snowboarding for the same age group that sees 29,000 hospital visits.

“Sledding accidents can happen to people of ages and I suggest that if you are going to sled, make sure you are at least 100 pounds, go on a safe, gentle and small powdery slope,” Burkart said. “Make sure there are no objects, such as people, animals, trees or rocks around. In addition, be sure and go slow and it never hurts to wear a helmet.”

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