

Helmet technology advances worth new purchase

By Kelly Kaoudis, SKI magazine

Last season, 1.3 million snow sports helmets were sold in the U.S., up three percent from the year before and 25 percent from the 2008-'09 season. Even in one of the toughest snow and retail years in recent decades, helmet sales continue to rise.

The consistent upward trend can partially be attributed to innovations in comfort, fit, and protection, according to Kelly Davis, the director of research at Snowsports Industries America (SIA). While safety experts agree widespread helmet use has reduced the frequency of serious head injuries, today's lids don't eliminate all the risks. In fact, in some cases, relatively low-impact falls and collisions can be just as dangerous as plowing into a blue spruce or landing a cliff-drop on your cranium.

A typical helmet disperses about 75 percent of the force of a direct blow to the head, though the impact may still be fatal, according to Dr. Jasper Shealy, a professor specializing in human factors engineering at the Rochester Institute of Technology and a helmet expert.

"Research shows that a [traditional] helmet can reduce brain injury if an incident involves a direct impact with a fixed object like a wooden post [or a tree]," said Shealy.

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