

IMPACT



Camas County Extension, PO Box 429, Fairfield, ID 83327; 208-764-2230; Fax 208-764-2454

Connecting Youth, Lifetime Sports and Safety at South Idaho Winter Snow Camp

The Situation

People are seeking more exciting lifetime sport activities. An increasing number are experiencing wintertime sports of snowmobiling, skiing, snowboarding, and climbing. Deaths occurring at winter sport activities have increased over the years. For example the number of snowmobilers killed in the west by avalanches in the past 10 winters, according to the Colorado Avalanche information center, has gone from 7, 5, and 6 in 1995, 1996, and 1997 respectively to 15, 18, and 14 in 2001, 2002, and 2003. The United States avalanche fatalities increased from 5 in the 1950's (rolling average) to 15 in the 1990's. It should be noted that more than half of avalanche deaths still involve non-motorized activities, including skiing, snowboarding, and climbing. Idaho is rated as one of the top eight states in avalanche fatalities. The top five US avalanche fatalities by age group over the past 53 years of data collection is:

1. 25-29 years old (highest)
2. 20-24 years old
3. 35-39 years old
4. 15-19 years old
5. 30-34 years old (lowest)

The increase in deaths can be attributed not only to more people participating in wintertime activities and ease of location accessibility, but increasingly to lack of safety precautions. In order to achieve a positive outcome in

winter accidents, survival skills are extremely important. There is a definite need for teaching survival skills and safe lifetime sports such as skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling.

Our Response

4-H volunteers team up with University of Idaho Extension personnel to provide southern Idaho youth, ages 12-19, with a winter snow camp experience. Three days of fun filled activities are packed into the South Central 4-H Camp, north of Ketchum, Idaho.

The objectives of snow camp are to:

- Teach winter survival
- Instruct participants on first aid
- Explain compass use
- Participate in a lifetime sport
- Practice teamwork
- Encourage friendships and fun



Learning workshops taught a variety of winter safety skills to participants including:

- Cross country skiing
- Snowshoeing
- First aid
- Packing a survival pack
- Navigating by compass use
- Building emergency shelters
- Constructing fire in snow
- Search and Rescue Dog demonstration

Other fun activities included:

- 4-H teen leadership opportunities
- Tubing
- Star gazing
- Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program

Cooperators and sponsors of winter camp are District II and III 4-H volunteers, the consolidated Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the District III Camp Board.

Program Outcomes

Each year from 2001-2004 approximately 60 youth and adults from University of Idaho Extension Districts II and III participated at snow camp and “had a blast!” as quoted by one participant.

A 2004 survey found that thirty three percent of the youth participating had never had the opportunity to cross country ski or snowshoe. All 33% stated that at camp they had learned a lifetime sport and were planning to participate in at least one sport again after camp. One participant stated, “I thought the skiing was really fun. I had never skied in my whole life before and I learned a great deal. Hopefully I won’t be on my (behind) as much next year!”

Youth participants felt they learned necessary survival skills through the training provided at snow camp. Skills learned included:

- What to put in a backpack (83%)
- Snow survival and awareness (100%)
- Compassing (85%)
- How to build an emergency shelter (71%)
- How to build a fire (85%)

Participants indicated that after camp, they would be able to assist in the handling of a person injured during a cross-country hike or ski trip, until emergency rescue personnel arrived. They also specified that if they were lost in the woods they would know enough survival skills to assure that they could survive on their own until a rescue team could locate them.

Future Plans

The winter snow camp planning committee is currently making plans to teach youth about different types of natural resource trips, such as day hikes, weeklong hikes, and hikes appropriate for summer and winter. They are also planning to teach youth; how to pack backpacks for different types of trips, what resources are available for hikers and how to determine what is needed to prepare for these trips.

For More Information

Cindy Kinder, Extension Educator
District III Area 4-H/Youth Educator
Camas County
PO Box 429
Fairfield, ID 83327
208-764-2230
Fax: 208-764-2454
Email: ckinder@uidaho.edu

4-05ckinder-connecting.doc
1/05

