

Boundaries and Ski Touring: Castle Mountain Resort's Procedures & Statement of Position

Castle Mountain Resort (CMR) acknowledges the growing popularity of ski touring in North America. Mainstream ski media has pushed "Big Line" and backcountry skiing, gear manufacturers have increased the quality and affordability of lightweight touring gear, and new lifts are reaching higher and farther into resort terrain. This has led to an ever increasing push to open more aggressive resort terrain and allow more "side-country" access. Ski hills and ski patrols all over North America have needed to find new management strategies to meet these growing demands.

CMR's License of Occupation (LOC)

CMR's LOC refers to an area that has been parceled out of the surrounding Crown Land to be developed and used solely by CMR, for lift-accessed and mechanized skiing. The leasehold follows Gravenstafel Ridge over North and South Peak, extends to the summit of Mount Haig and down the east ridge of Haig. It encompasses the eastern side of Gravenstafel Ridge, Haig Creek, Haig Bowl and Haig Ridge down to the valley bottom.

The LOC can be divided into four management zones. They are:

1. ***Lift accessed skiing terrain***- Main Mountain, Chutes, Far Chutes, and Huckleberry
2. ***Permanent closures*** - the lower section of Haig Creek
3. ***Cat accessed skiing terrain*** - From the Ghost Rider ropeline to the east ridge of Haig Bowl
4. ***Non-operational terrain*** - Beyond Minus 2, The head of Haig Creek, all runs on the north side of Haig Ridge, and the hanging valley under the East Face of Haig

This statement deals exclusively with the latter two.

Backcountry Skiing Terrain & Non-operational Terrain

CMR believes in the NSAA's view that the terms "side-country", "slack-country", or "backcountry-lite" are misnomers that mislead public expectation. There are only two types of terrain: areas within the ski area boundaries, and backcountry areas outside of the ski area boundaries. Boundaries refer to the Ski Area boundaries, not the LOC boundaries. **Backcountry areas are not patrolled, nor do they receive any sort of risk mitigation or hazard reduction. Neither is rescue guaranteed, and at best, it should be expected to be delayed and/or extended.** Ski hills in Canada also reserve the right to charge for rescues that occur outside of their boundaries. Skiers wishing to ski beyond the Ski Area boundaries should be equipped and practiced for self-rescue, and prepared to make their own avalanche and terrain decisions. The boundaries on Gravenstafel Ridge, west of Minus Two, and west of Haig Bowl, are signed with "Ski Area Boundary" signs and un-roped, allowing unmanaged and unlimited access, provided the operational terrain is open to public.

At the cat skiing boundary on the north side of Haig Ridge, access is controlled through a gate at the patrol hut at the top of the Huckleberry lift. This gate may be closed since this piece of backcountry terrain threatens operational terrain. Avalanche control may occur on the north side in order to reduce the hazard to the Cinch Forks. **CMR patrons not respecting the operational ropelines or access point will have their lift tickets revoked, or their season passes suspended for two weeks.**

Cat Accessed Skiing Terrain

The Powder Stagecoach Cat Skiing area is an operational zone from Tuesday to Saturday each week. Tuesday and Wednesday are used to gather snowpack information, perform avalanche control for the upcoming skiing period, and to preserve the integrity of the product. Cat skiing is sold to customers and occurs on Thursday to Saturday most weeks, depending on bookings and snow conditions. However, the snowcat is available for private bookings any day of the week. This schedule may also change during holiday periods.

Since cat skiing operations began in 2010, CMR has developed this area for mechanized skiing by clearing runs and building an access road and an egress road. This area has become increasingly desirable for ski touring. During the non-operational period of Sunday and Monday of most weeks, CMR permits patrons to ski tour in the area. However, **during the non-operational period, CMR views the cat accessed ski area as backcountry terrain. Avalanche control is not performed for ski tourers, and the same caveats of self-sufficiency are assumed for people traveling beyond the gate.**

Access is permitted only through the gate at the top of the Huckleberry lift. It serves as a point for backcountry skiers to read the Avalanche Canada bulletin, to check their rescue equipment, and to chat with patrollers, many of whom are active ski tourers in the area. The gate is also critical for managing traffic in the event of explosive avalanche control on either side of the ridge, or any other hazard associated with operations. **CMR patrons not respecting the operational ropelines or access point will have their lift tickets revoked, or their season passes suspended for two weeks.**

CMR understands that those wishing to ski tour in the cat accessed ski area are also customers, often times loyal pass holders. We will endeavour to provide notification of irregular closures to the area on the website, and to provide that information to the office generally by 8:00 AM each morning.

Release of Liability

CMR assumes no responsibility for the decisions made by patrons to ski outside of the lift accessed boundaries. CMR cannot recommend or promote anyone leave the Ski Area boundaries. Any information provided by any staff about routes, alternative ski touring areas, and avalanche conditions should be viewed as courtesies from one member of the ski touring community to another. This statement may be reviewed at any time and is subject to change.