

SKIERS WARNED TO CHECK INSTRUCTORS QUALIFICATIONS

Skiing enthusiasts may be heading for a fall if ski centres continue to put costs before safety, says the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL).

APIL president Frances McCarthy said it is vital that people ask their instructor as many questions as possible about their training and expertise. "Skiing is great fun and we don't want to put people off enjoying themselves," she said.

"What we are concerned about are the accidents that have happened because the instructor in charge has been teaching well beyond the boundaries of his expertise."

And APIL believes the only way to help prevent accidents is for ski centres to invest more money in employing properly qualified instructors. "We know some ski centres employ under-qualified instructors to help cut costs, but we urge them to think twice before doing this because they are ultimately putting a price on people's safety," said Frances.

Skiing expert, and assessor of instructors, Chris Exall also believes ski centres who allow instructors to teach beyond their qualification are putting their pupils at risk. "I know of many cases where people have been injured because their instructor wasn't qualified to do what they were doing," he said.

"One lady - a novice skier - has a terrible accident because her instructor, who was not qualified to teach and should have been working under supervision, led her onto a run which had been designed for expert skiers. She lost control and ended up with a broken spine."

Chris Exall has acted as expert witness on several cases involving skiing accidents and in almost all cases liability for the accident has been admitted by the ski centre. "The majority of these cases are settled before they go to court because the ski centres will not stand up in court and say that an accident happened because one of their instructors was not properly qualified," he said.

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Note to editors: For further information, or interviews, please contact:

Lorraine Gwinnutt
Press & Parliamentary Manager
APIL
33 Pilcher Gate
Nottingham
NG1 1QE
Tel: 0115 958 0585
Fax: 0115 958 0885

or

Lisa Wardle
Press Assistant
APIL
Tel: 0115 958 0585
Fax: 0115 958 0885
email: lisa@apil.com

email: lorraine@apil.com