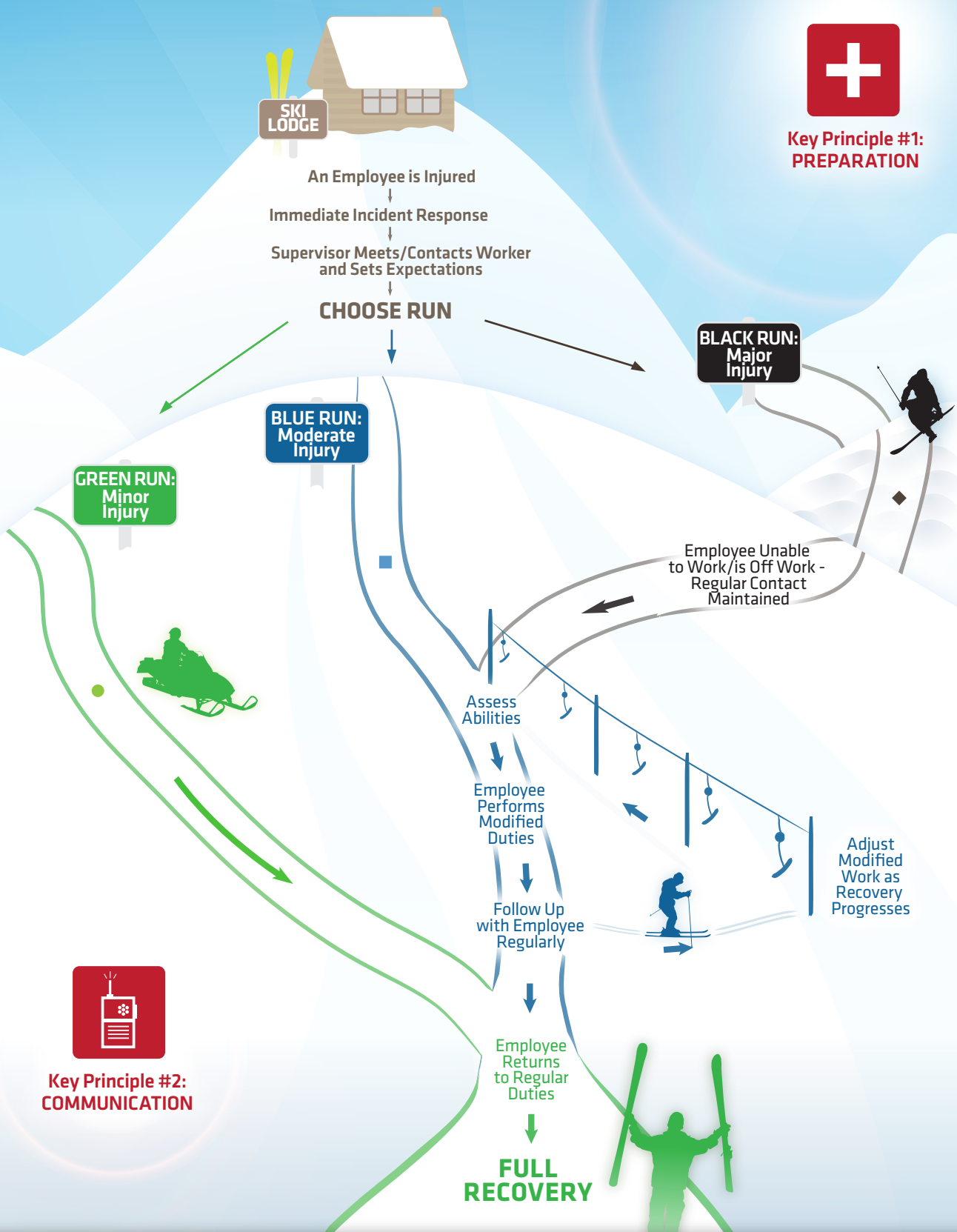


# NAVIGATING CHALLENGING SLOPES:

A Modified Work Trail Map for BC Ski Areas



## WHAT IS IN *NAVIGATING CHALLENGING SLOPES: THE MODIFIED WORK TRAIL MAP*?

*Navigating Challenging Slopes: A Modified Work Trail Map* has been designed for ski areas and outlines the basic processes of how to assist a worker with returning to work quickly and safely after a workplace injury.

This guide focuses on the modified work aspects of an Injury Management Program. It explains some of the key principles and processes that will help you put your company's modified work program in place. This document will provide you with an overview of the "Why and How" of helping injured workers go back to work.

This guide is complemented by *Navigating Challenging Slopes: An Injury Management Program Manual & Toolkit*. These resources include more information about an overall Injury Management Program and have templates of policies, procedures, roles & responsibilities, forms, letters and other information to help you successfully develop your own comprehensive Injury Management Program. At the end of this document you will find a **Glossary & Resources** with links to all of the documents that are critical to getting your organization's modified work program off the ground efficiently and effectively.



## WHAT IS MODIFIED WORK?

A modified work system is based on the philosophy that many injured employees can work safely and productively during the recovery process. It provides a framework to support workers who are suffering from an occupational injury or illness. Through a systematic process of offering suitable, modified or alternate duties, it helps workers return to their full duties and normal daily activities as quickly as possible.

Occupational research and medical evidence suggest that a modified work program is beneficial to an injured employee's recovery process and their overall health and well-being. As the modified work process shortens the amount of time an injured employee is away from work, it helps reduce the cost of claims for an employer. It is a win-win for employees and employers.



Occupational injury costs have been rising sharply in the ski area sector, which have resulted in significant increases in WorkSafeBC premiums for all operators. The duration of these injuries is a key driver of claim costs and appropriately managing claims and using a modified work approach will help from both a human and financial perspective.

# THE BENEFITS OF MODIFIED WORK

## Modified work programs are win-win for employees and employers.

### For Employees:

- Improves healing and recovery timelines
- Preserves employee's income
- Reduces concerns of employment security
- Maintains workplace relationships
- Decreases the risk of negative long-term health effects

Modified work programs have been shown to help employees with faster recovery from their injuries. They also reduce the financial hardship by allowing an employee to continue working during their recovery process and keep earning their regular pay, which is more than the WorkSafeBC benefits.

In addition to the physical and financial benefits, modified work programs also reduce the psychological impact of a work-related injury by giving the employee an opportunity to remain productive at the ski area. Regular communication with co-workers, friends and supervisors has proven to be a critical factor in enhancing recovery. This is even more apparent within the ski area industry where seasonal workers often rely on the work environment to be their social support network.

### For Employers:

- Illustrates your ski area's commitment to a healthy and safe culture
- Demonstrates that you value your employees
- Reduces the cost of hiring and training replacement workers
- Decreases the cost of your WorkSafeBC claims
- Improves the overall guest experience

Modified work programs enhance a worker's recovery and ensure your workers resume their regular duties as quickly as possible. Modified work programs have also been shown to prevent the deterioration of an employee's overall skills, health and attitude.

Through a process of offering modified (alternate) duties, you can significantly reduce the cost of your WorkSafeBC claims by lowering your wage loss payments. Lower WorkSafeBC claim costs ultimately results in lower WorkSafeBC annual assessments (insurance payments) for your company. You also benefit from your worker's ongoing participation in the ski area's day-to-day activities.



# KEY PRINCIPLES OF A SUCCESSFUL MODIFIED WORK PROGRAM

**Your modified work program will be successful if you remember two basic principles:**



## KEY PRINCIPLE #1 – Preparation

Like any ski patroller getting ready for a rescue, a successful modified work program is based upon good preparation.

### 1) Setting Expectations - Inform Everyone of the Modified Work Program

A critical part of any successful modified work program is communicating the program to everyone at the ski area.

Everyone should be aware of the program before an injury or illness occurs. This means that all managers, supervisors and employees need to know the program exists, the benefits of the program and their role in making it a success.

Everyone should know what to expect in the event of a workplace injury. Setting clear expectations will enable supervisors and employees to work together to plan an early and safe return-to-work in the event of a workplace injury.

Utilizing new and returning worker orientation/education sessions at the beginning of each season can be an effective way to market your modified work program. Developing an information sheet that is distributed and communicated during orientation, outlines expectations and provides your workers with a valuable reference guide. The information sheet should at minimum include the following basic information specific to your ski area:

- Benefits of the program for both employees and the ski area;
- The modified work process, including what the employees can expect and whom to contact if they get injured;
- A diagram or workflow specifying the steps in the process.



To inform everyone about the program, consider using meetings with employees (including their initial orientation), or making an announcement via the company intranet, memos, newsletters, emails or bulletin boards.



## 2) Being Prepared to Offer Modified Duties

When a worker is injured and your supervisors (managers) want to offer modified duties, how do they find out the types of available modified duties?

- *Does your company and its departments have a list of modified duties readily available?*
- *Is it easy to determine which duties are suitable for each type of injury?*
- *Does your company have an information package that the worker can provide to their doctor to help better determine the duties the worker is able to perform during the recovery process?*

Have modified work opportunities planned out before there is an injury. Don't wait for an injury to occur and then think about what the employee can do. Creating these resources in advance will help the modified work process flow smoothly for both workers and supervisors. More information on how to develop a list of modified duties and communicate it can be found in the [How-To section](#) of this document.



### KEY PRINCIPLE #2 - Communication

Worker recovery through a process of modified work can be further improved if the employer (i.e. immediate supervisor) and the employee are communicating regularly and clearly regarding the worker's recovery plan and progress.

The employer and employee also need to communicate effectively with other key players in the modified work process such as the supervisor/manager handling your company's return-to-work program, the employee's doctor, physiotherapist or other medical practitioners as well as WorkSafeBC.

The [Glossary](#) at the end of this document has a number of forms and letters to assist with the communication process. More information about this principle follows in the [How-To](#) section.




Modified or alternate duties are any meaningful activities, in any department, that suit the worker's current abilities.



# HOW TO USE THE MODIFIED WORK TRAIL MAP

## Immediate Incident Response


When a worker is injured, there should be a routine response process at any ski area that swings into action with appropriate emergency response to ensure the safety of the injured worker. This includes taking immediate action to ensure the safety of the employee and others. This process could include involvement of the supervisor, ski patroller and/or first aid attendant providing first aid, and securing the area to prevent further injuries.


Incident Scene Response is the first opportunity to begin to assess the severity of the injury. The *first aid attendant's assessment and response* will help in eventually choosing which run on the Modified Work Trail Map to follow. 

First aid attendants are an important first link in the modified work process for any ski area. They should receive additional training on the ski area's modified work program and processes, and how their assessments feed into that process.

Another key form that will ultimately need to be completed as a result of information gathered at the incident scene is the *Witness Statement*. Initial information for the *Accident/Incident Investigation Report* should also be gathered.

## Supervisor Meets/Contacts Worker & Sets Expectations (Day of Injury)

The success of the modified work approach depends on the supervisor/worker relationship and an open and ongoing communication. 

An initial meeting between a supervisor and a worker early in the process is a key step to a successful recovery. This initial meeting sets the tone for the recovery process. 



A caring and respectful relationship between the ski area and the employee is critical to a successful recovery.

Normally this meeting should occur on the day of injury. This is an opportunity to set expectations regarding a recovery plan (which run to choose), and to collaborate on determining a suitable modified work plan. Reviewing the general expectations and the *Return to Work Kit* is a good place to start. Information for filling out *Employer's Report of Occupational Injury or Disease (Form 7)* and the *Accident/Incident Investigation Report (Form F)* can also be gathered during this first meeting. 📄

## Choose Run

### Blue Run – Moderate Injury

#### Assess Abilities

Using the first aid attendant's injury report and patient assessment as a guide, consult your department's (and/or the ski area's) list of modified duties which have been categorized using the *Typical Physical Limitations for Common Injuries*. The list makes it easy to see which modified duties are more suitable for various types of injuries. ➕

To create a list of modified duties for your department, consider sitting down with the front line staff as they are a great source of ideas regarding daily activities and how they need help. Then use the *Typical Physical Limitations for Common Injuries* to help guide categorize which activities would be good for which types of injuries.

#### Offer Modified Work

Working together with your employee, review the list of possible modified duties that are appropriate for their injury and produce the *Modified Work Offer (Form D)*. 📄

#### Visiting the Doctor

If possible, review the *Return to Work Kit* with the worker before they go to the doctor. 📄

If the supervisor and worker have already met and agreed on a Modified Work Offer, then complete the *Letter to Doctor (Form B2)* in the *Return to Work Kit* with the worker and send it to the doctor. This letter outlines that an offer has been made so the doctor can confirm its suitability. ➕



Remember, modified work can be performed anywhere within the ski area. If you cannot accommodate the worker in your department, then work with other department managers or the ski area's return to work coordinator as necessary.




Your employee knows their ability best. You can offer modified work (link to Modified Work Offer) before they see a doctor.

If the worker goes to the doctor before a Modified Work Offer is agreed upon, fill out the *Letter to Doctor (Form B1)* in the *Return to Work Kit* with the worker and have the employee provide it to their doctor.

The worker is ultimately expected to return either the completed *Letter to Doctor (Form B2)* or *Physical Assessment Report (Form C)* to your organization from the doctor. This enables a supervisor to then work together with the worker in identifying and scheduling suitable modified duties using both the ski area's list of modified duties and the information from the doctor (i.e. the *Physical Assessment Report*). Once the modified work has been identified, the supervisor should complete a *Modified Work Offer (Form D)*.

## Monitor and Review

Frequent follow-up with an injured worker on how their recovery is progressing is critical to a successful outcome. 

Follow up daily, during the first week when a worker is on modified duties. The modified work approach is a dynamic process. Accordingly, changes during the recovery process may need to be made to the modified duties, depending on the worker's ability to perform those modified duties.

Even after a worker has returned to full duties, a daily follow up during the first few weeks can help to prevent injury reoccurrence. During the daily follow up, listen to the worker's experience and progress, and consider any further signs and symptoms that are being reported.

## Adjust the Modified Work as Recovery Progresses

The best model for adjusting modified work as recovery progresses is through a collaborative approach with the worker.

Substantial changes to the modified duties may require another *Modified Work Offer (Form D)* to be written.

Smaller adjustments can be written up in the *Communication Log (Form I)*. 



Be flexible with the employee's treatment plan. Medical appointments and treatment are an important part of recovery. Allow time for treatment and other medical appointments during the work day.





## ◆ Black Run – Major Injury

Major injuries such as those requiring hospitalization may have a slightly different route to recovery.

In these situations, the key principle of communication and maintaining a good relationship with your worker, even while hospitalized, is even more important to a successful recovery. The *Communication Log (Form I)* is a critical tool in this process. Checking in with the worker frequently during hospitalization builds trust and develops a caring relationship that will help to collaboratively determine modified duties once it's transitioned to the blue run. 📄

As the employee heals and recovers, their progress is monitored and what was once a major injury (black run) will become a moderate injury (blue run) where they will be able to return to work using the modified duty approach.



## ● Green Run – Minor Injury

In some cases the worker's injury is minor enough that they can return to regular duties on the day of injury (after initial first aid), or the very next day. They may not even need to see a doctor; however, the supervisor and/or first aid attendant should follow up with the worker the next day before the start of shift to ensure that the injury has not worsened overnight. 📄

If the injury has worsened and modified work is considered, then the injury should be considered moderate and the blue run should be followed, and the process of working together with the worker to determine modified duties begins.



The role of a first aid attendant should include following up with workers to monitor recovery progress.



Modified work may occur before a person sees their physician.

## SUCCESS – FULL RECOVERY

The modified work process concludes when the injured worker is able to resume their pre-injury job without undue risk to themselves or others. Once the worker has returned to regular duties and has had one or two weeks of follow up contact with their supervisor, full recovery has been achieved. Confirming a return to full pre-injury duties and hours is an important aspect of injury management and the management of your ski area. 📄

## GLOSSARY & RESOURCES

### Return to Work Kit

#### List of Forms, Checklists & Letters Customizable for Your Ski Area

**Form A** – Early & Safe Return to Work Letter

**Form B1** – Letter to Doctor

**Form B2** – Letter to Doctor (with a Modified Work Offer)

**Form C** – Physical Assessment Report

**Form D** – Modified Work Offer

**Form E** – Witness Statement

**Form F** – Accident/Incident Investigation Report

**Form G** – No Time Loss and No Medical Aid – Non Reportable Incidents

**Form H** – Time Loss and/or Medical Aid Claims – Reportable Incidents

**Form I** – Communication Log

**Form 55B23** – First Aid Record

**Form 55M60** – Occupational First Aid Patient Assessment

**Form 7** – Employer's Report of Injury or Occupational Disease

Typical Physical Limitations for Common Injuries

This guide is complemented by *Navigating Challenging Slopes: An Injury Management Program Manual & Toolkit*, which includes more information about an overall Injury Management Program as well as templates of policies, procedures, roles & responsibilities, forms, letters and checklists.

While setting up your ski area's Injury Management Program or during any step of the process, you can find other tools and resources from the following organizations:

- Employers' Advisers Office
- WorkSafeBC
- go2HR

### go2HR Provides the Resources You Need to Succeed

go2HR, the BC tourism and hospitality industry's human resource association, is a non-profit society responsible for coordinating the BC Tourism Human Resource Action Plan. This includes developing strategies to assist BC tourism and hospitality businesses in recruiting, retaining and training employees, thus supporting the growth and success of the tourism industry.

Working in partnership with WorkSafeBC, go2HR is also the health and safety resource and the certifying partner for the Certificate of Recognition (COR) Program for BC's tourism and hospitality industry.

*Navigating Challenging Slopes: A Modified Work Trail Map for BC Ski Areas* was developed in conjunction with WorkSafeBC, Canada West Ski Areas Association (CWSAA) and go2HR's Ski Area Occupational Health & Safety Technical Advisory Committee.