

Experience a day in the life of a Patroller

It's 7am. I grab my hot cup of coffee and head into the Patrol Room for the morning briefing, where our staff has assembled to review snow conditions, coordinate assignments and discuss the day's activities. Patrollers – paid staff and volunteers – on skis and snowboards, gather with new candidates and Mountain Security staff before hitting the slopes to start the day.

A constant parade of Patrollers makes their way to the chairlift, and takes the ride up the mountain to over 8,400' before access is open to the public. It's time to prepare the mountain for our guests who are waiting down in the base area to steal first tracks. We'll get our's after we leave the bump shack – the patrol huts that sit atop each peak at Bear Mountain. It's time to rip down each trail to establish the signs, directionals and safety equipment that will allow our guests to enjoy a thrilling, but safe, experience on our mountain. We repeat this same protocol daily, as snow conditions change day to day.

Once the mountain is set, it's time to get out onto the runs and enjoy the fresh powder with the 4,500 guests who have made their way up to the mountain this particular day. With snowboarders, skiers, snow skaters, adaptive skiers – we share the powder, while providing directions, information and on occasion, medical assistance for those who got more than they came up for.

As the time rolls past 10am, the first call comes in from dispatch. One of our lift operators has reported an incident on Showtime, a steep terrain run where a guest face-planted and hasn't moved since falling. A Patroller is dispatched from Goldmine Bump, with a toboggan in tow. The response time is quick and the Patroller is kneeling beside the guest inside 5 minutes of getting the call. The Lead Patroller has barely begun his initial assessment of the guest, when he is joined by two more Patrollers and a snowboarder from our Mountain Security staff, who secure the scene to protect both the downed skier and the Patrollers from others enjoying the same run. The primary assessment reveals the skier had simply knocked the wind out of himself but had no further complaints. A secondary assessment exposes a deformity near the guest's patella, so the Patrollers immobilize his leg with a quick splint and transport him in the toboggan. The ride to the Patrol Room is the last run that guest would take this day, not counting the ride to the hospital for further medical care.

The Patrollers return to the bump shack just after noon, in time to enjoy a BBQ lunch on the sun-splashed deck of the bump, overlooking Mt. San Gregornio. Several Patrollers are engaging in conversation about their real professions – engineers, salesmen, lawyers, firemen, among others. Volunteers come from all walks of life, but share the common interest of winter sports and helping those in need. And the need will be great, as the afternoon becomes busy after liquid lunch and fatigue start to take their toll on skiers and boarders alike. Several calls come in during the early afternoon, sending teams of Patrollers out to provide medical care for our injured guests.

Our job this afternoon was to secure an area that was deemed unsafe, requiring banner guard to keep the skiing/riding public away from that area. No sooner did we finish, a call came in to provide a courtesy ride to a guest who found herself on terrain that was above her skill level. We rolled up with one of our patrol toboggans and loaded the guest and her equipment for a safe ride down to the base

area. As we unload the thankful guest, a young boy is found crying, separated from his parents. Before we can secure all of the information about the young boy, a call comes out from dispatch about a lost boy with a description that matches our young guest. Before his tears dry, he is reunited with his Mom.

As the sun began to set and the chairlifts began to run empty, the Patrol staff prepares for the day's final sweep – where the Patrol systematically covers the mountain to insure that all of the day's guests have left the mountain safely. All trails are covered and Patrollers stop along the trail's edge looking into tree-covered canyons for any signs of lost or injured guests. This insures no one remains on the mountain overnight.

As sweep ends, all Patrollers wait outside the Patrol Room until all Patrollers are accounted for, after all, their safety is as important as the safety of the public that we have been serving all day. Our duty day draws to a close, another gratifying day on the slopes of Bear Mountain.

First on, last off. We wouldn't have it any other way.

If this sounds like you, contact the Bear Mountain Patrol via email or stop by the Patrol Room.