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Recreational Safety takes Responsibility and Control

Off-Season Ski and Equipment Maintenance

With the ski season nearing an end, this month I am bringing back the expert advice offered by Doug Barr. Skier's off-season equipment to-do list This is being written as an equipment safety article but there are a few other items thrown in with safety tips that you can do after the ski season ends. It covers your ski equipment from skis, bindings, clothing, tickets and your body/health.

At the end of the ski season, and maybe once during the season, wash your skis. This is more important if you travel long distances with your skis on a roof rack with no protection. Warm soapy water and a soft brush is all it takes to get the road grim off your bindings. Do not pressure-wash them or use any chemical cleaners. Harsh chemicals could remove internal lubricants or damage plastic surfaces. Wipe them dry with a towel to prevent edge rust. Hopefully, that road grime has not made its way into the bindings. Bindings do not need any lubrication at any time!

For most of the club members, I suggest that the following binding work should be done by a local ski shop. If you have experience working on bindings you can do this at home, but there is a special screwdriver for working on ski bindings; it's not a regular Phillips. The one big thing you can do to prevent binding failure and increase the safety of proper binding release is to back off the DIN setting on your bindings at the end of the season. By backing off the spring tension, the stresses on the binding housing and the spring itself are greatly reduced. The binding will need to be returned to the proper DIN before they can be used. This will need to be done by a professional ski shop where the bindings will be tested to make sure they release properly. The DIN setting is the tension in the springs that makes your bindings work. DIN stands for Deutsches Institut für Normung (German Institute for Standardization). It is determined by the skiers' height, weight, age, boot sole length and the aggressiveness of your skiing. The higher the number, the harder it is to have the binding release, the lower the number, the easier the binding releases. I once had a pair of skis that were left in the rafters of a very hot garage. Over time, and multiple changes of temperatures (winter to summer and back), the plastic binding housing failed and the spring broke through the back of the binding. It did take years for this to happen, but it did happen.

An end-of-season tune-up is not needed but an extra thick layer of wax on the skis will protect the bases of the skis from getting damaged as you move them around your garage all summer long. If done correctly, it will also prevent the edges from rusting. Store your skis in an area that has the coolest temperatures available. That would not be the rafters of your garage. Basements or crawl spaces work well. An additional benefit would be an area that doesn't have large temperature swings. What about the guest bedroom closet? One of our members gave me a great tip about tuning skis off season. He takes his skis out of storage on a hot summer day. Think 100 degrees. Allow the skis to warm up but do not place them in the direct sunlight. The high temperature will open the pores of the base material, allowing the wax to get deep into the base material. This is the time to hot-wax your skis with quality wax. Remember to leave extra wax on the skis to protect them. Some high-end ski shops have a 'hot box' to do this to skis during the winter. And they charge a lot for it. Again, do not put your skis in the direct sunlight, the bases might delaminate from the skis. As the winter season approaches, take out your skis and get them tuned and the bindings tested. Even if you don't back off the spring tension in the bindings, have your skis fully tuned and get the bindings tested to make sure something doesn't go wrong over the summer.

Moving on to your ski clothing. Over time, your waterproof clothing loses its waterproofing. Dirt in the fabric will cause premature wear and possible failure. I suggest taking your clothing to TEC (Technical Equipment Cleaners) in Truckee on River Street ([www.tectahoe.com](http://www.tectahoe.com)). They clean, repair and re-waterproof any high-tech items from jackets, to sleeping bags, to tents. I've had them do a lot of work for me over the years. Getting away from talking about ski equipment, taking care of yourself is also a very important maintenance tip. I had a mediocre ski season this year as I didn't maintain my strength and stamina over the summer. Getting a cold in December and Covid in January didn't help. Walk, cycle, stretch; do whatever it takes to keep yourself healthy over the summer and get ready for the ski season. Circling back to what you can do at the end of the ski season, buy next year's ski passes. Most businesses offer the best deals at the end of the season. Jump on it so you have the motivation to stay fit all summer in preparation of skiing in the winter.

Stay safe, Doug

FYI, I've had more than twelve seasons of experience working in different ski shops over the years including Helm of Sun Valley (in San Mateo), Mogul Mouse, REI and Scheels.