

## Minor: Sheriff shoots down Denver Post series

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BY JOHN MINOR  
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

As the sheriff in Summit County, I read with interest the recent series of articles in The Denver Post about skier injuries and fatalities. While I agree that any fatal accident is tragic, the vast majority of them are just that ... tragic accidents. Each person made a conscious choice to ski/board, and each person wanted the thrill and enjoyment that snow sports are known for.

Skiing entails a certain amount of inherent risk, as does any activity that involves varying levels of speed and uneven terrain. And let's be honest with ourselves as well: as human beings there is a part of each and every one of us that is a thrill seeker (maybe some of us more than others).

In today's over-regulated society, we need to ask ourselves if it is really the role of government to intercede on our behalf for every issue that arises. Shall we become like New York City and have the government tell us what we can eat and drink? Personally, I don't think this is the answer.

I would like to personally thank the public, who immediately took the reporter, Karen Crummy, to task on her one-sided approach to this series. Comments such as "the reporter's bias is alarming," "poor attempt at muckraking," and "sensationalistic story lacking perspective" were just a few of the sentiments expressed by Denver Post readers. I would like to give Ms. Crummy the benefit of the doubt; however, our office spoke with her on numerous occasions over the past nine months as she researched this story, and it appears that work still needs to be done to dispel some of Ms. Crummy's misrepresentations.

The ski patrollers we work with are dedicated, caring professionals. They are well trained and ultimately in the best position to respond to any on-mountain incident. Our office simply doesn't have the resources to respond to every accident, nor is it necessary. Patrollers shoulder this responsibility, and they provide exceptional service. And contrary to the first article's insinuation, all fatalities and incidents involving criminal activity ARE investigated by law enforcement.

We have a long-standing memorandum of understanding with our ski areas when it comes to incidents. Ski areas report life-threatening injuries and fatalities per this agreement. Ski patrollers have never been anything but factual in reporting to our office, and I have never suspected that there has been – or will be in the future – any attempt to manipulate or cover up information. It isn't ski patrol's role to place blame, determine fault or make any assumptions. Their primary role is to help others in need; to suggest the contrary borders on journalistic negligence at best.

The sheriff's office works very closely with the ski areas, and we are proud of the relationship we have developed over the years. Prior to every ski season, our office meets and train with patrollers at all four Summit County resorts. We conduct training on fact-finding, documentation and scene preservation. When an incident occurs, they share this information with us.

Our local patrollers have done some amazing work here in Summit County. If requested, they leave the designated ski area boundaries (when circumstances allow) to assist us with search-and-rescue calls, even when those calls are unrelated to anything associated with the ski area itself. They routinely work with Flight for Life on Rapid Avalanche deployments, gladly risking their own lives for others. Simply put, all they care about while on duty is helping others and saving lives. They are good people, Ms. Crummy, and some of the most unselfish group of individuals I have ever met. To insinuate they operate with the intention to limit ski area liability is misleading and a blatant attempt to create a scandal where none exists.

John Minor is sheriff of Summit County.