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# NORTHSHORE JOURNAL

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*Christine Mallory, Editor*

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## Fast Track to Skiing Fun at Giant's Ridge

By Kitty Mayo

Two new ski lifts are being installed at Giant's Ridge that will speed to the top, shorten lines, and increase the number of runs skiers and snowboarders can make.

With snow weather looking good for the targeted opening date of November 24<sup>th</sup>, new general manager at Giant's Ridge, Fred Seymour says, "Greater speed and capacity, along with easier loading and unloading is going to equate to more time to ski and have fun."

The new Calgary Express high speed "detachable" quad lift will cut uphill travel time in half, as well as making loading/unloading easier for passengers with the car leaving the fast cable at the top and bottom of the hill. Additionally, the high speed lift has four seats instead of three, increasing the number of passengers per trip.

The other replacement lift is called a fixed grip quad, and will maintain one speed throughout its trajectory, while increasing seating to four from a two seater. The Leitner-Poma chairlifts were purchased from a manufacturer in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Located in Biwabik, the 200 acre mountain resort has 35 ski runs, and five chairlifts. Seymour says that the new fixed grip lift is located near the race runs and anticipates it lending to a smoother race season this year. "With the nordic and alpine state championships here every year those lines sometimes got long, this will really easy up congestion and make the experience a lot better," stated Seymour.

Funding from the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board of \$5.7 million paid for the new ski lifts, a move that IRRRB commissioner Mark Phillips says should help stop the decline of winter visitors. "We hope to see a reversal of the downward trend in skiing visits, and it's already generating

excitement with season pass sales going up," said Phillips.

The IRRRB has owned Giant's Ridge since 1984, and at times the board has been criticised for a budget there that has been in the red. According to Phillips the resort does have a \$2 million annual loss, but in his view that math over-simplifies regional economics. "In the measurement we use we do spend a couple million dollars a year subsidizing Giant's Ridge, but that doesn't measure the money that comes into our communities as a result," Phillips stated.

According to Phillips a recent economic study gives credit to Giant's Ridge for spin-off revenue related to local services and industries of around \$44 million each year. "We are making a lot of moves narrow that subsidy over time, and frankly Giant's Ridge is probably one of the brightest spots in the east Range area," said Phillips.

A new chalet was added to the resort last summer, offering a self-operated food service and liquor sales, both of which were brought under private management in the hopes of increasing revenue. Previously other private businesses running on-site, such as rentals and gift shops, had their leases terminated to try to regain control of any profit from those enterprises.

Phillips says that the IRRRB is working hard to increase collaboration with private sector investors currently at Giant's Ridge, such as housing developers and tourist lodging. He also sees a benefit to attempting to attract further private sector development.

"We are working hard at trying to be more efficient and a better manager of the property," Phillips stated.

## Tree Stand Accidents Leading Cause of Hunter Injury

By Kitty Mayo

Early on the first morning of the firearm deer hunting season a 73 year old man about to climb into his tree stand plunged 16 feet to the ground, hitting his head so hard that he suffered traumatic brain injuries. That man is my father.

Even though the firearm season is almost over for this year, plenty of archers will continue to be climbing into trees, and this cautionary tale will hopefully be powerful enough to carry over to increased safety next year, and every year of deer hunting season.

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, tree stand accidents are the leading cause of injury to hunters, with a shocking one out of three people who hunt from an elevated stand having a fall that results in a serious injury. Those "serious" injuries range from spinal or pelvic fractures, damage to organs, brain injury, and death.

Maximizing field of vision while minimizing ground scent, it makes perfect sense that hunters want to get up off of the ground. That trend is probably not going to change, since being up in a tree really does give you a better chance at getting a shot off. However, as tree stands have become more common, so have injuries related to them.

Safety harnesses are the number one way that lives can be saved, and injuries can be prevented, with systems available that protect a hunter not only while they are in their stand, but also while they are climbing up to, or down from it.

Always wear a safety harness, also called a fall arrest system. While adding another piece of equipment to your gear may be annoying, you are just flirting with disaster and the odds are not in your favor. These are designed to provide full body support in case of a fall. Inspect your safety harness for any damage or wear before each use.

The MNDNR cautions to never trust the safety of a permanent tree stand that was built by someone else. Check permanent stands for deterioration from the weather each year.

Learning how to recover from a fall while wearing a safety harness is an important skill to have ahead of time. If you fall while wearing a harness, it is critical to attempt to recover as soon as possible, as remaining suspended will make your recovery more difficult. If you have a fall and are saved by your harness, replace it with a new one as soon as possible, since the strain may compromise its effectiveness.

Here are a few more essential life-saving tips that could prevent that split-second slip that will happen to MOST tree stand hunters:

- Remember the 3-Point Rule whenever climbing: have three points of contact at all times before moving, either two arms and one leg, or two legs and one arm on the ladder.
- Use a haul line for all gear. Pull up your unloaded firearm or bow, and when descending lower them to the far side of the tree. Never climb with anything on your back or in your hands.
- Use slow, even movements of no more than 12 inches at a time. Think through every move before you make it.
- Recommended height for an elevated tree stand is less than ten feet off the ground.

Find further resources for a quick safety course at: [www.huntercourse.com/treestandssafety](http://www.huntercourse.com/treestandssafety), or for more tree stand safety information visit: [www.tmastands.com](http://www.tmastands.com).

While my dad remains in neurotrauma intensive care on life support, and we may never know exactly why he fell, we do know that he would want every tree stand hunter who hears his story to take every precaution to prevent a fall like his.

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