

Snow Grooming Guidance and Snow Depth System



At the Canada West Ski Areas Association (CWSAA) Spring Conference, Hemisphere GPS has announced the EquiPiste integrated snow grooming management system. EquiPiste provides visual guidance, snow depth status and event logging for snow grooming operators, mountain managers and snow road operations. Ski resorts benefit from improved grooming quality and productivity, optimal snow-making decisions and distribution as well as more predictable and preventative snow cat maintenance.

Snow grooming operations are tasked with creating quality snow conditions for ski trails or pistes, as they are referred to in the industry. Designed with an integrated touch screen terminal and proven Crescent GPS, Hemisphere GPS's EquiPiste graphically displays to the operator the areas groomed, boundaries, assets, points of interest and hazards.

Through the guidance cues, operators increase their efficiency and quality of work by avoiding overlaps and skips in grooming. Areas that need attention such as thin snow pack and winch anchors can be flagged with meta-data so operators can easily navigate back at any time, even in low visibility. Pathways can be mapped and re-used for training novice operators or for repeatedly navigating snow roads. Operation managers benefit from reviewing the job files from each machine to determine variable costs, performance and maintenance tracking. As well, data can be mapped within Google Earth and used for generating daily grooming or road maintenance reports for customers.

Many ski resorts also spend a substantial amount of their budget on snow-making activities. When combined with Hemisphere GPS's survey grade Eclipse GNSS technology, EquiPiste displays and records real-time snow depth measurements and maps. The snow depth data improves the efficiency and quality of managing the snow levels. The depth data helps indicate where and when to make snow, it alerts the operator to thin snow pack, where to redistribute snow as well as how to identically recreate (day to day and year to year) downhill race courses. Analysis of the snow depth data enables more optimised snow management.

Andre Roberge, sr. manager of New Ventures at Hemisphere GPS says that through collaboration with the ski resort and snow vehicle machine industry they have customised existing Hemisphere GPS technology to serve an adjacent vertical market. EquiPiste allows ski and snow road operations to capture and visualise the status and behaviour of snow for optimised grooming and manufacturing. Customers have experienced tremendous benefits in productivity, quality, and safety as well as significantly reduced operational expenditures and lowered environmental impact. As a result, EquiPiste customers are able to provide a better standard of service and experience to their customers.

EquiPiste is currently available through Hemisphere GPS and is on display at the CWSAA Spring Conference in Kelowna, BC and will be on display at the National Ski Areas Association National Convention and Tradeshow in San Antonio, TX, USA on 7 and 8 May 2012.