



## PRESS RELEASE

### Mt Ruapehu – a key training ground for Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic games staff

**MT RUAPEHU, 10 OCTOBER 2019:** The slopes of Mt Ruapehu have become a training ground for Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics staff.

A group of 35 Chinese recently spent a couple of weeks on the ski slopes of Mt Ruapehu honing their skills for both the upcoming World Cup and the Winter Olympic games.

Mt Ruapehu Commercial Manager Cesar Piotto says that the three groups found it hugely beneficial, partly because the conditions on the mountain are quite different to China. "Here there's more challenging snow, weather, and terrain so if they can cope with what Mt Ruapehu throws at them, they'll be well prepared. They'll be working at the Olympics' alpine racing venue, which is mainly man-made snow so it's vastly different to the Mt Ruapehu conditions."

Amongst their training the three groups learned the finer skills of ski patrolling and groomer driving. "They said that it was the most challenging conditions they had ever groomed in, faced with a white out storm at one point."

Haozhe Wang, Ski Patrol from Harbin, Heilongjiang Province says, "Myself and my colleagues were proud and grateful to have had the opportunity to travel to New Zealand and have first-hand experience in mountain rescue techniques. We believe that we still have a lot to learn but we have made a significant step forward as we prepare for the coming winter's World Cup and then the 2022 Winter Olympic Games.

"We quickly learned the foundation of a professional patrol rescue system and emergency rescue knowledge, which not only broadened my vision but also improved my professional skills. We met many great people both at Whakapapa and in Ohakune and we truly hope that we have the chance to return the hospitality in the future."

Chang Hong, Ski Patrol from Jiamusi, Heilongjiang Province found the experience equally as rewarding and worthwhile. "In two short but intensive weeks, I acquired a lot of professional rescue knowledge, and grasped the entire rescue procedure including the correct usage of toboggan and other rescue equipment.



"Importantly, we realised as patrollers, that we need not only the most professional rescue knowledge and techniques, but team collaboration and cooperation is critical as well. We could see this very clearly not only from our Canadian trainers, but very much from watching the Whakapapa patrol that teamwork, and not only within the patrol team is the key ingredient to a successful program.

"Personally though, I was so excited to visit such a beautiful place - all of my friends at home were very jealous. I definitely hope to come back again next year."

Cesar says that the Chinese ski industry is huge with over 400 resorts compared to about 20 in New Zealand. "It's a young industry which is developing extremely fast. There is a thirst of knowledge and collaboration, so the group's experience here at Mt Ruapehu is beneficial on a number of levels including customer relations, resort operations, safety and emergency management.

"Not only are we aiming to host more Chinese ski industry groups back to the maunga, but we also want them to spread the word about the great skiing we have here in New Zealand to their friends and family."

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