



PRESS RELEASE

Snow arrives at Mt Ruapehu for ski season opening and school holidays

Mt Ruapehu, 1 July 2020: Mother Nature has turned on the snow at Mt Ruapehu just in time for the school holidays.

The Whakapapa ski area officially opened today for the season in windy conditions keeping visitors away, but the outlook is favourable for both ski areas over the coming days and more than 20cm of fresh snow has fallen on the upper mountain in the last 36 hours.

RAL CEO Jono Dean says, "This is a fantastic start to the season. We'll need another 30cm of snow before we can get groomers out on the upper mountain to start prepping trails and access to lifts.

"At Whakapapa on the lower mountain we had our first good night of snowmaking last night. With optimal temperatures of around -3 we were able to turn over 1.2 million litres into snow for the lower mountain."

There is another storm forecast to come in tonight with a cool southerly flow that will bring snow to 500m along with some more favourable snowmaking conditions.

"This will be followed with two fine days to kick off the July school Holidays this weekend. All going to plan we will have the Sky Waka & Knoll Ridge Café open for sightseers with beginner skiing and boarding open in Happy Valley," Jono says.

"On Saturday we will also open the sledding area at Whakapapa for the first time this season. Into next week there is some good snow in the forecast for Monday and Tuesday which will once again be followed by some favourable snowmaking temperatures."

If the snow and the weather forecasted continues the team is aiming to open the Rangatira and Valley T lifts for skiing and boarding by Saturday July 11. "We'll have a better view and forecast on this to be able to confirm by Wednesday July 8," Jono says.

Mountain visitors are urged to remember to book their carparks up the mountain with the new booking system. "The new booking system is all about easing congestion on busy days and also ensuring fair and equitable parking for all visitors, be they avid skiers, first timers, families or sightseers.

"It means that people can plan their trip up the mountain and they don't have to rush on sometimes icy roads or sit in queues and hope they'll get a park. The booking system is 'real time' so visitors can see if it's going to be a busy day and either catch a shuttle up the mountain, or change their time of arrival or day, to avoid busy times.

"We know some people can be sceptical of change but our advice is to try the new parking booking system and I'm sure that the results will speak for themselves when it comes to busy times.

"Our expectation is that people only book the days they intend to come skiing and that they are respectful of others who may want to come up to the mountain. This is the time to exercise some respect for others."

The time of arrival is also required and it is expected that people arrive at their selected time to ease congestion.

"We've listened to the frustrations about queuing for parking and general volumes of visitors to the ski areas for years now and we've come up with what we believe is a good solution that will ensure fair and equitable parking for everyone," Jono says.

He is hoping that the booking system will also encourage visitors to plan their trip in advance and avoid busy times, like weekends. "While weekends will always be of high interest, skiers need to consider going up the mountain mid-week to avoid crowds and queues. There is some remarkable skiing to be had with wide open trails available for customers. The new booking system and its live availability means people can easily see when the best time is to visit and select their dates."

A carpark can be booked online at mtruapehu.com on a Wednesday from 10am which will include availability for the week ahead. Car number plates will be scanned on arrival to match to the booking at a controlled entry point on the Bruce Road or Ohakune Mountain Road.

"Visitors will also be asked how many people will be in each car, which will help us to manage the reduced safe carrying capacities in place for both ski fields this season. Whakapapa is limited to 4,500 visitors and Turoa 3,700," Jono says.

The booking system will be open to the public by Wednesday 8 July and in operation by Saturday July 11. It is available for both Mt Ruapehu's Turoa and Whakapapa ski fields.

ENDS

For further information, images or videos, please contact:

Tracey Mehrtens
Accento PR
tracey@accento.nz

Jono Dean
RAL
jdean@mtruapehu.com