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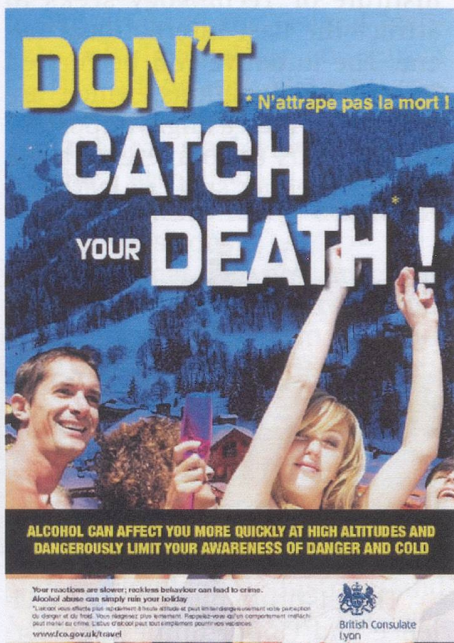
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Campaign targets boozy Brits on the piste

Mixing young Britons with "happy hours" and the hazardous Alps can prove to be a dangerous cocktail, warns a new British government safety campaign.



Posters with the slogan "Don't catch your death" have been put up at Geneva airport and several Swiss ski resorts to raise awareness among British tourists of the risks of binge drinking on a skiing holiday. But Swiss resorts play down the problem. The initiative was jointly launched in Switzerland, France and Italy just before the Christmas holidays. In all, it targets one million British holidaymakers visiting the Alps this winter.

The action, which was originally devised by the British consulate in Lyon, is supported by the Swiss and French police, tourist offices, British tour operators,

Geneva airport and French airports in the Savoie, Haute Savoie, Isère and Rhône regions.

The initial idea is said to have come about after a spate of drink-related deaths and serious accidents. According to British diplomats, more than 30 Britons were involved in alpine accidents last year, half of whom were under 25. Many died because they underestimated the risk of drinking at high altitude. A study published by the British foreign ministry in 2005 estimated a third of skiers and snowboarders under 25 had experienced problems abroad linked to a mixture of altitude, adrenaline and alcohol.

The latest campaign has been influenced by the death of British student Rachel Ward in January 2009 while on a student holiday to the French resort of Val d'Isère. The 20-year-old from Durham University died after she got lost on her way home, fell in a shallow river and succumbed to hypothermia.

An autopsy on the body of British tourist Myles Robinson, 23, showed he was under "strong influence of alcohol" when he fell to his death down a 100-metre cliff in Wengen shortly before Christmas. And only last week the entire ski resort of Morzine in France was out looking for a 16-year-old girl who got lost at 4am after a night out.

Consuming alcohol at altitude can make people feel drunk more quickly and when inebriated they are much less equipped to deal with the alpine conditions.

from swissinfo

Study highlights risk factors on the piste

Irresponsible behaviour, speeding, icy snow, poor visibility and no helmet all increase the chances of having an accident on the slopes, according to research.

Data from three Swiss hospitals reveal that many skiers overestimate their abilities and quickly exceed their limits.



Snowboarders appear to be more safety conscious. They are more likely than skiers to wear helmets, back and wrist protection. Some 50 per cent of skiers said they wore a helmet.

The typical injuries sustained by the two groups also differ. The dorsal and cervical vertebrae are more exposed in skiers, while the lower backs of snowboarders are more vulnerable. Injuries to the extremities are also more common in skiers. 15 per cent of accidents involved collisions with objects or persons.

from swissinfo

Alcohol is also a Swiss problem

An estimated 260,000 Swiss people aged between 15 and 75 regularly drink too much. About 300,000 are addicted to alcohol or belong to a group of people at risk. On average five people, most of them young, are admitted to hospital every day for treatment of alcohol-related problems.

One in six deadly road accidents is the result of drink driving.

from swissinfo

Das Spiegelglas

Ein altes Gleichnis hörte ich vom Geld:
 Schau durch ein Glas, und du erblickst die Welt.
 Stopf es mit Silber voll – was wird geschehn?
 Nichts als dich selbst kannst du darin noch sehn.

Mascha Kaléko