

# Periscope



**WATCH OUT FOR THAT TREE!**  
Chalat wants safer slopes

dren to ski and believes it's generally a safe activity. Most skier deaths, he says, involve young, unhelmeted males who hit trees while skiing recklessly. Still, he wishes resorts paid for their own personnel to wear helmets. And he wishes operations crews were more careful about moving grooming equipment on slopes filled with skiers. "A thousand skiers can go by that with no problem," he says, pointing to a nearby snow mover, but the 1,001st could end in tragedy. On the lift between runs, Chalot tells cautionary tales. The most nightmare-inducing one involves a client who ended up on the ski lift when it closed for the night, then nearly froze to death before jumping from the chair, becoming paralyzed in the fall. When our lift ride ends, Chalot's back on the slopes—and nearly nailed by a snowboarder who wipes out while talking on his cell phone. The lawyer just laughs. "It's OK as long as they don't hurt anyone else," he says, skiing away.

—DANIEL MCGINN

## FIRST PERSON

# One Lawyer's Guide to Safe Skiing

**D**RIVEN BY HEAVY snowfall out west, this could be a record season for America's ski resorts. But even as more skiers don helmets, it can still be a dangerous activity: each year roughly three dozen skiers die

in accidents, and dozens more suffer brain injuries or paralysis. Despite legislation that limits resorts' liability, each year a few of these injuries result in lawsuits—many brought by Denver attorney James Chalot, the sport's lead-

ing plaintiff's lawyer. To get his views on the state of ski safety, NEWSWEEK spent a morning in his tracks amid the moguls of Vail, Colo.

At the University of Michigan, Chalot raced on the ski team; he taught his four chil-