

SIA Moves Show to Early December in 2017

SportsOneSource reported that SnowSports Industries America (SIA) is moving up the dates of its annual SIA Snow Show in Denver by nearly two months to early December, starting in 2017.

The shift means there actually will be two SIA shows in 2017 – one during the current period of late January that year (January 26-29), plus one on the new schedule in early December that same year (December 5-7). The trade show will be a three-day format with show hours spanning 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday.

The move comes in the face of earlier order deadlines and as Outdoor Retailer Winter Market will host its annual show two weeks earlier than usual in early January, starting with the upcoming 2016 show.

“This decision was made with great care and consideration of the evolving buy/sell cycle, and an eye on the future growth of the industry,” said Nick Sargent, SIA’s incoming president. “The show’s purpose is to preview product in the best possible way for retailers to make educated and effective buying decisions when they place their orders at the appropriate time. We look forward to the benefits that this shift will provide to the snow sports community, including our retailers, reps, suppliers and the industry as a whole.”

“It’s an imperative adjustment, especially in the softgoods and expanding hardgoods markets, and one that keeps the show relevant to the evolving state of the business’ production, buying and consumer cycles,” said Mike Adams, vice president and commercial director for Amer Sports.

While many acknowledge the industry’s main trade shows have fallen well behind actual ordering deadlines, there are concerns with earlier dates. First and foremost, it may lead to even earlier ordering deadlines as brands try to leapfrog the competition. Some retailers have said that order deadlines should move back, instead of the shows moving up. But in an age of overseas manufacturing, long lead times are likely here to stay, shifting a lot more risk to retailers.

Another concern is scheduling the shows too close to retailers’ busiest time of the year. Early December and early January (with returns and gift-card spending) are key holiday-shopping periods for retailers and there’s the question of how many will be able to afford the time away from their stores. Some brands, too, are grumbling, saying that Outdoor Retailer Winter Market’s new dates nixed their typical vacation time between Christmas and New Year’s, having to prepare for the show the following week.

Finally, the earlier dates are likely to hurt smaller brands, several sources told *The B.O.S.S. Report* – many won’t be ready with sample products and marketing materials, they said.

SIA officials said they “will organize individual product category task forces, comprised of retailers, reps, rep groups, buying groups, and suppliers, to outline the most efficient and effective format for the show’s preview process, On-Snow Demo and the regional order wrap-up events that follow.”

They added that the earlier dates will provide “a much needed respite by extending the pause between SIA and Outdoor Retailer. That is, if Outdoor Retailer doesn’t shift its dates to get back ahead of SIA.

“Changes in product development, sales cycles and order deadlines are driving changes and these same factors were the ones that motivated outdoor customers to specify the move of Outdoor Retailer shows to earlier dates as well,” said Marisa Nicholson, vice president and show director for Outdoor Retailer. “It will be imperative that we continually review the data, industry analytics and feedback from the outdoor industry and our partner Outdoor Industry Association given the speed of change.”

DPS Skis has and will continue to exhibit at both shows, according to the Salt Lake City company’s Public Relations and Team Manager Erme Catino. The earlier date might even give the company a leg up against other medium-sized brands that rely on offshore factories, because DPS has made its top-selling “Pure3” line at its wholly owned factory in Salt Lake City since 2013. The company still sources its lower-priced Hybrid skis from China, but received samples for the 2016/17 model year season from that factory two weeks ago.

"The OR date changes this year kind of threw a wrench in planning media events, but with this being two years down the line I don't think we will be hit too hard," he said. "Besides, you can only control so many things. Our Hybrids were held up by the West Coast strike last year. Who knows what could happen."

The Snow Show has drawn a lot of energy in recent years from backcountry skiing, which is more native to the OR/mountaineering crowd than the SIA/alpine skiing crowd. As more on-piste skiers ventured into the backcountry in search of virgin powder, ski areas responded by opening access the backcountry. This opened up a "sidecountry" market that drew brands from both worlds.

But last year Dynafit dropped out of the SIA Snow Show for the first time in years and Black Diamond followed suit this year after deciding its future lied more with the retailers drawn to Outdoor Retailer.

--David Clucas and Charlie Lunan