



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Swiss Ski Area Uses Blankets to Prevent Ice Melt

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One of Switzerland's most popular **ski** areas has been covering mountain areas with cloth material in an effort to reduce ice melt over the summer.

Workers have placed large **blankets** of material around Mount Titlis, a ski area near the Swiss mountain town of Engelberg.

The area contains a **glacier** that has been losing large amounts of ice over the past 20 years. The protective cloth, made of polyester material, is designed to block the sun.

Putting the blankets over the glacier provides "a natural protective **shield**," Gian Darms explained to Reuters. He oversees snow conditions and mountain security in the area.

Decreasing snow cover resulting from higher temperatures presents a serious threat to ski areas across Europe. Having a glacier can provide some protection from climate change. It can help keep large snow supplies on the mountain year-round. This snow can later be moved to fill in areas where it is needed.

But the Swiss government has predicted that 90 percent of the country's remaining 1,500 glaciers will disappear by the end of the century if nothing is done to cut man-made pollution **emissions**.

Darms said he has had to continually increase the size of the blankets over the glacier in recent years to save what is left.

A small group of employees works over five-to-six weeks to cover parts of the glacier. At the end of the summer, the workers spend weeks removing the covers.

Currently, the **reflective** material covers about 100,000 square meters, which is about the size of 14 football fields. The blankets help radiate the sun's energy back into the atmosphere.

Collected snow is used to fill openings in the glacier that could open up along the area's ski runs. The snow also helps support lift structures that are fixed into the ice.

I'm Bryan Lynn.

Reuters reported this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English. Susan Shand was the editor.

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Words in This Story

ski – *v.* to move over snow wearing skis (a pair of long, thin pieces of wood or plastic worn on the bottom of boots)

blanket – *n.* a thick layer of cloth material

glacier – *n.* a large mass of ice that moves very slowly, usually down a hill or valley

shield – *n.* a person or thing used as protection

emission – *n.* the act of producing or sending out something (such as energy or gas) from a source; something that is sent out or produced by something

reflect – *v.* to send back or bounce off

