

Due to the hazardous conditions, inspection of the slide release zone was possible only from a distance, using binoculars. The fracture line was about six-hundred to seven-hundred yards above the by-pass road above the plant. Apparently there were actually two separate slides which joined about a third of the way down the slope. Several days after the slide, the National Guard Gun Crew fired high explosives to bring down or settle the remaining snow on the hill. Nine rounds were fired from the 105 mm gun. Only minor slides were generated, but apparently the explosives settled the snow field.

COMMENTS

This problem repeats a pattern all too common to mountain installations. Avalanches usually can be avoided at little cost if foreseen before construction begins. Protection afterwards can be prohibitively expensive. (Note: A gas company installation was damaged by an avalanche in this same canyon one year later. See report No. 65-4.)

No. 64-4

SOLITUDE SKI AREA, UTAH

7 March 1964

WEATHER FACTORS

Snowfall the day preceding the accident deposited about 18 inches of fresh powder snow in the area.

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

On the morning of 7 March, 1964, an Avalanche Theory and Practical Experience Course was being conducted by members of the National Ski Patrol System Intermountain Division, at the Solitude Ski Area. Five patrolmen were responsible for setting up a mock avalanche in Hoppies Hollow for practical field work while the class instruction was conducted at the Lodge.

In Hoppies Hollow, the patrolmen artificially released an avalanche, throwing a dummy onto the slide path in order to give the class practice in recovery of buried victims. Everything went as planned. The mock scene was complete with the exception of ski tracks entering the slide area. Patrolman R.G. joined Patrolmen D.W. and S.U. on the left side of the slide area in preparation for making the necessary tracks. S.U. was approximately 30 feet below the two other patrolmen. The three were separated from the original slide area by a small knoll. S.U. called to D.W. that there appeared to be some overhang that did not slide. It was also noticed that quite a few fracture lines were evident in the snow. D.W. called down to him to wait. However, the patrolman did not hear the call and skied around