

Blocks Portion of I-80

However, early reports indicated it had blocked a portion of I-80 and was hindering traffic.

H. Ames Harrison, district ranger in Wasatch National Forest, and Ray Lindquist, snow ranger in Big Cottonwood, agreed the cause of the canyon's slide was the warming trend. The temperature change triggered it, they said.

The Big Cottonwood slide was between Cardiff Fork and the nearby "S" curve.

Among those trapped above the slide were more than 2,500 youngsters participating in a Salt Lake County Recreation Department ski school.

Utah Highway Department crews began working on the slide shortly after it occurred.

A large rotary, blower-type snow plow began biting into the lower portion of the slide early in the afternoon. After digging into the massive snowpile for some distance, the plow became stuck and crews had to put chains on drive wheels to get it going again.

By 5 p.m., the plow had broken through. However the Salt Lake County sheriff's office said only outgoing traffic would be allowed, and no ingoing vehicles would be permitted until further notice.