

RESCUE SUMMARY

To Dobson, the avalanche “felt like a big ocean wave when it hits you from behind and sweeps you along the beach.”⁵⁴ Though he could not move, he had “a tiny air pocket in front of his face.”⁵⁵ Fortunately for Dobson, a CalTrans snow plow operator witnessed the incident. Within 15 minutes, a rescue team with 15 probers was searching the scene. They located Dobson 36 minutes after he was buried. He was still breathing. “I feel like I’m the luckiest guy in the world right now,”⁵⁶ he reported later that day.

AVALANCHE DATA

Sources did not describe the avalanches in enough detail to characterize the events.

COMMENTS

Lucky indeed.

Motorists comprise only a small percentage of avalanche fatalities. Two things might improve one’s safety in a rare instance of being in a car struck by a natural avalanche on an open highway. Stay in the car, because you are less vulnerable to being carried or buried than when outside, on foot. But if you do get outside your vehicle, perhaps to dig it out, post a person to watch any start zones or avalanche paths above you. Their warning might provide the critical second or two that allow you to escape before being hit by moving debris.

BISHOP’S BOWL, SUNDANCE MOUNTAIN RESORT, UTAH |

19930116

January 16, 1993

Two inbounds riders caught; one fully buried and killed. They triggered the avalanche after entering a closed area. Debris from the avalanche partially buried a second skier below.

SITE

Sundance Mountain Resort sits 13 miles northeast of Provo, Utah, on the east side of Mount Timpanogos. It is known for its owner, Robert Redford, and eponymous film festival. Bishop’s Bowl is a northeast-facing bowl that lies just below the resort’s highpoint at 8,250 feet elevation. Numerous black-diamond runs drop off Far East Ridge, which comprises the skier’s right side of the bowl.

WEATHER AND SNOWPACK SUMMARY

It was snowing moderately at the time of the accident.

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Bruce Bothun (50) of Florida was skiing with his nephew (14). Shortly after 15:00, Bothun skied off Far East Ridge into an avalanche closure while his nephew remained on the ridge. Bothun triggered an avalanche that fractured a foot deep and about 60 feet wide. His nephew watched as his uncle sat down and rode the avalanche about 400 feet through scattered trees. As Bothun rode over a steep rollover, he disappeared out of his nephew’s sight. The debris channeled into a gully known as Pipeline. A 17-year-old skier in the Pipeline gully saw the avalanche coming. He attempted to ski out of the way but was caught.

**No rescue
equipment**

Terrain trap

**In avalanche
runout**

RESCUE SUMMARY

A ski patrol search team arrived in about 25 minutes. They had probes, but the team rescue dog was at the veterinarian's. Searchers struck Bothun on the first pass of a coarse probe line. He was buried three feet deep. He had been buried for about 40 minutes and had died of asphyxiation. The 17-year-old was only buried to his knees and was uninjured.

AVALANCHE DATA

The avalanche involved only new snow. It released on a 40-degree slope. The debris traveled about 600 vertical feet and piled up 15 feet deep in the gully.

TYPE	TRIGGER	R SIZE	D SIZE	BED	ASPECT	CHARACTER
SS	ASu	2		O	NNW	

COMMENTS

Bothun was skiing in an area closed for avalanche danger when he triggered the slide. The resort and his family later disputed whether he did so intentionally, with his nephew stating that he and his uncle thought they had remained in an open area.

In an investigation following the accident, Sundance staff found a set of ski tracks that drifted outside the boundary signs briefly, then veered back in. A rope runs between the boundary signs, which are spaced every 100 feet, but it may have been covered with snow, a resort spokesman said.⁵⁷

Another account of the accident described Bothun and his nephew starting down the slope that avalanched together,⁵⁸ while yet another⁵⁹ reports the pair entered at least two closed areas. The family filed a lawsuit two months after the accident.

This accident and the one a few days prior in Colorado (19930113a) demonstrate that entering an inbounds avalanche closure can have fatal consequences.

19930122 **EAST TWIN CHUTE, SOUTH OF BRECKENRIDGE SKI AREA, COLORADO** | January 22, 1993

Two sidecountry riders caught; one partially buried, and one buried and killed. Three riders left the Breckenridge Ski Area through a gate and triggered the slide. The survivors had to leave the site to find help because they did not have rescue gear. A rescue dog located the buried victim about an hour after the slide.

SITE

East Twin Chute is a northerly-facing chute on the lower flanks of Peak 9 in the Tenmile Range. At the time of the accident, East Twin Chute was outside the boundary of Breckenridge Ski Resort. Riders could access it by exiting the ski area through an access gate near the top of E Chair.

**High
avalanche
danger**

WEATHER AND SNOWPACK SUMMARY

A storm ended on Thursday, January 21. The day after was clear and windy, a typical pattern for the area. More than 100 reports of avalanches over several days prompted