

Seth Horowitz (23) was driving the red Subaru with his girlfriend Marnie Brown (25) in the passenger seat. They were Snowbird resort employees—a sushi chef and server—and Horowitz also attended the University of Utah. They planned to enjoy a powder day at the resort.

**In avalanche  
runout**

Horowitz glimpsed a powder cloud as they approached the White Pine Chutes. “The next thing we knew the car is being picked up,” he recalled. “The windshield exploded and snow began pouring in.”<sup>50</sup>

**RESCUE SUMMARY**

The car stopped on its side, with Horowitz and Brown buried inside. They could barely move and neither could see anything. “We weren’t panicking. We didn’t give up. But we wondered whether someone would find us before the air ran out.”<sup>51</sup>

**No rescue  
equipment**

The debris covering the road stopped traffic in both directions, including three buses carrying dozens of people. Passengers in the vehicles rushed to the partially buried car. They used snowboards to dig the packed snow from the car. UDOT forecasters arrived and began urging people back into their vehicles. The impromptu searchers uncovered Horowitz first, then Brown, wrapped them in blankets and coats, and helped them into a bus. Paramedics treated them for cuts and bruises and transported them to a hospital, where they were released. The car was totaled. Three to four inches of snow fell at the accident site during the rescue. The road remained closed until 13:00, which allowed people who had arrived at the ski resorts early an uncrowded powder day.

**AVALANCHE DATA**

Prior to the slide, the track was 80 to 100% filled, and the surface was mostly refrozen. Debris covered the road three to four feet deep for 125 feet. From observations of the debris on the road, forecasters concluded the slide involved “only new snow and not too much of it.”<sup>52</sup> It was not clear whether the avalanche involved only loose snow or a slab release. “The nature of the debris indicated a fast moving loose snow avalanche. It may have entrained a small soft slab mid track.”<sup>53</sup> On January 18, 24-hour snow totals were 11 inches of snow at 6% density. Helicopter bombing of slide paths in the vicinity “produced several medium sized avalanches three of which crossed the road.”<sup>54</sup>

TYPE	TRIGGER	R SIZE	D SIZE	BED	ASPECT	CHARACTER
L/SS	N	3	3	S	ESE	SS

**COMMENTS**

This was a terrifying experience for Brown and Horowitz. He described the accident as ‘the luckiest and unluckiest day of my life. Of all the times I have driven up that canyon and all the cars going up around us, we get hit. But we were lucky to survive.’<sup>55</sup>

That there are so few similar stories is a testament to the effectiveness of forecasting and mitigation programs for avalanche-prone roads like UT-210. Such programs aren’t perfect, however, in part because forecasters must rely on weather forecasts that aren’t perfectly accurate. Conditions can change rapidly when snowfall exceeds predicted rates and totals, as they did in this case; a weather station would later be installed to help prevent similar accidents in the future. The gusty winds may also have contributed by drifting additional snow into the start zone or causing snow to drop from a cornice or other terrain, triggering the loose snow avalanche. A UDOT spokesman reported that “the process was followed and everyone was in agreement. We missed one. That happens.”<sup>56</sup>