

**PINE CREEK, NORTHWEST OF MIDWAY, UTAH | January 22, 19950122**

1995

One boy fully buried. A roof slide buried the boy; he was dug out 20 minutes later, unresponsive, and later died at the hospital.

**SITE**

The Brighton Estates are a collection of vacation homes on S.R. 224 between Midway and Guardsman Pass, on the east side of the Wasatch Mountains. The homes are snow-bound in the winter, because the road is not plowed. The cabins sit at roughly 8,600 feet elevation, on a southeasterly slope below treeline.

**WEATHER AND SNOWPACK SUMMARY**

After a dry December, the central Wasatch Range saw sustained snowfall for the first few weeks of January. In the first three weeks of the month, the Thaynes Canyon SNOTEL (9,230 feet; 1.75 miles northwest) recorded 6.1 inches of snow-water equivalent.<sup>60</sup> Strong winds the night before the accident left a crust on the snow surface.

**ACCIDENT SUMMARY**

A family from Salt Lake City arrived at an A-frame cabin for the weekend. Chris Johnson (7) and another boy the same age were playing outside the cabin shortly after noon. They were knocking icicles off the roof eaves when the snow on the roof avalanched, burying one of the boys.

**In avalanche  
runout****RESCUE SUMMARY**

The second boy ran for help. An emergency call alerted the Wasatch County Sheriff's department and personnel from nearby Wasatch Mountain State Park, who responded within 20 minutes. At about that time, Johnson's father and a passing snowmobiler found and dug him out. Johnson's father started CPR and continued until a medical helicopter arrived. A flight nurse reported a pulse during the flight, and the hospital initially listed Johnson in critical condition. He died the following morning.

**No rescue  
equipment****AVALANCHE DATA**

The entire snowpack on the roof slid, a slab about four feet thick and 20 by 30 feet. It was estimated to weigh "several tons."<sup>61</sup> A newspaper account attributed the avalanche to the rapid warming inside the cabin. "It hadn't been used in awhile, so the heat from the inside must have helped loosen the snow."<sup>62</sup>

TYPE	TRIGGER	R SIZE	D SIZE	BED	ASPECT	CHARACTER
U	U	5		G	U	

**COMMENTS**

Roof slides like this one account for a small percentage of avalanche fatalities. But coming as they do at people's homes or vacation cabins, they seem particularly tragic. Stay out from under the eaves of sloping roofs with large amounts of snow. And teach your kids to avoid such places.