

Wasatch avalanche kills man

OGDEN STANDARD EXAMINER

MONTH 11 DAY 4 YEAR 98

☐ Top of Utah may be hit by another storm today

Standard-Examiner staff and wire services

SALT LAKE CITY - A 21-year-old New Hampshire man was killed and a woman was seriously injured after an avalanche swept a party of five snowboarders down a rocky slope in the Wasatch Mountains on Saturday.

Salt Lake County sheriff's deputies were not releasing the names of those caught in the avalanche, pending notification of the family of the man killed. All those involved were in their early 20s and four of them had arrived in Utah from the eastern United States last month.

The group had ventured into Alta and Snowbird ski resorts in Little Cottonwood Canyon. Neither resort is open nor had crews conducted any avalanche control on the steep north-facing slopes, said Sheriff's Sgt. Lane Larkin.

About 12:30 p.m., the group was descending Mount Baldy at Snowbird when about 500 vertical feet of snow broke loose and swept up the snowboarders as the avalanche rushed down the mountain of cliffs and exposed rocks.

The woman taken to Alta View Hospital was in serious condition Saturday with unspecified injuries to her legs, back and chest.

"It was awfully lucky for any of them to survive," said Larkin.

Meanwhile, the National Weather Service has issued a winter storm watch for Weber and Davis counties today.

Light snowfall is expected before noon with possible heavy snowfall to follow. The weather service expects 1-2 inches before noon, with 3-4 to fall after that.

A snow advisory has been issued for Cache Valley and the northwest mountains in Utah, where the weather service expects between 3-9 inches.

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► Rescuers recover snowboarder's body

SALT LAKE CITY – Rescue workers battled a steady snowstorm Sunday to recover the body of a New Hampshire man who was killed when an avalanche swept a party of five snowboarders down a rocky slope in the Wasatch Mountains.

Jeff Clement, 21, of Henniker, N.H., was killed on Saturday by an avalanche that swept 500 vertical feet down the cliffs and exposed rocks of Mount Baldy, a favorite destination for snowboarders in Little Cottonwood Canyon between Alta and Snowbird ski resorts.

Neither resort is yet open for the season, nor had crews conducted any avalanche control on the steep north-facing slopes, said Sheriff's Sgt. Lane Larkin. Signs warning of avalanche dangers are posted all around the mountain.

Around 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Clement, the last of his party to descend the slope, apparently kicked loose the snow that started the slide.

All those involved were in their early 20s, and four of them had arrived in Utah from the eastern United States last month.

A woman in the party was hospitalized with injuries to her legs, back and chest. She was released Sunday.

Two of the snowboarders were buried up to their armpits and were able to dig out themselves and the two other survivors. The pair then headed to the Snowbird lodge and notified officials of the avalanche.

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Snowboarder Loosens Avalanche, Dies in Snow Pile Near Alta

BY MICHAEL VIGH

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

A snowboarder, who triggered the first avalanche of the season in Little Cottonwood Canyon, died Saturday afternoon when he was swept away by the thick, wet snow.

Police declined to release the name of the victim, pending notification of family members. The victim's female friend suffered leg and hip injuries and was transported to Alta View Hospital in Sandy. She was listed in stable condition late Saturday.

Three other friends were with the two victims, but police said

they were unharmed in the avalanche estimated as 3-feet deep, 20-feet across and 500 feet in length.

The five people hiked to Mount Baldy between the Alta and Snowbird ski resorts Saturday morning. Just after noon, the five snowboarded down the mountain one at a time. After the first four were partially down the mountain, the male victim began his descent and triggered the avalanche.

The four survivors were covered up to their armpits in snow, but each was able to dig out. The surviving snowboarders could not find the victim's body, which was

later discovered in a pile of snow by a member of the Alta Ski patrol and his dog.

However, Salt Lake County Sheriff's search and rescuers called off the recovery of the victim's body late Saturday because of further avalanche danger.

"We are trying to be careful, making sure that our rescue people are going to be all right," said Salt Lake County Sheriff's Lt. Stephen Chard.

Sgt. Lane Larkin said authorities would intentionally set off avalanches today at 6 a.m. to bring down loose snow. After they determine it is safe, they will retrieve the body.

"We want to try to make the recovery before the next storm hits," Larkin said.

National Weather Service senior forecaster Peter Wilensky said the avalanche danger could be furthered in the next week as more snow is predicted to blanket the mountains.

"We are looking for quite a stormy pattern continuing between now and Saturday," he said. "And I'm sure that will increase the avalanche hazard."

Wilensky said there is a winter storm warning continuing through tonight in the area mountains.

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