

19990206c

LITTLE WILLOW CANYON, EAST OF DRAPER, UTAH

February 6, 1999

One snowshoer caught, buried, and killed

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Persistent Slab
avalanche

Aaron Bruder (24), Steve Parkins (24), and Justin Heil (22) headed up Little Willow Canyon east of Draper, south of Salt Lake City for a day of snowshoeing. Around noon, the group was traversing a slope. "Heil told his friends he 'had a real bad feeling about being up there' and decided to turn back."

Heil headed downhill. He was in a creek below his two friends when an avalanche released. Heil was fully buried.

RESCUE SUMMARY

No rescue
equipment

Brudder and Parkins rushed to the avalanche debris. They could not find their friend. They hiked down the canyon and called the police from a nearby residence. About 30 members of Salt Lake County's Search and Rescue Unit and avalanche dogs headed up to the avalanche. They "battled blizzard conditions" and low visibility to reach the site. Shortly after they began searching, the search dogs alerted on Heil around 18:00, over five hours after the avalanche.

COMMENTS

Yet another group that was unaware of the danger of avalanches and unprepared for the accident. Yet another group whose enjoyable day in the mountains turned tragic.

