

More than one person on a slope

to the ski resort. She skied down off of the ridgeline and began traversing diagonally across the slope. She then fell, losing a ski in the snow. Chris Rand, Conner Reinfurt, and Keith Latalliere skied down to Sharon to help find the lost ski.

The time was 12:45, and as Cassie Reinfurt and J.D. Lamb stood near the top of the slope, the avalanche released directly below Cassie's snowboard. (From the witness accounts, it is unclear if Cassie was moving at the time the avalanche released.) Lower on the slope, Sharon, Chris, Conner, and Keith were all caught in the avalanche. Keith was carried about 50 feet downhill and was buried to his waist. Conner was completely covered in the moving snow and was carried downhill until he struck a tree. He was then pushed to the top of the snow and was on the surface when the avalanche stopped moving. Chris and Sharon were both carried downhill and into the gully and out of sight. They were both completely buried in the avalanche debris.

Terrain trap

RESCUE SUMMARY

Cassie and J.D. waited above the crown line until Andy returned, and then the three of them traveled down the bed surface to assist in the rescue. Keith was able to dig himself out of the avalanche debris, and he and Conner began descending the debris pile looking for Chris and Sharon. About 60 feet below where Conner had hit the tree, they heard Chris yelling from beneath the snow surface. They began digging and uncovered Chris from under about 2.5 feet of snow.

No rescue equipment

At this point Andy, Cassie, and J.D. arrived. Some of the party continued to extricate Chris from the debris (taking 30 to 45 minutes), and the remainder began probing the snow with their equipment in an attempt to find Sharon. Sharon had been to the skier's left of Chris when the avalanche released; therefore, they concentrated their search in that area.

Shortly after Chris was uncovered, Keith left the scene to alert the ski patrol. Several people from other backcountry parties joined in the search, adding four or five rescuers to the initial searchers.

Sometime later, members of The Canyons Ski Patrol arrived at the Red Rock Cliffs area and determined that the accident site was still threatened by potential avalanches. They evacuated the searchers and conducted avalanche mitigation. The initial searchers had located Sharon's skis and left them near a tree, next to where they were recovered. Control work produced additional avalanching along both flanks of the original slide.

Once the accident site was deemed safe, a ski patrol search team, including two search dogs, was allowed onto the debris pile. After working the site for approximately five minutes, one of the search dogs alerted on a deep portion of the debris. A probe confirmed Sharon's location, and her body was recovered a short time later from under four feet of snow.

Sharon Reinfurt was recovered at 15:57. She was located approximately 60 feet downhill and to the left of where Chris had been buried. At the time of recovery, she was lying face down with her head pointing downhill. Rescuers reported that no ice mask had formed during the burial. She had been buried for approximately three hours and 12 minutes. Later, the medical examiner's report stated that the cause of death was asphyxia.

AVALANCHE DATA

Persistent Slab avalanche

The avalanche was classified as HS-ASu-R2-O. The crown depth varied from 1.5 to 3.5 feet and was 200 feet wide. The slope angle at the crown was 41 degrees. The slide fell 400 feet vertical. The slope faced east and was at an elevation of 9,600 feet.