

Two dead in Summit avalanche

SALT LAKE CITY - An avalanche killed two men who were snowmobiling in the back country of Summit County Saturday afternoon.

Jason M. Wade, 29, of Layton, and Steven R. Barlow, 29, of Salt Lake City, were identified as the victims of the avalanche that happened just after 1 p.m. in an area in Upper Chalk Creek known as the shoots, said Lt. Joe Offret.

The two men were in a party of four snowmobilers in the area. The slide buried the two men and partially buried a third while the father of one of the men who were killed watched, Offret said.

The partially buried man was able to free himself from the slide and locate the other two. CPR rescue efforts were started and a snow cat operator in the area was located, Offret said. The snow cat was equipped with a CB radio and this was used to contact the Summit County Search and Rescue and sheriff's deputies, who responded with the South Summit Ambulance Team.

The two who were buried were pronounced dead at the scene.

The slide was 12 feet deep, 180 feet wide and slid for 350 to 400 yards. Due to on and off snow fall and about 12 hours of wet heavy snow, the conditions are very dangerous in this area, Offret said.

Uinta slide raises the victim total to four

■ Two snowmobilers die in Moffit Bowl; busy season for County Search and Rescue continues

by Tim Sullivan
OF THE RECORD STAFF

A deep snow slide east of Oakley claimed the third and fourth **avalanche** victims of the season on Saturday.

Jason Wade of Layton and Steven Barlow of Salt Lake City, both 29, were out snowmobiling with two others in the Upper **Chalk Creek** drainage of the Uinta Mountains at about 1 p.m. when the slide broke loose, said Lieutenant Joe Offret of the Summit County

Sheriff's Department. It buried Wade and Barlow deep under the debris and partially buried another member of the party, Jason Peacock, 25, who was uninjured.

The slide occurred when one of the victims was having trouble with his machine near the top of the bowl, said Offret. Another came up to help him, and Peacock, who worked with the two men, followed. When Peacock was part way up the bowl,

however, Offret said he saw the snow fracture and made a sharp left to escape the **avalanche**.

After being partially buried, Peacock was able to free himself. The fourth member of the party, one of the victim's father, watched from below and barely escaped the **avalanche's** path. The two saw one machine sticking up out of the debris, and figured

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Avalanche suffocates two men

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Wade and Barlow were uphill from the snowmobile.

Because none of the men were carrying avalanche beacons, they had to guess the location of Wade and Barlow, and because they didn't have shovels, they couldn't dig with any degree of efficiency. Eventually, they noticed one victim's legs and the other's arm protruding from the debris, and though they didn't have shovels, were able to dig Wade and Barlow out.

However, said Offret, when the two men recovered their friends from 30 to 40 inches beneath the debris, about 25 to 30 minutes had passed since the slide occurred and the snow had set up. They were not breathing. Peacock tried to revive Wade and Barlow using CPR, but he was unsuccessful.

The men were able to flag down a snowcat that belonged to a guiding service using the area. Its driver had a CB radio. He contacted Deer Valley, which in turn contacted the Summit County Sheriff. The Sheriff's Office called the county Search and Rescue team as well as the South Summit Ambulance, which were unable to save the vic-

tims. Wade and Barlow had been snowmobiling in the area, known as Moffit Bowl, before, said Offret. The concave bowl is shaped like an hourglass and lies at about 10,000 feet, with a north to northwest aspect. It contains pitches of varying steepness which average out to about 34 degrees, close to ideal for avalanches.

Drew Hardesty of the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center said its investigation of the avalanche showed that the slide broke about 180 feet wide, 400 feet long and averaged two to three feet deep. Hardesty said investigators believe the slide was triggered because, when Wade and Barlow were trying to free their machines, they caused the shallow pocket of faceted snow beneath them to send a fracture up the slope to where the slab broke off.

In addition, the slope had been loaded by eight to 10 inches of high-density snow.

"These deep slabs are really difficult to forecast," said Hardesty.

The Moffit Bowl slide marked the second time in two weeks an avalanche has resulted in one or more fatalities, but even more staggering is how often the county has

had to deploy search and rescue efforts for non-fatal avalanches in that same time period.

"Our guys have been out every weekend," said Offret.

In recent weeks, he said, search and rescue, which is mostly comprised of volunteers, has been out as frequently as every day. Twice in the last month, he said, the county has responded to slides in which no one was buried, including a late February avalanche in White Pine Canyon which was triggered by skiers that left the area safely but who never contacted the sheriff to say no one was injured.

"These guys donate a lot of time," said Offret. "At the end of the avalanche season, we have a lot of angry Search and Rescue families."

Even though Search and Rescue is mostly volunteer, Offret said, the county still needs to put a price tag on each effort so it can be reimbursed by the state from money it gets through surcharges on hunting and fishing licenses.

Saturday's rescue effort involved about 20 rescuers and eight police officers said Offret. It also put the rescuers in danger, because the area around the slide was still highly volatile to avalanche danger.

Slide Near Oakley Kills 2

Two fellow snowmobilers escape **avalanche** uninjured

BY FRANK CURRERI

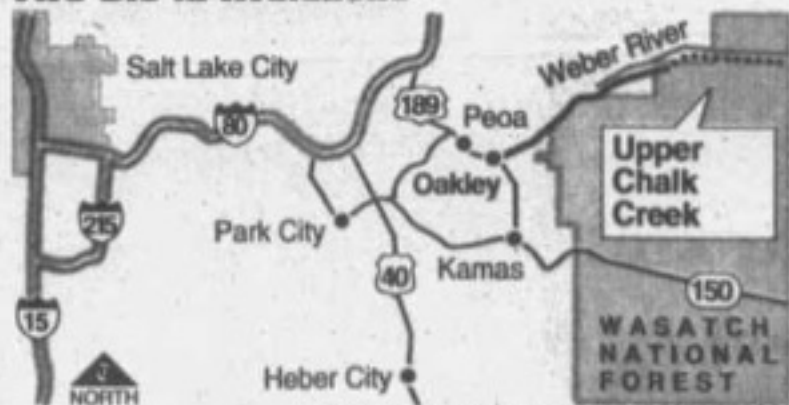
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

OAKLEY — A day of leisure turned lethal for two snowmobilers Saturday when an **avalanche** erupted on a mountain near Oakley in Summit County.

The massive snowslide — estimated to be at least 900 feet long, 180 feet wide and 12 feet deep — buried the two men at around 1 p.m. while the father of one victim helplessly looked on, according to Lt. Joe Offret of the Summit County Sheriff's Office.

The victims, identified as 29-year-old Jason Wade of Layton and 29-year-old Steven Barlow of Salt Lake City, marked Utah's third and fourth **avalanche** deaths of the year. Wade and Barlow, along with a friend and the father of one of them, had been joyriding in a popular snowmobile haven of Upper Chalk Creek that is commonly referred to

Two Die in Avalanche



Rhonda Haines Maylett/The Salt Lake Tribune

as "the chutes."

Suddenly, thousands of pounds of snow came rumbling down the estimated 9,000-foot-high mountain like a gigantic wave. One man, 25-year-old Jason Peacock, tried to outmaneuver the slide on his snowmobile, Offret said.

Peacock's flight attempt was unsuccessful, Offret said, but may have saved his life; Peacock was only partially submerged under the snow's weight and he escaped without injury.

See **AVALANCHE**, Page B-2

Victims Of Slide Were Lifelong Friends

■ Continued from B-1

"He did a Chris Farley impersonation, anything to make people laugh," Wade said. "When I started lecturing him, he said, 'Why worry? Tomorrow we could die.'"

But the memory of her husband as vibrant and alive makes his death even more painful.

Wade, however, takes comfort in the fact that her husband died while in the mountains he loved. "That's at least something," she said. "I would rather see him die snowmobiling than in a car

accident, or something."

Wade's husband and Steven Barlow were Utah's third and fourth avalanche deaths of the year. The pair had been riding with a friend and Barlow's father in the popular snowmobile area of Upper Chalk Creek that is commonly referred to as "the chutes."

Conditions at the mountain were ripe for disaster because of heavy snowfall in the area over the 12 hours preceding Saturday's slide. March is part of the peak season for avalanches.

In addition, the U.S. Forest



Jason Wade
(A photo of
Steven Barlow
was not
available.)

Service Utah Avalanche Center advisory had rated Saturday's avalanche danger as "considerable" for steep slopes at or below 7,500 feet.

According to the avalanche center's web site, Wade's snowmobiling party triggered the slide.

"This avalanche accident is the latest reminder that our snowpack stability changes dramatically throughout our forecast area," the center's Web site states. "Although the number of deep slab avalanches has been decreasing since our last major loading cycle nearly two weeks ago, we are still seeing deep releases."

But this year has not been the worst avalanche season.

The deadliest since the 19th century — when many were buried in boarding houses up the canyons along the Wasatch Front — occurred during the 1998-99 season when at least seven people died in

snow slides.

In November 1998, a 21-year-old male skier was killed when he shredded a hazardous line on Snowbird's Mount Baldy before the Little Cottonwood ski resort opened for the season.

In January 1999, two teens were buried after a cornice broke under them while they explored Sanpete County's Fairview Canyon.

Also that month, two men failed to return from a snowmobile outing in Sanpete County and were believed dead in an avalanche. And a young snowmobiler triggered a massive slide in January while ascending steep terrain on Mount Nebo.

In February 1999, a 22-year-old male was buried in a slide triggered by his snowshoeing companions as he climbed the west face of Salt Lake County's Lone Peak.

Tribune reporter Brian Maffly contributed to this story.