

COMMENTS

This family group was seeking powder and an alternative to a ski-area setting, but they lacked backcountry experience and avalanche skills. Therefore, they didn't even consider that there could be avalanche danger beyond the ropes. And when they came to the slope they wanted to ski, they showed more concern with the cornice than the stability of the slope below. Finally, without beacons, probes, and shovels, they were helpless when a member of their group was buried four feet deep.

**PRATER MOUNTAIN, SOUTHEAST OF ALPINE JUNCTION,
WYOMING | March 3, 2001**

20010303

Two snowmobilers caught; one partly buried, one buried and killed

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Prater Mountain, 10,078 feet elevation, is located in the Salt River Range, which lies very near the Idaho state line and southeast of Alpine Junction, Wyoming. Very little is known about this avalanche death—for example, the precise location, which may be known as Lee Bowl, is unclear. On March 3, a party of three snowmobilers was riding in the area. Two members of the group were caught in an avalanche. One member was partially buried and was dug out by the third person. The second rider, Jay Almos (39) was buried.

Other riders in the area aided in the search and used tree limbs to probe the area. After about 90 minutes, the searchers found Almos under two to three feet of snow. CPR efforts were administered on the victim without success.

COMMENTS

The lack of information available on this accident precludes comment.

UPPER CHALK CREEK, EAST OF OAKLEY, UTAH

20010310

March 10, 2001

Three snowmobilers caught; one partly buried, two buried and killed

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

East of Oakley, Utah, the Chalk Creek region of the Uinta Mountains is a popular snowmobile area. Fresh snow had fallen Friday, and on Saturday, March 10, a number of riders were in the area. One group of three included Jason Wade (29), Steven Barlow (29), and Jason Peacock (25), and they were riding in an area known as the Chutes.

Suddenly, the slope broke all around them and avalanched. Peacock tried to outmaneuver the slide on his snowmobile, but was caught, carried downhill, and partly buried. Wade and Barlow disappeared in the avalanche. The father of one of the missing men had been riding further downhill when the avalanche broke and was able to avoid getting caught.

**More than one
person on a
slope**

RESCUE SUMMARY

No one in the group had beacons or other rescue gear. Peacock was able to get out of the debris and rushed to the aid of his buried friends. Other riders in the area came to help

**No rescue
equipment**

as well. Initially, searchers focused their efforts near the sleds. It took them some time to locate visible clues. Both victims were buried about 75 feet laterally away from their sleds. They were about three feet deep near the toe of the debris, one with a hand and the other with a foot sticking out. Rescuers gave CPR, but the buried men did not respond.

AVALANCHE DATA

Persistent Slab avalanche

This avalanche broke on a northwest-facing slope and released near an elevation of 10,000 feet. The main part of the slide was an hourglass-shaped path about 150 feet wide at the top, then choking down to 50 to 75 feet before opening back up to about 150 feet wide in the deposition area, where the debris was up to 12 feet deep.

The fracture also jumped out of the main slope and took out the next two gullies. Thus, the total width was about 500 feet. It ran 400 feet vertical. Although a couple of areas in the starting zone were about 40 degrees steep, most of the start zone was less than 35 degrees. Fracture depth was two to five feet. Alpha angle was 27 degrees.

Most of the bed surface was down to ground level, but in places the sliding surface was a faceted layer formed during a December-January clear spell. A pit on the flank of the start zone showed a two-foot-thick hard slab over very weak facets and depth hoar.

The slide was classified as HS-AMu-R3-G.

COMMENTS

None of the riders in this group carried avalanche rescue gear. If all party members had been equipped with beacons, it would have shortened the burial time. This may have saved the men's lives.

20010318a **FARWELL MOUNTAIN, NORTH OF STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO | March 18, 2001**

One backcountry skier caught, buried, and killed

WEATHER AND SNOWPACK CONDITIONS

A storm moved into the northern mountains of Colorado on March 10 and brought daily snowfall through March 18. During this time, Steamboat Ski Area got 28 inches of snow, and snow was still falling on the day of the avalanche.

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Inadequate rescue equipment

On Sunday, March 18, a group of five experienced backcountry skiers used snowmobiles to reach the slopes they planned to ski. Though they were all good backcountry skiers, they were not fully prepared for avalanche rescue. Among the five, they had only three beacons. They distributed the beacons to the "weaker" skiers. The group also lacked collapsible probe poles.

The group was on Farwell Mountain, a 10,840-foot peak about 27 miles north of Steamboat Springs and five miles east of Steamboat Lake. They skied a slope on the east side of the mountain and then returned for a second run. Three skiers skied down, one at a time, and moved out of the area at the bottom of the slope.

The time was 13:30 when Sean Patrick Clancy (34) headed down. He was one of the two skiers without a beacon. After several turns, the avalanche broke above Clancy and