

Bodies of avalanche victims recovered

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) The bodies of two physicians buried by an avalanche while hiking over the weekend in Big Cottonwood Canyon have been recovered. One of the doctors was from Eagle River.

Salt Lake County sheriff's Deputy Peggy Falkner said the men were caught by a 2-mile wide avalanche that was 30 feet deep where it broke away.

The victims were experienced hikers and outdoorsmen.

They were identified as Scott Dull, 39, of Eagle River, an emergency room physician at Providence Alaska Medical Center who was involved with search and rescue; and Martin Gleich, 38, Salt Lake City, a critical care physician for Intermountain Health Care.

The men attended medical school at the University of Washington. Dull graduated in 1992 and Gleich in 1991.

Falkner said the pair had started hiking from the Storm Mountain trailhead at 4 a.m. Saturday, hoping it was cold enough that the avalanche danger would be minimal. They had expected to be through by 11 a.m., she said.

It was believed the men triggered the avalanche, but the conditions were created by the recent warm weather with Chinook winds, Falkner said.

The Utah Avalanche Forecast Center had warned Friday of potentially catastrophic avalanches.

The center said melt water percolating through snow was producing "wet slabs and wet sluffs" and

that entire snowpacks were at risk of sliding over rocks.

Neither man was carrying an avalanche beacon.

Deputies were alerted at 5:49 p.m. Saturday when the family of one of the hikers called to report the men overdue.

Searchers spotted the foot of one man sticking out of the snow shortly before 9 p.m., and the body of the other man was found hundreds of yards away by avalanche dogs from Alta resort just before midnight.

Winter avalanches tend to be powdery, and sometimes victims can swim out of them, "but at this time of year, it's like cement, with huge chunks of snow — boulder size and bigger," Falkner said.

Six people have died in avalanches in Utah since December, equaling the number recorded in 1998-1999, which was the most since 1951.

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Two avalanche victims found

SALT LAKE CITY

Searchers have recovered the bodies of two hikers buried Saturday by an avalanche in Big Cottonwood Canyon.

Salt Lake County sheriff's Deputy Peggy Falkner said the men were caught by a two-mile wide avalanche that piled snow as high as 30 feet.

The victims were both doctors and were experienced hikers and outdoorsmen.

They were Martin Gleich, 38, Salt Lake City, a critical care physician for Intermountain Health Care, and Scott Dull of Eagle River, Alaska, an emergency room physician who was involved with search and rescue.

Falkner said the men had started hiking from the Storm Mountain trailhead at 4 a.m. Saturday, hoping it was cold enough that the avalanche danger would be minimal, and they had expected to be through by 11 a.m.

She said it was believed the men triggered the avalanche, but the conditions were created by the recent warm weather with Chinook winds. The Utah Avalanche Forecast Center had warned Friday of potentially catastrophic avalanches. The center said melt water percolating through snow was producing "wet slabs and wet sluffs" and that entire snowpacks were at risk of sliding over rocks.

Neither man was carrying an avalanche beacon.

Deputies were alerted at 5:49 p.m. Saturday when the family of one of the hikers called to report the men overdue.

The body of one man was found about 10 p.m. and the other about midnight.

Both bodies were near the surface. One body was found by searchers and avalanche dogs from the Alta resort found the second body.

Avalanche Victims Were Skilled Hikers

BY KEVIN CANTERA

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Warm temperatures led to deadly conditions in the mountains of Salt Lake County over the weekend, when melting snow caused a massive avalanche that claimed two lives in Big Cottonwood Canyon.

Martin Gleich, 38, of Salt Lake County, and Scott Dull, 39, of Eagle River, Alaska, were killed Saturday after becoming trapped by a 2-mile-wide avalanche that barrelled into a narrow ravine.

It took rescue workers more than six hours to recover the two bodies buried beneath ice and snow.

"This is one of the biggest slides we have ever seen," said Deputy Peggy Faulkner of the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office. The snowfield was nearly 30 feet deep where it broke away from the side of the mountain, she said.

The two deaths raised the tally of avalanche fatalities in Utah since December to six. That equals the number of deaths in the 1998-99 avalanche season, the deadliest since 1951, according to statistics from the U.S. Forest Service's Utah Avalanche Center.

Gleich and Dull, described by Faulkner as "experienced backcountry hikers," set out at 4 a.m. Saturday from the Storm Mountain trail head, where posted signs warn of avalanche danger.

Hikers Set Out Early to Minimize Risk

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"They thought that by setting out early they would avoid the most dangerous time of day," before the snow started melting, Faulkner said. "But temperatures rose pretty quickly. They were just at the wrong place at the wrong time."

Investigators believe the pair triggered the slide, but were unsure of the exact time of the incident, she said. Deputies were alerted at about 5:40 p.m. when family members called to report that the men were missing.

Just before 9 p.m., rescuers found the foot of one of the men sticking out of the snow. Hundreds of yards away, with the help of a rescue dog, they discovered the second victim just before midnight.

Gleich was a physician at LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City, where he recently served as the medical director of the respiratory/special care intensive care unit, said Jess Gomez, hospital spokesman.

"His colleagues described him as a very caring and compassionate physician," Gomez said. "They are shocked and saddened by his passing."

Also a doctor, Dull worked as an emergency room

physician at Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage.

Both men attended medical school at the University of Washington. Dull graduated in 1991, Gleich in 1992.

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