

Two snowboarders die in avalanche

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The slide killed an 18-year-old man from Salt Lake County and a 19-year-old man from Nevada. Their

names were being withheld Saturday night as authorities tried to notify their families.

The victims left the Crest chair lift at Brighton with a group of a dozen young snowboarders to traverse 10,321-foot Pioneer Ridge. They triggered an avalanche 6-8 feet deep that swept 800 vertical feet down a slope.

Other members of the party used cell phones to alert

authorities about 12:30 p.m.

The snowboarders, 18 to 22 years old, were skiing 1 1/2 miles outside Brighton despite avalanche danger from a winter storm that dropped four feet of snow on Wednesday and Thursday. They ignored warning signs to ski an area that isn't groomed, patrolled or made safe by avalanche control work.

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The Associated Press

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"The avalanche danger is extreme and the kids were not prepared for it. They didn't have probes or shovels or avalanche beacons," Salt Lake County sheriff's Deputy Peggy Faulkner said Saturday.

A storm moving Saturday into the Wasatch Mountains was set to drop another 14 inches of snow overnight.

Avalanche Kills 2 Backcountry Snowboarders Near Brighton

BY KEVIN CANTERA

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

A massive avalanche near the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon on Saturday crashed down upon and killed two young men who were crossing a snowfield to go snowboarding.

The pair, identified only as an 18-year-old Nevada man and a 19-year-old man from Salt Lake County, were found by search dogs more than 200 feet from where they had been walking, said Peggy Faulkner, Salt Lake County sheriff's spokeswoman.

The two were part of a group of 12

young adults who had ventured beyond the boundaries of Brighton Ski Resort into the backcountry near Pioneer Peak. None of the group was properly equipped for a trip into the high mountains, where avalanche danger was severe, Faulkner said.

"They saw the signs warning them against leaving the groomed trails," Faulkner said. "They knew they were not prepared."

The wall of snow — 800 vertical feet — came thundering down just after 12:30 p.m. and left an eight-foot gash at the fracture line where the slide originated.

"The folks at Brighton say that this was the biggest avalanche they had ever seen," Faulkner said.

Two members of the group had crossed the snowfield and were out of harm's way when the avalanche began, Faulkner said. The two victims were in the direct line of the slide and were immediately swept away.

"It appears [the cause of death] was trauma," Faulkner said. Both men were taken to the state Medical Examiner's Office for autopsies.

No other injuries were reported. Another member of the group called 911 from a cellphone, Faulkner said.

Avalanche danger remains high along the steep slopes of the Wasatch Front as unstable snow piles up on an icy snowpack that was laid down months ago.

Anyone planning to risk a backcountry expedition is urged to check conditions at www.avalanche.org, or by calling for a recorded report, updated daily.

Recorded advisories are available for these areas: Salt Lake 364-1581; Little Cottonwood Canyon 742-0830; Park City 435-658-5512; Ogden 626-8600; and Provo 378-4333.

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