

## COMMENTS

Solo backcountry travel can bring good feelings of calm and serenity and suits many skiers' personalities, but it comes with a serious downside. In an emergency, there will be no help or rescue. Ray Azar knew the risks, both of skiing avalanche terrain and of skiing it alone. He was comfortable with this, but, sadly, his time ran out.

## DALY CANYON, NORTHWEST OF PARK CITY, UTAH

20040226

February 26, 2004

One snowshoer caught, buried, and killed

## WEATHER AND SNOWPACK CONDITIONS

On February 25 and 26, a strong winter storm hit the Park City area of Utah's Wasatch Range. It was a warm storm, and about two feet of heavy snow fell on those two days. On the east slope of the Wasatch, especially at lower elevations surrounding Park City, the snowpack had been shallow and weak prior to this storm. Early on February 26, a big windstorm overloaded many slopes, causing the avalanche danger to spike upward.



The black lines outline the crown and flanks of the February 26, 2004, avalanche. The black X in the lower left marks the burial site. *Photo Bruce Tremper, Utah Avalanche Center.*

## ACCIDENT SUMMARY

On Thursday, February 26, two men were snowshoeing in Daly Canyon (also known as Empire Canyon) near the Judge Mine, on the outskirts of Park City. Jason DeLecour (34) was visiting from Houston, Texas, and was snowshoeing with a friend who lived in Park City. Late in the day, just after 18:00, DeLecour triggered a small avalanche in a narrow, wooded gully. The gully acted as a terrain trap, causing the snow to pile up deeply, completely burying DeLecour.

**Terrain trap**



A hasty team found the victim buried about 4 feet deep—a result of the terrain trap. *Photo Bruce Tremper, Utah Avalanche Center.*

**No rescue  
equipment**

**RESCUE SUMMARY**

These men were not prepared for an avalanche emergency and had no rescue gear at all. The surviving man rushed to some nearby houses for help. Several residents hurried to the site, and a call went to the Deer Valley Ski Patrol for an avalanche rescue dog.

Few details of the rescue were available, but the hasty searchers had found the victim before the patrol rescue team and dog got to the site. The rescuers uncovered DeLecour from three to four feet of snow, and he did not respond to resuscitation efforts.

**Storm Slab  
avalanche**

**AVALANCHE DATA**

Very little data was available on this avalanche. It probably would have been classified as SS-AI-R2-I.

**COMMENTS**

The thought of avalanches probably never crossed the minds of these two snowshoers, so they did not recognize that the small slope above the trail could pose a threat. Small avalanches can be deadly when the debris comes to a stop in a gully, where it can pile up deeply.