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Man Survives Being Buried in Avalanche

KSL Team Coverage Todd Griffiths, Salt Lake County Sheriff's Dept.: "Any time you can come out of an avalanche alive, it's incredible."

Incredible is right! An early season avalanche buries a back country skier for more than ten minutes, but he lives to tell about it.

Steven Lloyd, Avalanche Survivor: "I was thinking 'Crap, I'm in a pretty bad situation now.'"


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Friends of the survivor say when they checked him into the hospital and were asked the reason for admittance there was no box for avalanche survivor because usually you don't survive an avalanche, but Steven Lloyd did.

Steven Lloyd: "I've almost broke down and cried two times tonight."

He's alive. Steven Lloyd was buried for 15 minutes in three feet of snow after he and his friends triggered an avalanche in Silver Fork Canyon this afternoon. They had skied down the bowl already and were hiking back up when the snow line cracked.

Steve Lloyd: "I started to move with the snow. Hit tree. The snow came over my head, pushed me face down. I tried wiggling my face to get an air pocket in front of my face. At that point I took a few breaths and tried to slow down my breathing and passed out."

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But Steven and his friend Jason West had avalanche beacons and Jason was able to find his friend and dig him out. Steven was unconscious.

Steve Lloyd: "When I came to I couldn't move my body, my limbs and my legs, nothing moved. And I was shivering really, really bad. All I remember is I came to and they were shaking me and calling my name. I could hear them and was trying to open my eyes, but was struggling to even get my eyes open."

From there he was flown to the University of Utah Medical Center. He's doing just fine.

Steve Lloyd: "I have a really bad headache right now, but besides that, no."

His wife is fine too. She heard about it all through a friend, but didn't realize how serious it was until she heard her husband's name on a radio report.

Shilo Lloyd: "I'm now one of those stories on the news where I think, 'those people are so stupid. How could those skiers have done that?'"

Steven admits he and his friends shouldn't have been in that area.

Steve Lloyd "There was definitely signs and we kind of ignored them."

But he's not going to ignore them anymore because he needs to live, he's going to be a dad next month. It's their first.

All of this happened this afternoon. That quest for powder that skiers and snowboarders seek turned into a life or death struggle. One of the survivors tells us it was an extremely humbling experience. Lloyd's friend Jason West described it.

Jason West, Backcountry Skier: "That I needed to find him and dig him out because I know you have very limited time without oxygen before there's serious problems."

Lloyd wasn't breathing at first. West revived him.

Todd Griffiths, Salt Lake County Sheriff's Dept.: "If these guys didn't have the experience they have in the backcountry, if they weren't wearing avalanche beacons, if they didn't have this type of survival equipment, it's very likely that this gentleman wouldn't have survived."

As West worked to save Lloyd, another skier called for help on his cell phone. A team of search and rescue crews quickly prepared to haul skiers down the mountain. In the end, AirMed brought two of the skiers down. The others skied down.

Right now the snow in the mountains is light, fluffy, tempting for powder lovers. The experienced skier, though, also knows that under the powder is a layer of unstable snow, primed for avalanche.

Jason West, Backcountry Skier: "Which is why it is humbling, because I do know better, I didn't feel good about it."

Every ski resort in both Big and Little Cottonwood canyon has been doing avalanche control today, but avalanche danger is still extremely high.

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