

# Skiers missing after avalanche

ASPEN, Colo. (AP) — Searchers on snowmobiles and skis, moving gingerly through an area of extreme avalanche danger, failed Monday to find five cross-country skiers missing for three days in mountain back country.

The team reached a remote hut in Taylor Pass where they had hoped the five had found shelter from near-zero temperatures. But the cabin about 15 miles south of Aspen and another one nearby were empty.

Authorities called off the search at dusk Monday, but planned to go out again Tuesday morning with dogs.

An avalanche thundered down a mountainside in the area Saturday.

"It's a very pessimistic outlook if they didn't reach a hut," said Debbie Kendrick of the Pitkin County sheriff's office. "But these are people who have done some backwoods stuff before and have some knowledge, so we're hopeful in that light."

The missing skiers left the Ashcroft Ski Touring Resort on Friday, camped overnight and were to have returned Saturday. Two other people with them returned safely by a different route.

About 16 people went out on the back side of Aspen Mountain on snowmobiles, cross-country skis and Snowcats, the wide-tracked utility vehicles

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Deputy Joe DiSalvo,  
Pitkin County sheriff's office

used at ski areas, sheriff's Deputy Joe DiSalvo said. They had to cover nine to 11 miles in snow drifts up to 5 feet deep.

"It's real tough going and in an area where there is some extreme avalanche danger," he said. "They need to be as safe as they can."

Aircraft were able to join the search for only about 11 hours Monday because of clouds, DiSalvo said.

"If they got to a hut, there's firewood and a fireplace and they could stay up there four days and virtually be fine," DiSalvo said. "If they made a snow cave, the survivability rate is good. If they're out in the elements, I don't know. It's hard to tell."

The skiers were identified as Brigetta Schlugar, Dee and Rob Dubin, all from Denver; Ken Torp, of Conifer; and Elliott Brown of Golden.

"We're optimistic," said Don Dubin, Rob's brother.

The two skiers who left the group and took a different route, Andrea Brett, 42, of Denver, and

Richard Rost, 34, of Boulder, got back safely although Brett had frostbitten fingers and toes.

"When you get right down to it, it was basically survival," Rost said of their decision to go ahead of their five companions. He said they were unaware of the avalanche danger and impending storm Friday.

More than 300 avalanches have been reported in Colorado's high country since Wednesday, when a storm moved in and dumped as much as 7 feet of snow. "For each avalanche reported we estimate another 10 released, but are unobserved," said a report from the Colorado Avalanche Information Center.

Nine people have died so far this winter in Colorado avalanches.

One snowslide surrounded four vehicles on Interstate 70 near Vail Pass on Sunday, but the seven people were rescued within minutes. Eastbound I-70 reopened late Sunday but west-bound lanes were intermittently closed Monday between Vail and Copper Mountain as crews tried to clear the road.

Two avalanches near Aspen threatened the resort town's water supplies during the weekend by briefly blocking two creeks. Most mountain passes were closed and transportation officials said they may have to blast snow off the roads with explosives.

# Journalists plead guilty to supplying a minor

BEMIDJI, Minn. (AP) — A former television reporter and a former cameraman accused of staging a party for a story on teen-age drinking pleaded guilty Monday to furnishing alcohol to a minor.

Reporter Kelly Nelson and cameraman Jim Talley, both 23, were accused of buying two cases of beer and taking it to a cabin where they filmed teen-agers drinking in November.

Judge James Preece is expected to sentence them in late March. They face up to one year in jail and a \$3,000 fine, but Beltrami County attorney Timothy Faver said few people receive the maximum sentence.

At the time, Nelson and Talley worked for KCCO-TV in Alexandria. The station broadcast an apology, and Faver said he had no information to indicate that station management was involved.

The complaint said Nelson and Talley asked a 17-year-old boy if they could film a party where underage drinking took place. The legal drinking age in Minnesota is 21.

The complaint said the boy gave Talley \$33 to buy the beer.

KCCO broadcast the story Nov. 24 as part of a series on teen-age drinking.

# Letterman decides to stay in NY

NEW YORK (AP) — David Letterman has decided he'll move five blocks to a television landmark instead of 3,000 miles to the other coast when his late-night show switches from NBC to CBS.

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