

## Avalanche of grief

### Two men killed while skiing in bounds in latest tragedy at British Columbia resort

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Tragedy has struck the town of Golden, B.C., and Kicking Horse Mountain Resort yet again after two men were killed by an avalanche while skiing in bounds yesterday.

Four people were skiing within the boundaries of the resort, in a place called Feuz Bowl that was considered an avalanche-closed area, when the slide occurred just before 2:30 p.m., said RCMP Sgt. Marko Shehovac.

"Two people were able to get out; two males are deceased," he said.

#### TWO SURVIVORS

The two skiers who survived the slide, both men, were not related to the victims.

"They just happened to be in the same area," he said.

RCMP were notified after witnesses reported the avalanche.

"Some people saw it happen and were able to report it to the ski hill," he said.

The victims were airlifted to Golden District Hospital where they were pronounced dead, said hospital spokesman Jennifer Henkes.

One of the buried men was recovered at 2:59 p.m., the other five minutes later.

"We are aware that one of the males did have an avalanche beacon," said Shehovac.

Calgarian Kevin Hall was skiing at Kicking Horse when the deadly slide occurred.

"The first thing it did for us was just send an absolute shiver up our spine because it was an area that we had been skiing (in)," he said.

"People that we were talking to in the lineup around the base of the chair, there was just surprise and shock with regards to what had happened.

"But there was no anger there. There was obviously an appreciation for the response from the hill ... and concern for the people that had been caught in the avalanche."

A spokesman for the resort declined to comment on the incident.

The age and identity of the victims have not been released.

#### DEADLY SEASON

The deaths bring to 15 the number of people in Western Canada killed this winter by avalanches, including eight men buried by a series of massive slides on their snowmobiles near Fernie, B.C., on Dec. 28, 2008.

Yesterday's avalanche comes little more than a week after Quebecer Gilles Blackburn, 51, was rescued from the backcountry, where he spent nine days lost in the wilderness when he and wife Marie-Josée Fortin skied out of bounds from Kicking Horse.

Mounties have admitted errors in not launching a search sooner after multiple sightings of Blackburn's SOS signs were ignored, leaving his 44-year-old wife dead.

In a tragically ironic twist, the victims of yesterday's avalanche skied off a chairlift known as Stairway to Heaven - the same one Blackburn and Fortin disembarked from Feb. 15 when their torturous wilderness odyssey began.



The ski area markers line the ski run looking towards the Stairway to Heaven chairlift at Kicking Horse Mountain Resort in Golden, B.C., last month. An avalanche killed two men skiing in bounds at the resort yesterday. (Jeff Bassett, The Canadian Press)