

2015/1/1 – Thompson Pass, MP 29

Avalanche Details

- Location: Face between Vertigo (Gully 1) and Snatch (Gully 2) MP 29
- State: Alaska
- Date: 2015/1/1
- Time: ~6 PM
- Summary Description: 1 snowmachiner caught, buried
- Primary Activity: Snowmachining
- Primary Travel Mode: Snowmachine
- Location Setting: Accessed backcountry from Richardson highway MP 29

Avalanche

Number

- Caught: 1
- Partially Buried, Non-Critical:
- Partially Buried, Critical:
- Fully Buried: 1
- Injured: 0
- Killed: 0

- Type: SS/HS
- Trigger: AM Snowmobile
- Trigger (subcode): u - unintentional release
- Size - Relative to Path: R5
- Size - Destructive Force: D2.5
- Sliding Surface: G – avalanche released on ice crust at ground as well as within layers of old snow

Site

- Slope Aspect: NNW
- Site Elevation: 5500 ft
- Slope Angle: ~38 °
- Slope Characteristic: Bowl

The group who triggered the January 1st avalanche shared this:

After dark January 1st five riders unloaded their snowmachines on Thompson Pass at MP 29. They began trying to climb the closest north face. The riders were breaking through the crust into lower facets. While two riders were getting unstuck, three of them found their way up onto the face above. As the highest rider (Rider 1) crested the rollover at about 3900', the third rider (Rider 3) felt powdery spray and turned around, trying to get out of the way of what he felt was an avalanche.

The second rider (Rider 2) who wasn't far behind Rider 1 on the ascent, got caught, carried, and buried on a bench at about 3100'. Only his hand was sticking out - he had no avalanche transceiver, probe, or shovel.

The two riders below lost moonlight for a few moments, but did not realize there was an avalanche and powder cloud occurring.

Rider 3 who had gunned it down and off the moving snow was able to find Rider 2 in the dark and help him get unburied (Rider 2 had been able to get his head and body mostly out of the snow).

Meanwhile, Rider 1 turned around at the top, not knowing they had triggered an avalanche. He headed down slope. He was quite surprised when his machine launched off the avalanche crown. He was barely able to keep his machine from washing out on the icy, rocky bed surface. He only then realized there had been an avalanche.

Luckily, Rider 1 was unhurt, but his machine was stuck, buried, and damaged by the avalanche.