

Silver Basin Avalanche Fatality

December 11, 2021

Report by Dallas Glass and Andy Harrington

Incident Summary

On the morning of Saturday, December 11, a party of 6 skiers toured from the parking lot at Crystal Mt. The group planned to ski Silver Basin, a section of the ski area that had not yet been opened for the season, had not received avalanche mitigation, and thus contained a backcountry snowpack. After a short break near the bottom of the basin, the team began a long ascending traverse heading towards Silver Saddle. About 250 vertical feet below the ridgeline locally known as Box Car, the group noticed small cracks and felt "the snow change." They turned back across the slope, intending to find a place to transition for the ski down. At this point, all six members were close together and the slope avalanched. The entire party was caught and carried and three were fully buried. A nearby party of two witnessed the accident, called 911, and assisted with the rescue. Crystal Mt Ski Patrol was notified of the accident through 911 and also responded to the scene. Although two of the buried skiers were rescued, the third sustained multiple injuries. The party was escorted away from the scene by ski patrol and several volunteers. The Northwest Avalanche Center and Crystal Mt Ski Patrol returned to the scene on December 12 to conduct an avalanche investigation. A complete report will be released in the coming weeks.

Occurrence Time and Date: Approx 10:50 on Dec 11, 2021

Time First Reported to SAR: 10:50

Recovery/Rescue Time: Approximately 25min, All members were located and extracted by 11:16

Lat/Lon: 46.91158, -121.50222

Location: Crystal Mountain Ski Area, Silver Basin, Pierce County, Mt Baker-Snoqualmie NF, WA

Number in Party: 6

Number Caught: 6

Number Partially Buried, Critical or Not-critical: 1 partial non-critical, 2 partial critical

Number Completely Buried: 3

Duration of Burial: <15min

Number Injured: 0

Number Killed: 1

Avalanche Type: SS

Trigger: ASu

Size: R3 /D2.5

Start Zone Aspect: NE-E

Start Zone Angle: Est. Avg 35

Start Zone Elevation: Approx: 6600'

Height of Crown Face: Est. 2'

Width of Fracture: Estimated 600'

Vertical Fall: Est: 800'

Slab Characteristics: Unknown

Weak Layer Characteristics: Unknown

Bed Surface Characteristics: Unknown

Burial involved a terrain trap: Yes, trees and small cliff.

Number of people that crossed start zone before avalanche: None

Avalanche occurred during: Ascent

Location of group in relation to start zone during avalanche: All six members were grouped together in the middle of the start zone.

Avalanche Safety Gear Carried: All members carried shovels, probes, and transceivers

Avalanche Training and Experience at Activity: Most if not all members in the group had a Level 1

Signs of Instability Noted by Group: Blowing snow, significant new snow, small shooting cracks

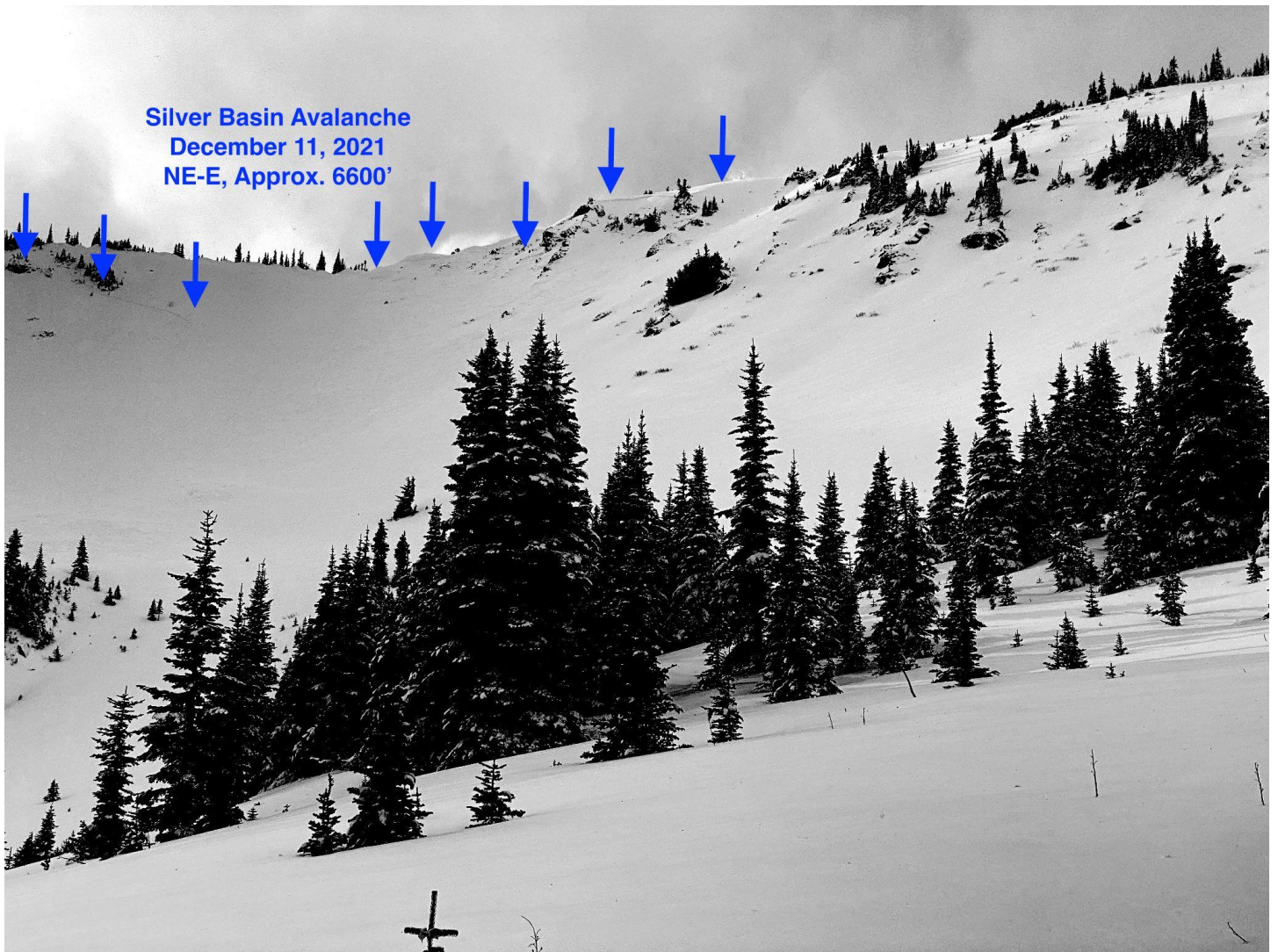
Extent of Injuries or Cause of Death:

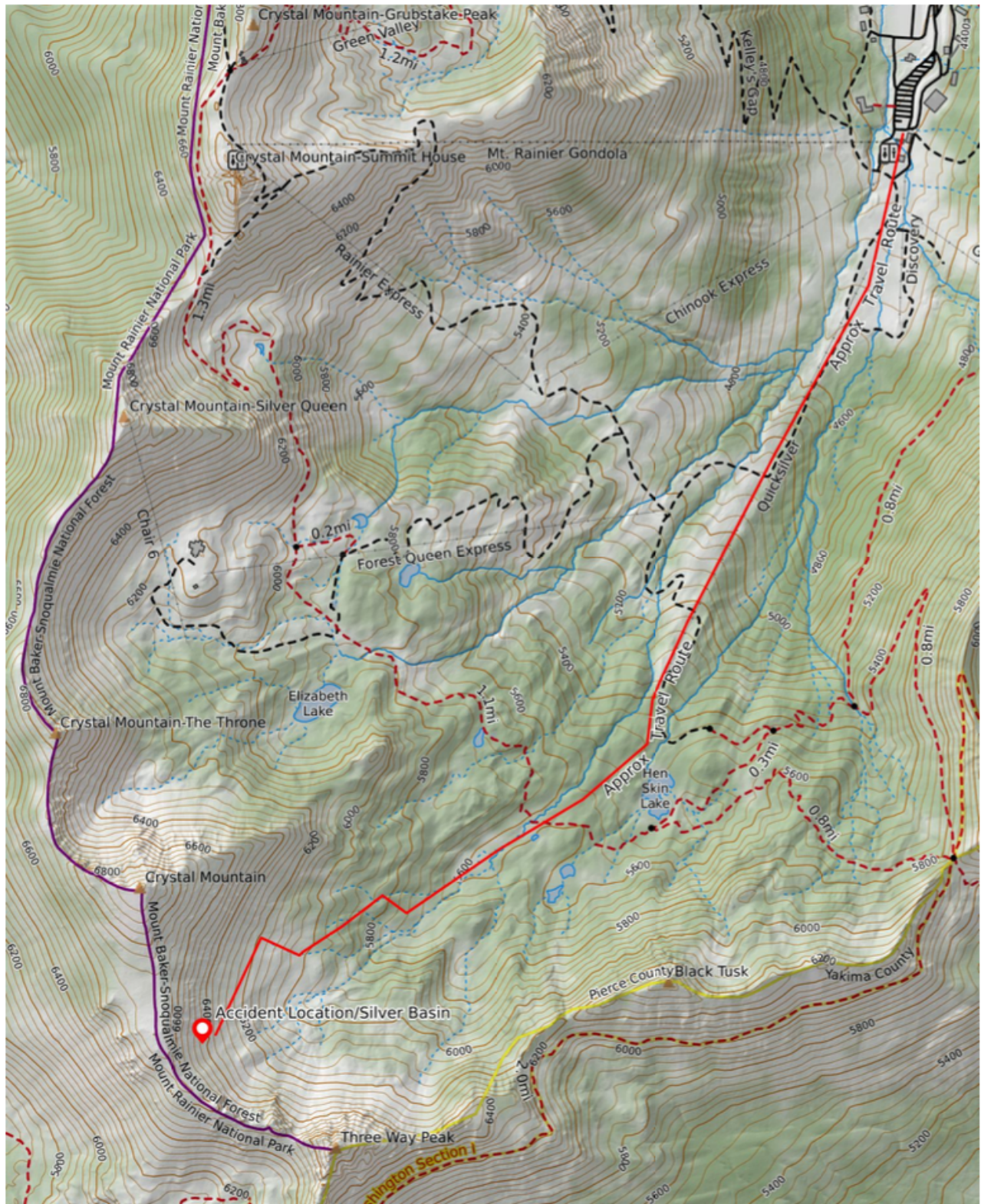
- Skier 2: was found unconscious and not breathing. Once revived he reported no injuries and did not seek medical attention.
- Skier 4: was strained through a stand of small trees and sustained blunt trauma.
 - M.E. cause of death: "multiple blunt force injuries"

NWAC Forecast Zone: West South Zone

Avalanche Danger Rating (Above, Near or Below Tree-line):

The forecasted avalanche danger was Considerable near and above tree-line and Moderate below tree-line at the time of the accident. You can read the forecast for 12/11 [here](#).





Mercator Projection
 WGS84
 UTM Zone 10T
 C.A.L.T.O.P.O

