

AVALANCHE REPORT

Date of occurrence: June 9, 2013 approx 1:30pm

Location: 9400', Illumination Rock, Mt. Hood, Oregon

Slope characteristics: SE aspect, 35 – 40 degree slope

Avalanche characteristics: Skier-triggered wet slab, 8"-12" crown, see details below

Group characteristics: 2 advanced skiers with advanced backcountry knowledge

Short video of avalanche: <http://youtu.be/tRb75tYOO4w>

Summary:

Relatively cool windy day kept surface firm on ascent from T-line lodge. Prime corn skiing occurred relatively later in the day than normal. As group was about to reach Illumination saddle, group noticed a previous slide on S aspect above Illumination saddle west of Crater Rock, which looked skier-triggered from approx. 9800' with debris ending at 9400'. We assumed this had been an old storm slab caused by the weak layer from the storm of 3 or 4 weeks prior which deposited about 1 foot of new on Mt. Hood. It is now apparent that the old slide was a recent wet slab identical to the one that I was about to trigger, and that the weak layer was indeed from that previous storm. Group continued toward Illumination Rock.

The SE aspect immediately below Illumination Rock was noticeably slushier (of course) as I ascended the shoulder from saddle. I took note of the slush but lulled myself into skiing it anyway due to other factors such as: overall firmness of surface experienced throughout morning, presumption of good melt-freeze, assumption that old slide had been caused by different conditions, familiar ski line, no terrain trap, perception of low-consequence risk. No further evaluation was done. In hindsight it was too late in the day to ski this particular aspect.

At the time, I considered my initial traverse across the top to be a good ski cut. Wet slab was triggered on the 2nd ski turn as other group member watched from safety with pieps on. I was buried up to my waist but easily extracted myself – no injuries. The debris was relatively loose and granular immediately after it stopped. It was easy to walk out of the debris field – 3 feet deep at that point. The toe of the debris field on the slope below me might have been 5 feet deep. Group left area in a hurry because about half of that steep slope was still intact but unstable. The other half of that slope slid down to where it becomes less steep. My estimates for slide path: 100' wide?, 200 vertical feet?, 300' length of slide path? Like I said, we got out of there in a hurry so those are rough estimates. Also refer to video evidence sent via email to NWAC.

Submitted by: Patrick Buckley