

Mt Saint Helens Avalanche Burial, February 19, 2026

Report by Dallas Glass

Incident Summary

On Thursday, February 19, 2026, a group of 8 snowmobilers were recreating on the east side of Mt Saint Helens. They had originally planned to ride near the Plains of Abraham, but ended up spending the morning in the vicinity of the Shoestring Glacier, riding as high as 6500ft. Around lunchtime, the group stopped on a flat bench at about 5600ft. One of the riders made a lap across a previously untracked slope in the main Shoestring Gulley without incident. Three of the riders, then decided to make a second pass through the terrain, with one (Rider 3) stopping on a ridge above and to the north of the main valley.

Unbeknownst to the lead rider (1), the second rider continued to follow him back down the slope. Rider 1 noticed the snow around him cracking and steered his sled uphill to escape the avalanche. He then continued down to the team still parked at the lunch site to inform them of the avalanche. While with the bulk of the group, he realized Rider 2 was not present. He communicated with Rider 3 via radio to inquire about the missing teammate. Once confirming he was missing, Rider 1 drove to the middle of the avalanche debris to begin his search.

Rider 1 turned off his snowmobile and switched his avalanche transceiver to search. The device immediately read 3.3, and the arrow pointed left. He turned and dropped the transceiver to the snow, reading 1.1. Rider 1 then deployed his avalanche probe and inserted it into the snow, striking Rider 2's backpack. Rider 1 began digging, quickly locating his friend's backpack and then uncovering his head. Additional members of the group began to arrive, removed Rider 2's backpack, helped clear his head, and removed his helmet. Rider 2 was positioned face down in the snow, head downhill. When they removed his helmet, Rider 2 was purple and not breathing. Rider 1 instructed a teammate to give him rescue breaths. The teammate performed 3 rescue breaths. Rider 2 then began wheezing and turning pink. The group worked to manually maintain his airway while they continued to dig him out of the snow. Rider 2's head was 2.5-3 feet below the surface.

While the group continued excavating Rider 2, Rider 1 called 911 for help. Rider 2 slowly regained consciousness. The group then focused on warming him with hand warmers, extra clothes, and warm liquids. The team then dug out the buried snowmobile. After recovering, all riders returned to the trailhead together, where they encountered Search and Rescue personnel dispatched to the scene. Rider 2 was transported to the hospital by his friends, where he was evaluated and released.

Occurrence Time and Date: 12:01 pm on February 19, 2026

Time First Reported to SAR: 12:25 pm

Recovery/Rescue Time: Approx: 12:20 pm

Lat/Lon: 46.189125, -122.165467

Location: Swift Glacier, Mt Saint Helens, Gifford Pinchot NF, Skamania Co, WA.

Number in Party: 8

Number Caught: 1

Number Partially Buried, Critical or Not-critical: 0

Number Completely Buried: 0

Duration of Burial: 12-15 min

Number Injured: 0

Number Killed: 0

Avalanche Type: HS

Trigger: AM

Size: R2 /D2

Start Zone Aspect: NE

Start Zone Elevation: Approx: 6000ft

Height of Crown Face: Est. 2-3 ft

Width of Fracture: Est. 300 ft

Vertical Fall: 150 ft

Burial involved a terrain trap: Slight depression

Number of people that crossed start zone before avalanche: 1

Avalanche occurred during: Descent

Location of group in relation to start zone during avalanche: Middle

Avalanche Safety Gear Carried: All members: Shovel, Probe, Transceiver. Some members: Airbag, the victim was carrying and deployed his airbag.

Signs of Instability Noted by Group: None

NWAC Forecast Zone: West South

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

Moderate at Upper and Middle Elevations, Low at Lower Elevations

<https://nwac.us/avalanche-forecast/#/forecast/6/180782>



Image 1: The view along the SE portion of the crown from near the burial site. Crown depths averaged 2-3 feet deep.

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Image 2: A view of the accident site from Rider 3's filming location. The main avalanche is hidden from the group by a subtle ridge.