

# Mt Herman Avalanche Incident

2/14/2026

Report by Irene Henninger

## Incident Summary

On Saturday, February 14, 2026, two frequent and experienced Mt Baker backcountry skiers toured in the Enchanted Forest area on Mt Herman. The pair performed a few hasty pits and skied one run. They did not notice any signs of instability. Skier 2 then returned to the trailhead, while Skier 1 continued on solo. While making additional laps in the terrain, he noticed a human triggered avalanche on a feature that commonly produces slides. However, when he tested nearby steep, convex slopes, they did not fail.

He then proceeded top of a gully along Mt Herman's East Face. He attempted to check the slope from his normal safe stopping point. Skier 1 then made several large turns into the terrain. On his second turn, the slope released. He was initially traveling towards steep terrain with a flat bench, which could result in a deeper burial. Skier 1 managed to steer towards gentler terrain and away from the bench terrain trap. He was abruptly stopped by a tree after traveling roughly 15 vertical feet. The snow hardened quickly around him, locking him in place.

Skier 1 was buried to his chest, with one arm free. He was able to remove his backpack, access his shovel blade, and dig himself out. After skiing roughly 300 feet downhill, the pain in his injured leg caused him to stop. Fortunately, a party of two tourers witnessed the avalanche, saw Skier 1 caught and carried, and responded to assist. The pair was carrying a rescue tarp/sled. They positioned Skier 1 in the sled and began transporting him down the hill. Search and rescue personnel arrived shortly after, transferred the injured skier to a hard-shelled sled, and continued transporting him to the trailhead. Everyone was back in the parking lot around 4 pm. Due to the time of day and weather, the avalanche was not formally observed. On that day in the Mt Baker backcountry, most avalanches were small to large (D1-2), human triggered slabs, 10-14 inches deep. These avalanches likely failed at the new-old snow interface on northerly aspects and on a crust in south facing terrain. At the time of the accident, nearby weather stations showed the storm total was roughly 16 inches. The victim noted that, despite having previously triggered many avalanches in this location, this particular slide surprised him. It propagated further than usual. This caught him off guard, given his previous observations.

**Occurrence Time and Date:** 11:30 am, Saturday, February 14, 2026

**Recovery/Rescue Time:** 20 min self-extrication. 4.5 hours total evacuation.

**Lat/Lon:** Approx: 48.85850, -121.69251

**Location:** East Face, Mt Herman, Mt Baker-Snoqualmie NF, Whatcom, CO, WA.

**Number in Party:** 1

**Number Caught:** 1

**Number Partially Buried, Critical or Not-critical:** 1 partially buried non-critical

**Number Completely Buried:** 0

**Number Injured:** 1

**Number Killed:** 0

**Avalanche Type:** SS

**Trigger:** ASu

**Size:** D 1.5

**Start Zone Aspect:** ESE

**Start Zone Elevation:** 4800 feet

**Burial involved a terrain trap:** Tree

**Number of people that crossed start zone before avalanche:** 0

**Avalanche occurred during:** Descent

**Location of group in relation to start zone during avalanche:** Upper

**Avalanche Safety Gear Carried:** Avalanche transceiver, probe, and shovel

**Avalanche Training and Experience at Activity:** Highly experienced at the activity

**Signs of Instability Noted by Group:** 1 small human triggered avalanche in nearby terrain

**Extent of Injuries or Cause of Death:** lower leg injury

**NWAC Forecast Zone:** West North

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

Considerable at Middle and Upper Elevations, Moderate at Lower elevations

<https://nwac.us/avalanche-forecast/#/forecast/4/180349>