

# Wilson Glacier Avalanche Incident

**May 04, 2026**

Report by Dallas Glass

## Incident Summary:

Just after midnight on Monday, May 4, 2026, a party of two departed Paradise on the south side of Mount Rainier to ascend the Ingraham Direct and then ski the Fuhrer Finger routes. The climb went as planned, with the pair arriving at the summit between 11:00 and 11:30 am. There, they encountered another party of two with a similar objective. The teams joined together, departing the summit around 12:30 pm.

The group of four descended the upper Nisqually Glacier and Fuhrer Finger without incident. They reported firm conditions near the summit, with very soft spring snow in the Fuhrer Finger couloir. Arriving on the Wilson Glacier around 1:25 pm (Image 1), they met a team of 3 that descended the Fuhrer Thumb. The now party of 7 continued down the Wilson Glacier.

Around 8150 ft, two members of the group skied to the top of a large, obvious knob, then traveled right (southwest) back towards numerous ski tracks from previous days. At 1:35 pm, Skier 3 (the victim) also stopped atop the same knob. After investigating the left (east) exit, he skied off the knob in that direction and into the steep terrain below (Image 2).

Skier 3 noticed a crack opening near his skis. Initially assuming it was a crevasse, he continued downhill, perpendicular to the crack. As the snow around him began moving, he realized it was an avalanche and tried to escape to the sides. The slide quickly knocked skier 3 off his feet, and he tumbled down the slope. Skier 3 came to rest at the base of the features, partially buried to just above his waist. He had lost both skis, poles, and an ice axe in the slide (Image 3).

The party of 3 that joined the group on the Wilson Glacier included 2 local mountain guides. They witnessed the slide and immediately responded to the scene. They assisted skier 3 out of the snow and performed first aid, including an initial and physical assessment. No significant injuries were found. After recovering one of the missing skis, one of the guides loaned the victim a second ski to facilitate the trip back to Paradise.

At Paradise, skier 3 met Mount Rainier park rangers. They also performed a physical assessment. Without major injuries, skier 3 chose to drive himself home. En route, he began to experience significant pain in his right forearm and jaw, causing him to divert to a local hospital for treatment.

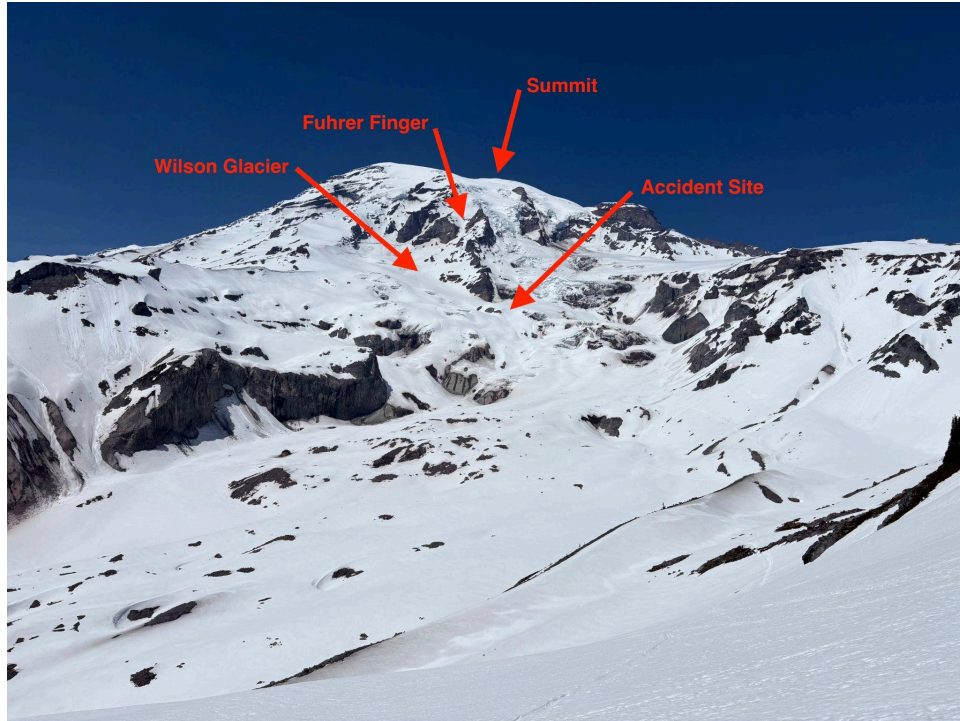


Image 1: An overview of the route and accident site on the south side of Mount Rainier as seen from near Glacier Vista. Photo: Mount Rainier National Park Rangers



Image 2: An overview of the accident site, including skier 3's track, as seen from near the Muir Snowfield. Photo: Jonathon Spitzer



Image 3: Looking up the avalanche from the burial site. Photo Drew O'Brien

**Occurrence Time and Date:** 1:30 pm, May 04, 2026

**Time First Reported to SAR:** 2:05 pm

**Recovery/Rescue Time:** 1:35 pm

**Lat/Lon:** Approx: 46.82329, -121.74472

**Location:** Wilson Glacier, Mount Rainier, Pierce Co, Mount Rainier National Park, WA

**Number in Party:** Initially 2, 7 at the time of the accident

**Number Caught:** 1

**Number Partially Buried, Critical or Non-critical:** 1, non-critical

**Number Completely Buried:** 0

**Number Injured:** 1

**Number Killed:** 0

**Avalanche Type:** Wet Slab (WS)

**Trigger:** Artificial Skier Unintentional (ASu)

**Size:** R2 /D2

**Bed Surface:** O

**Start Zone Aspect:** S

**Start Zone Angle:** 45

**Start Zone Elevation:** Approx: 8150 ft (2484 m)

**Height of Crown Face:** Approx: 12 in (30 cm)

**Width of Fracture:** Est: 100ft

**Vertical Fall:** Approx: 450 ft (137m)

**Burial involved a terrain trap:** No

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

**Avalanche occurred during:** Descent

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

**Avalanche Safety Gear Carried:** Avalanche transceivers, probes, and shovels

**Avalanche Training and Experience at Activity:**

**Signs of Instability Noted by Group:** Wet loose avalanche on Little Tahoma, April 30, 2026

**Extent of Injuries or Cause of Death:** Right wrist fracture, facial contusions.

**NWAC Forecast Zone:** West South

**Avalanche Danger Rating (Above, Near or Below Tree-line):** No avalanche forecast was issued on the day of the incident.