

LTBMU employee left in cold when Deaflympics canceled

By Dan Hinxman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Alpine skier Nicole Brill should be swooshing in silence down a Slovakian slope today.

She knows it's loud when her skis get going fast. Deaf since she was about 1, hearing aids give her the ability to pick up sounds. She combines the aids and her partial ability to read lips to turn sounds into words. She asks only that you enunciate clearly.

But when she skis in the Deaflympics – at speeds of more than 60 mph in the downhill – she and her fellow competitors hear nothing. No wind, no skis grinding on ice. In competition, athletes are not allowed to wear hearing aids.

It's a sensory experience that able-hearing skiers can only imagine.

And in this quadrennial Deaflympics, it's something Brill can only imagine, too. On Feb. 11, three days before she was scheduled to fly to Slovakia, the 17th Deaflympics (formerly the World Games for the Deaf) were canceled.

Brill, a 35-year-old from Reno who works for the U.S. Forest Service in South Lake Tahoe and was the only U.S. woman scheduled to compete (along with three U.S. men), found out in an e-mail she received on her phone while training at Mt. Rose.

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