

2 backcountry skiers survive Mt. Rose avalanche



Crews assess the Jan. 5 avalanche scene at Mt. Rose. Photo/Truckee Meadows Fire

By Scott Sonner AP

Rescue crews in the Sierra Nevada say two backcountry skiers caught in an avalanche escaped injury in the snow slide that closed the state highway between Reno and Lake Tahoe.

Washoe County sheriff's Deputy Jeff McCaskill says the backcountry skiers – a man and a woman – ended up walking off the mountain on their own after rescue crews responded about 12:20pm Thursday along the Mount Rose Highway west of the Mount Rose ski resort.

North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District spokeswoman Tia Rancourt says the skiers already were out of harm's way when paramedics arrived, conducted a medical evaluation and released them. No one else was hurt.

Nevada Department of Transportation spokeswoman Meg Ragonese says the avalanche passed through a few vehicles traveling on the highway west of the summit near an area popular for

sledding and cross-country skiing about 30 miles southwest of Reno.

She says at least two vehicles ended up getting stuck in several feet of snow, but NDOT snowplows were able to free them.

Ragonese says the highway would remain closed for an indefinite period Thursday while crews attempt to trigger some man-made avalanches in an effort to reduce the threat of future snow slides.