



Mike Morrison | Sheriff

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Sgt. Jason Reinfeld

Incident #: 23C01723

Phone: 509-667-6864

Date: 02-22-23

<http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/sheriff>

***** UPDATE FEBRUARY 24, 2023 4:30 PM *****

Sheriff Mike Morrison reports on February 24th, 2023 the body of Seong Cho, a Korean National residing in West Hartford Connecticut was recovered from the base of Colchuck Peak. Cho was one of three climbers killed in an avalanche on the afternoon of Sunday February 19th. Today was the first day weather conditions allowed air resources to fly into the area. Snohomish County Sheriff's Office Helicopter Rescue Team was able to locate Mr. Cho's body under a thin layer of snow at the GPS coordinates provided by a surviving member of the climbing party. The body has been turned over to the Chelan County Coroner's Office.

Snohomish County HRT made additional search attempts for the remaining two climbers but they were not located. Part of the search included the use of a RECCO device mounted on a cable below the helicopter. This device can detect chips sewn into some outdoor gear and help provide a location of someone buried under avalanche debris.

Ground teams will not be deployed to the area until conditions are safe.

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***** UPDATE February 22nd, 2023 1530 *****

Sheriff Mike Morrison reports on February 22nd no rescuers were sent in to the avalanche scene near Colchuck Peak. Two avalanche experts from Northwest Avalanche Center deployed to the Colchuck area to assess the current avalanche hazard. The bodies of the climbers killed in the avalanche remain at the scene.

The Chelan County Sheriff's Office is identifying the avalanche victims as:

- Seong Cho, a 54-year-old male Korean National residing in West Hartford Connecticut
- Jeannie Lee, a 60-year-old female from Bayside New York
- Yun Park, a 66-year-old male from Palisades Park New Jersey

Recovery efforts from this point forward will be based on avalanche and weather conditions as well as overall rescuer safety.

Undersheriff
Dan Ozment



Chief of Operations
Ryan Moody



Chief of Patrol
Seth Buhler



Chief Civil Deputy
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Sheriff Mike Morrison reports on February 20th, 2023 Deputies were contacted at the CCSO Leavenworth substation about an avalanche that occurred near Colchuck Lake the previous day. The reporting party, a 53-year-old Maryland man reported the group he was with had attempted to climb Colchuck Peak on Sunday February 19th. There were six climbers in that group and the reporting party had stayed at their base camp that day.

The lead climber triggered an avalanche while attempting to climb the Northeast Couloir of Colchuck Peak. Four of the climbers were swept down the couloir approximately 500 feet. Three of the climbers died as a result of trauma sustained in the fall. They were a 60-year-old female from New York, a 66-year-old male from New Jersey, and a 53-year-old male from Connecticut. The fourth climber, a 56 year old male form New York sustained non-life-threatening injuries and was able to hike back to base camp with the remaining two. They were a 50-year-old male from New York and a 36-year-old male from New Jersey. When they arrived at camp, they sent the reporting party for help.

When Deputies took the report, A SAR coordinator started gathering resources. A total of 22 rescuers responded to the trailhead to assist with this effort. They were from Chelan County Mounty Rescue, Chelan County Volunteer Search and Rescue and ORV unit, Seattle Mountain Rescue, Tacoma Mountain Rescue, and Yakima Mountain Rescue. A group of four from Chelan County Mountain Rescue responded to the lake driven part of the way by the CCVSAR ORV unit. They reached the base camp at approximately 1:30 pm. They were able to determine avalanche conditions were too hazardous to continue to the deceased climbers. They escorted the surviving climbers back to the trailhead.

Rescuers were not sent back in to the scene today due to hazardous conditions. CCSO continues to work with Northwest Avalanche Center to assist in a recover plan.

Colchuck Peak sits at the South end of Colchuck Lake approximately 8 miles South of Leavenworth, WA.

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