

By The Associated Press

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HELENA, Mont., Feb. 18 (AP) — Avalanches killed six people in Montana, Utah and Idaho over the weekend, the authorities said.

In the Big Belt Mountains in Montana, the bodies of two snowmobilers caught in an avalanche were found by searchers early Sunday and removed by helicopter later in the day.

The avalanche occurred Saturday at the base of Mount Baldy, about 20 miles from Townsend, Mont.

A survivor traveled the 15 or 20 miles back to the trailhead, initially by snowmobile and then on foot after the machine became stuck, said Sheriff Cheryl Leidle of Lewis and Clark County. Upon reaching a pickup truck at the trailhead, he used a cellphone to call for help.

“It would appear the avalanche drove them into a grove of trees downhill from the avalanche itself,” Sheriff Leidle said.

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Families of the snowmobilers issued a statement identifying the deceased as Kris Rains, 26, and Brett Toney, 27, both of Townsend, and the survivor as Jason Crawford, 27, of Helena.

In Utah, two snowmobilers died in separate avalanches on Saturday.

Zachary Holmes, 16, of Farr West, Utah, was buried by an avalanche estimated to be 300 feet wide near Tower Mountain in the Uinta Mountains, about 14 miles southeast of Heber City, the Wasatch County sheriff's office said.

Earlier Saturday, a snowmobiler on Signal Peak in southwestern Utah set off an avalanche that killed him, the Sevier County sheriff's office said. That man, whose name was not released, was climbing

the back side of the peak when the avalanche buried him in an estimated eight feet of snow, the authorities said.

On Sunday, a 17-year-old skier from Massachusetts was killed after being caught in a slide while skiing out of bounds near the Snowbasin ski resort in Utah. The authorities found the boy's body after several hours of searching.

In Idaho, the Bonneville County sheriff's office in Idaho Falls confirmed the death of a Utah man in an avalanche near Palisades Peak. Nicholas Gus Steinmann, 26, of Ogden, Utah, died Saturday after attempts by rescue personnel to resuscitate him failed.