

Abruzzo Avalanche: 22 Still Missing

Kayla Pantano (January 23, 2017)



The search continues at the Hotel Rigopiano with only 11 survivors and 7 victims accounted for of the total 40 who were onsite at the time of the disaster.

Five days after a [massive avalanche](#) [2] demolished the Hotel Rigopiano near the mountain resort town of [Farindola](#) [2], Abruzzo, rescue teams continue their search for the 22 people still missing amidst sub-zero temperatures and ongoing snowfall.

Though the weather is hindering their efforts, rescuers vowed not to stop working until everyone is accounted for. While they located the seventh victim on Monday, they also discovered three wiggling white sheepdog puppies that renewed the rescuers' faith in finding the remaining people alive. Italian emergency crews joyfully pulled out the dogs, proving conditions under the snow could still support life.



The puppies were born last month to the hotel's resident sheepdogs, Nuvola and Lupo, who managed to find their way out after the avalanche on Wednesday.

Workers hope that the people who are still trapped are able to find air pockets under the debris, like the dogs, and that the snow is insulating them from the frigid temperatures.

Family of 4 and a Couple Among the 11 Survivors

Eleven people have survived, including two who were not inside at the time the avalanche hit and nine who were pulled out of the ruins on Friday. The latter survivors had reportedly taken refuge beneath a collapsed portion of ceiling, where they were able to light a fire to keep warm for two days.

Guest Giampaolo Parete was one of the two who escaped when he went to his car to get something. After 40 some hours of torturous waiting, workers rescued the first survivor: his eight-year-old son. The boy's mother, Adriana, was pulled out next, who feared for her six-year-old daughter still trapped inside. The little girl was later saved and the family was reunited at a hospital in the coastal town of [Pescara](#) [3].

Student Giorgia Galassi and her fiance, Vincenzo Forti, who owns a pizzeria in Pisa, also survived. They revealed that they ate ice to stay alive but adrenaline is what kept them going. Galassi praised her boyfriend "who never had any doubt" and hummed to keep everyone calm.

"He supported us, everyone, not just me. He kept the whole group strong," she shared.

Many of the survivors had symptoms of hypothermia and dehydration, but were otherwise in good health. Hospital director Rossano Di Luzio said that only one required surgery.

Were Pleas for Help Dismissed?

Though the guests and workers could not have foreseen the disaster, many gathered on the ground floor of the hotel to await evacuation following the four earthquakes. Bruno Di Tommaso, the hotel's director, sent an email to local and provincial authorities asking for help. He requested a rescue team to intervene for his stranded and "terrified" clients who couldn't leave "due to blocked roads," a result of both the snowfall and the quakes.

The president of Pescara, Antonio Di Marco, confirmed that he saw an email from Di Tommaso and had arranged for a snowplow to clear the road that night. The avalanche hit the hotel around 5:00 p.m., at which point the snowplow had yet to arrive.

Prosecutors are currently investigating the situation and looking into possible disaster and multiple manslaughter charges. In particular, they are examining whether local government officials underestimated the threat facing the hotel, which had no phone service and dwindling gas supplies.

Chief prosecutor Cristina Tedeschini reported that they are looking into the timing and content of communications, where the snowplows were deployed, who was alerted and when about the risks of avalanches, and how authorities responded when the avalanche hit the hotel.

It is still unclear of when communications were received and when they were acted on. However, according to Tedeschini, since five days have passed and the search continues, she believes the delay may not have had a significant effect on the search effort.

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[2] <http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/facts-stories/article/earthquakes-strike-abruzzo-avalanche-buried-hotels>

[3] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pescara>