

# Snowslide Blocks Efforts to Rescue Trapped Trainmen

By BARBARA BROWNE  
Rocky Mountain News Writer

A snowslide loaded with boulders and uprooted trees Monday blocked a rotary snow plow trying to reach an estimated 20 men trapped on snowbound Cumbres Pass.

The men have spent two nights on the 10,922-foot peak. Monday night was the third.

The plow reached within two miles of the Rio Grande Railroad work train, locked in 15-foot drifts, when the slide poured tons of snow, rock, dirt and timber on the track ahead of them.

## WHINE AUDIBLE

The plow was near enough to the stranded trainmen to hear its whine before the 40-foot slide isolated them from immediate freedom.

Amos Cordova, station master at Chama, N.M. said the plow had reached a second train sent out to rescue the first late Saturday. This train also was trapped in the snow.

Cordova thought the plow would return to Chama Monday night and make a fresh start in the morning. Approximately 15 crewmen in the freed train are with the plow, attempting to clear the way.

Winds of 40 to 45 miles an hour whipped the snow which was still falling Monday morning.

Cordova said some of the smaller cars on the train higher up were nearly covered by snow. He added there were places where snow was 20 feet deep.

Five men from the stranded freight braved the blizzard Monday, he said, to walk over the drifts down to the plow.

Railroad officials in Denver said the men made the hazardous trip safely, gathered up a supply of food sent up the mountain with the plow and returned to their comrades at the freight train.

Officials are in communication with the freight train by

radio-telephone, but have no communication with the plow.

The trains carry several days supply of food as a normal precaution, but Cordova said it was possible the men at the top had almost used up their rations.

Meanwhile the Mountain and Cold Weather Training Command at Camp Hale was sending four pieces of equipment to try and bring the men in.

## ARMY AID EXPECTED

Rio Grande spokesmen in Denver said at least two Army Weasel snowtrucks should arrive at Chama Monday night. The trucks would wait there overnight and attempt to take the men out Tuesday.

"If we can get the men out, we'll quit worrying about the trains," a railroad official said. "We'll leave them up there and get them after the storm's over."

The trucks are equipped to travel over heavy snow, he said. All trapped men are receiving time and a half pay for all hours beyond the first eight since they left Chama, railroad officials said.

Freight operations on the narrow gauge line were halted last week when the storms hit. The first work train was dispatched to clear the tracks.

Heavy snow and ice derailed one of its two locomotives. The second train, another twin-engine outfit, was sent to help the first and became snow-stalled a mile from it and the top of the pass.

This second train now waits at a siding four miles from the top. Cumbres Pass is near the New Mexico border in Southern Colorado.