

Troops Reach Trapped Trains



Low clouds, whipped by 40-mile-an-hour winds, Wednesday added to 22 feet of snow on Cumbres Pass, where Army troops were attempting to rescue some 60 Rio Grande crewmen. An arrow points to the 10,922-foot pass, on which many of the men have been

stranded since Saturday. This air shot of the area was taken by David C. Snyder, Rocky Mountain News photographer, who flew over the region Wednesday. Snyder tried to get nearer the trapped trains but the howling blizzard thrust his plane back.

By BARBARA BROWNE
Rocky Mountain News Writer

Army snow weasels Wednesday reached two of three trains snowbound on 10,922-foot Cumbres Pass.

But they will be unable to start hauling train crews back until Thursday.

J. B. Norwood, assistant Denver supervisor for the Rio Grande Railroad, told the home office the trip was too dangerous for even the trained Army snow troops to attempt at night.

Wednesday the two weasels bucked 45-foot snow drifts, narrow ledges and weak snow overhangs which could drop them

hundreds of feet into canons, to reach the trains.

Soldiers went ahead of the web-track trucks shoveling the powder snow, which gave no traction.

GROUND BLIZZARDS

Ground blizzards, in addition to falling snow, gave rescuers the feeling of being in an intense fog. Often they were unable to see as much as a foot ahead of them.

Every moment brought a new difficulty—a sudden ridge, countless ice cornices, and always the possibility of a fresh snowslide.

The weasels were greeted by cheers of joy as they clanked over the last ridge that separated them from the snowbound crewmen.

Then the soldiers joined the trapped trainmen for the night.

A plane from Alamosa late Wednesday dropped food to the men on top of the pass, where food supplies were reported running low.

Denver railroad officials said they understand an Army helicopter will fly up to the top of the pass Thursday to observe rescue operations.

The 40 men were trapped by snow in two separate train attempts to rescue 20 other Rio Grande crewmen a mile higher up the mountain.

The original 20, snowbound since Saturday, spent their fifth night in a mountain section house Wednesday. The weasels will try to reach them Thursday.

A record snowfall and blizzard winds delayed the weasels a day in making their rescue.

Crewmen Wednesday slapped soldiers on their backs and shook hands in delight after the troops arrived at 3 p.m. It took them 10 hours to travel approximately 11 miles.

Crewmen said they had heard the clacking of the slow-moving snowtrucks for almost an hour before they broke into view.

The weasels had crawled Tuesday within 2½ miles of the men before turning back before dark. They reached their Tuesday stopping place at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, after leaving at 5 a.m.

LONG TASK

Meanwhile railroad officials dispatched a fourth work train from Alamosa to attack the pass from the Eastern Slope.

The train with a rotary snow plow and three bulldozers will plunge into the long task of clearing 30-foot drifts from the tracks.

The job is expected to take at least four days.

Another bulldozer left Chama Wednesday to punch into drifts on the western side of the pass. It will be joined, probably Thursday, by two more bulldozers from Salida.

Diminishing wind on the Colorado-New Mexico pass has brought some encouragement to rescue crews. However, snow still is falling. It is expected to become heavier this weekend.

Chama citizens, meanwhile, are getting more excitement than they've had in a long time.

Residents gathered around the weasels the moment they arrived Tuesday from Camp Hale.

NATIONWIDE INTEREST

Photographers and reporters from Santa Fe, N.M., are swarming into town to cover the rescue attempt, which has attracted nationwide interest.

Several trips will be needed to remove all 40, Army spokesmen said. The weasels, each with a 2-man crew, are pulling sleds which will hold about six men.

Tough Laws Urged For Short Checks

The Denver Better Business Bureau Wednesday urged passage of tough laws against short check practices.

It specifically approved a measure in the State House of Representatives calling for felony convictions of persons guilty of passing short checks.

City Watershed Runoff Outlook Encouraging

By J. BOB LUCAS

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