

4 climbers die on Mount Blanc

by UPI

CHAMONIX, France -- Four climbers froze to death when trapped at 13,000 feet on Mount Blanc in the French Alps in a blizzard that left rescuers impotent to save them. The victims, whose bodies were found Tuesday, were Mark Emerson, 30, of York, Britain; his girlfriend, Jane Jerram of New Zealand; and two other female students from France and Chile, The Telegraph reported Thursday. They were engineering students at a Grenoble college, the newspaper said. A French rescue team had received several mobile phone calls from the climbers, who found themselves stranded with no tent and little equipment when the storm hit, bringing winds of 75 miles per hour and temperatures dropping to 5 degrees Fahrenheit, the British newspaper reported. "Their situation was desperate," said one rescue worker. "We practically listened to their final hours as they happened." Stephane Bozon, the captain of the High Mountain Police in Chamonix, France, called the climbing party's decision to proceed despite an ominous forecast "stubbornness and stupidity." "They persisted despite the weather and focused only on climbing Mont Blanc. Their responsibility is total," Bozon said. More than 20,000 mountaineers climb the 15,774-foot peak annually.

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