Beat: Miscellaneous

Last body found from Washington landslide that killed 43

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USPA News - Rescue workers on Tuesday located the body of the last person who had remained missing since March 22 when a devastating landslide wiped out a small community in the U.S. state of Washington, officials said. It puts the total death toll at 43. Shari Ireton, a spokeswoman for the Snohomish County Sheriff`s Office, said search and rescue personnel located the body at approximately 8 a.m. local time on the west side of the disaster site.

"Search and rescue personnel used evidence-based search techniques, often employed by law enforcement in missing persons cases, in their search," she said. Personal items belonging to the family of 44-year-old Arlington resident Molly Kristine "Kris" Regelbrugge had previously been located in the area where her body was found. "Recovery is currently ongoing and could be lengthy, as the area needs to be made safe for personnel, but is expected to happen by the end of today," the spokeswoman said. Regelbrugge had long remained the last person still missing after the landslide wiped out the `Steelhead Haven` neighborhood which was established in the 1960s. "I`m humbled and honored that we are able return Kris to her family," said Snohomish County Sheriff Ty Trenary. "I`m also extremely grateful to the communities of Oso, Darrington and Arlington who stood beside us these past four months in our efforts to recover all of the missing victims." The devastating landslide happened at about 10:37 a.m. local time on March 22 and struck an area of State Route 530 in Oso, between Arlington and Darrington, in Snohomish County. The slide wiped out a small community with dozens of homes, and only a few people survived, including some of whom were gravely injured. With 43 deaths it was the deadliest landslide in modern U.S. history. Tuesday`s discovery came on the same day an independent report by the Geotechnical Extreme Events Reconnaissance Association (GEER) was released. The report detailed a number of possible causes, including three weeks of extreme rainfall in the area and timber harvesting that may have weakened the hill due to groundwater changes. Some parties have criticized officials for allowing homes to be built on the hill, as geologists had already warned about instability decades ago. The slope in question had also experienced a number of landslides as early as the 1930s, including a recent landslide in 2006 which blocked the North Fork Stillaguamish River but came to a rest before reaching the neighborhood.

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