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## Landslide Season Gets Underway Early

Salt Lake City, Utah -- Utah's 2006 landslide season got an early start this week. On Tuesday, a small slide temporarily blocked the road to the Pinecrest subdivision in a side canyon to Emigration Canyon. Typically, the landslide season runs from the beginning of March through the end of May as groundwater levels rise from infiltrating snowmelt water. High groundwater can trigger land slippage or movement. Despite the landslide this week, this year is not expected to be as active as last year.

One of the key indicators for predicting the severity of the landslide season is the weather. "Last year, we knew in January that it was going to be an active year because of the heavy high-elevation snow pack that had been accumulating for several months, and above-normal precipitation at lower elevations," said Francis Ashland, landslide specialist in the Geologic Hazards Program at the Utah Geological Survey. "This year, the snow pack is generally not as heavy, except locally in northern Utah. Recent wet storms combined with groundwater levels that remain high from last year may lead to an active season."

In 2005, the UGS documented more than 100 landslides, however, it is believed to be a small percentage of the actual total number of active slides in the state. Most of the documented landslides were reactivations of existing landslides. "We monitor 50 active landslides from Morgan County to Utah County to track landslide potential each year," said Ashland.

As development, particularly in northern Utah, creeps higher onto the foothills, some communities are taking proactive steps to understand their risk for landslides. For example, Provo, Lindon, Draper, Layton and Salt Lake County have recently taken steps such as enacting ordinances requiring geologic hazards evaluations to be conducted as part of an application for development. In the meantime, the Geologic Hazards Program staff continues to monitor landslides and keep emergency personnel up-to-date on landslide conditions.

Additional information on landslides, including 2005 events, is available at:  
<http://geology.utah.gov/utahgeo/hazards/landslide/index.htm>