Avalanches bury vehicles, skier

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The Daily Yomiuri—Heavy snowfall continued to blanket Sea of Japan coast Sunday, causing traffic accidents, avalanches in Nagano and Gifu Prefectures and inconveniencing people returning home after New Year’s holiday.

In Azumimura in Nagano Prefecture, thirty-three people aboard tourist bus were evacuated to nearby tunnel and were later rescued, police said.

According to police, avalanches occurred at five locations, swallowing four automobiles, taxi, ambulance, and a fire engine. Nine people in automobiles and taxi were rescued and four occupants of ambulance and fire engine managed to free themselves.

 first avalanche hit vehicles stranded in traffic jam on mountain road near south opening of Hirukubo Tunnel along 500-meter stretch of 35.1-kilometer Kamikochi-Norikura mountain road in village. Two automobiles were buried by snow and another five were buried in subsequent avalanches, police said.