

Irish in avalanche-hit province urged to 'make contact with family' as up to 30 people believed dead

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Up to 30 people are believed to have been killed in an avalanche in Italy, according to media reports.

An Italian rescue official said that the avalanche was supposedly triggered after a quake which hit the Abruzzo region in Central Italy on Wednesday.

[@emergenzavvf](#) (19gen-8:30) [#HotelRigopiano](#), Drago54 sta calando ora squadre soccorso [#vigilidelfuoco](#) con verricello su obiettivo



Rescuers battled extreme conditions overnight to reach the hotel which is located close to the Gran Sasso mountain.

Several Italian news websites are quoting the president of the province's statement on social media in which he said the Hotel Rigopiano was buried in snow.

A car drives along the main road to Monterale, after a 5.7-magnitude earthquake struck the region, on January 19, 2017. AFP PHOTO / ANDREAS SOLAROANDREAS SOLARO/AFP/Getty Images

"There seem to be victims, but it all needs to be confirmed. There were 20 guests in the hotel," provincial President Antonio Di Marco said at the time.

More than 12 hours after the wall of snow smashed into the hotel, only two survivors had been accounted for.

Antonio Crocetta, the head of a group of Alpine police that was trying to reach the cut-off hotel, said; "There are many dead."

Emergency workers now fear the hotel will collapse.

"We haven't been able to do too much. The structure has collapsed. It's more like a pile of rubble than a hotel," said Antonio Crocetta, a member of the Alpine Rescue squad who was on the scene.

"What is left of the hotel is in danger of collapse. The hotel is almost completely destroyed. We've called out but we've heard no replies, no voices. We're digging and looking for people," he told Reuters speaking by telephone.

The ski resort is located approximately 180km east of Rome

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade told Independent.ie that they are aware of an avalanche in Abruzzo, Italy but there are no indications of any Irish people being involved.

"There are no indications of any Irish citizens being involved," a spokesperson said.

"Irish citizens in the area should make contact with their family and follow the advice of local authorities.

"Anyone with serious concerns for Irish citizens in the area can call +39 06 585 2381/+353 1 408 2527."

The resort is located approximately 180km east of Rome.

Video footage showed rescuers with shovels digging through a wall of snow, and at least one man being led through the cleared path.

An ambulance was blocked several miles from the hotel, according to Sky News.

Earthquakes hit the region on Wednesday, including one with a 5.7 magnitude, but it was not immediately clear if they triggered the avalanche.

