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South Pole team stuck in Antarctica

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Four Hamilton-area adventurers are stranded in the Antarctic and will not be able to get home in time for Christmas.

The team -- which arrived at the South Pole Dec. 15 after a 200-kilometre ski trip -- are trapped at a camp called Patriot Hills because the weather has prevented their plane from landing.

"This is just intense weather," said team member Fred Losani last night in a phone interview.

"The lesson is, this is a forbidding continent."

He said there are about 60 other people trapped at Patriot Hills, an outpost for polar flights, because of the weather.

Team member Peter Turkstra says the foursome are in the midst of a storm that's packing winds of 130 km/h.

The team, which skied to the South Pole to raise funds for schools and local charities, had planned to fly out of Patriot Hills Dec. 18, and fly home from Chile on Dec. 20. The new timeframe has them leaving either Boxing Day or Saturday.

"Even that is not guaranteed," Turkstra said. "It tends to go day by day."

"We're definitely not going to be home for Christmas."

The team also includes Steve Stipsits and American guide Doug Stoup. A fifth member, Mark MacLennan, had to be airlifted out two weeks ago after getting frostbite on his hands. He is now recovering at home and waiting for his friends to arrive.

This is the second time the group has taken on an adventure to raise money for charity.

In 2006, they travelled to the North Pole and raised more than \$500,000 for local kids.

The foursome are trying to find different ways to keep busy during this sojourn. Stipsits played chess with a Russian man yesterday.

The team had talked about touring a nearby mountain range, but the weather has kept them indoors.

"We're playing cards because the weather is so severe," Stipsits said. "We're tent-bound."

Losani is planning to have rehydrated turkey risotto for his Christmas meal.

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