

Australian scientist dies during Pole winter



Rodney Marks, an Australian researching astrophysics at the South Pole, died Friday, May 12.

He was 32.

Marks was spending the austral winter at the Amundsen-

Scott South Pole Station.

He worked for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, on the Antarctic Submillimeter Telescope and Remote Observatory (ASTRO) – a project of the University of Chicago's Center for Astrophysical Research in

Antarctica (CARA). The telescope detected radiation emanating from star-forming regions in space.

Like everyone who works at Pole, Marks passed a battery of medical and psychological tests before being allowed to winter.

After his death, Marks' coworkers constructed a wooden casket decorated with a brass inlay of the constellation Scorpio. They placed his body in a temporary grave near the geographic South Pole, where he could rest under the stars he came south to observe.

He previously spent the winter at

Pole during the 1997-98 research season as part of CARA's South Pole Infrared Explorer (SPIREX) project.

Marks had also been an alternative-rock musician in Australia, and played with bands that formed at Pole during the summer and winter seasons.

The exact cause of Marks' death cannot be determined until his body is removed from Amundsen-Scott Station and flown off the continent for autopsy.

Marks' death was the second in the U.S. Antarctic Program this year. John G. Biesiada, 43, a Canadian citizen,, died at McMurdo Station on Jan. 8. ■