

the accident, it was 8 degrees C. The slope that avalanched was a low-elevation, southerly-aspect basin directly above the route, and wet avalanches were observed by the climbers before they started at noon. They did not have probes or shovels with them, and although they carried avalanche beacons, those were not activated. (Source: Terry Willis, Yoho National Park Warden Service)

CRAMPON SNAGGED, FALL ON SNOW, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT (ICE AXES ON PACKS)

British Columbia, Rocky Mountains, Mount Dennis, Guinness Gully

A party of two climbed Guinness Gully, a multi-pitch grade 4 ice route, on March 3, 1992. They then rappelled part of the way down the climb before traversing through some timber to a steep descent gully to the west. The descent gully is a small avalanche path, and an avalanche had run in it earlier in the year, leaving a smooth, hard track and debris at the bottom.

As the climbers approached the bottom of this gully at 1600, one of them snagged a crampon and fell forward. He rapidly picked up speed, passing his partner and sliding some 150 meters down the 25 degree slope before piling up in rocks, trees, and hard snow at the bottom. He sustained broken ribs, compound fractures to both ankles, and multiple lacerations to his arms. His partner ran the short distance to the road and drove to the park administration office to report the accident. A warden rescue team hiked in with medical and evacuation equipment. The victim was checked over and immobilized, and because of the steepness and roughness of the terrain, slung out by helicopter to an ambulance.

Analysis

The victim was the less experienced climber, but still quite experienced. It was reported that he was wearing a different pair of crampons than he normally used. As he was above and behind his partner when he fell, it is unlikely that the partner would have been able to stop him if they had been roped together. They did not have their ice axes available for a self-arrest, and that is possibly the most important single precaution which could have forestalled this accident. (Source: Terry Willis, Yoho National Park Warden Service)

ROPE PARTED (WORN THROUGH ON ROCK EDGE WHILE JUMARRING), FALL ON ROCK

British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Stawamus Chief

On April 8, 1992, Grace W. left her climbing partner near the south summit of Stawamus Chief in order to examine a wall for new route prospects. She was jumarring up the wall at 1415 when her nine mm rope apparently chafed through on a rock ledge. She fell 300 meters and was killed. Police, ambulance, fire department, and Provincial Emergency Program personnel located her body on a ledge and removed it by helicopter.

Analysis

The repeated motions involved in jumarring seem likely to aggravate any tendency for a sharp edge to damage a rope. To minimize the risk, climbers should use the thickest rope that will pass through the jumars, watch for sharp edges and pad them whenever possible. (Source: Ian Kay, Vancouver)