

STRANDED, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT**Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Longs Peak**

On July 25, at 0100, David Gallegos and his brother George (26) left from Covenant Height's Camp to climb Kiener's Route (III, AI 1, 5.4) on the East Face of Longs Peak. George had climbed the route previously and was to show David the way. They did not have any ropes, ice axes, gloves, or rain gear. Both men were clothed in all cotton, and had strap-on crampons which they wore over cloth boots. After ascending Lamb's Slide and crossing Broadway Ledge, George Gallegos became confused and mistook the North Couloir for Kiener's Route. When part way up the North Couloir (AI 3, 5.5), George was unable to continue because of unsteady footing in the snow. The two called for help for about 45 minutes, after which David continued to the top and down the Keyhole Route, where he borrowed a cell phone to call 911. Three climbers and later two RMNP rescue climbers assisted George Gallegos back to the base of the East Face of Longs Peak.

Analysis

The Gallegos brothers had insufficient experience and inadequate equipment for an East Face climb on Longs Peak. Unroped falls from both Kiener's Route and the Notch Couloir have occurred in the past and resulted in fatalities. Unroped falls and ascents without adequate snow/ice equipment have also resulted in injuries and fatalities on Lambs' Slide. George Gallegos had been rescued previously in a similar incident on Mount Evans. (Source: Jim Detterline, Longs Peak Supervisory Climbing Ranger)

FALL ON SNOW, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPE, EXCEEDING ABILITIES**Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Mount Meeker**

On August 14, Scot Eden (25) was injured while attempting to descend from a partial ascent of Left Gully (a.k.a. Dream Weaver—II, AI 2), on Mount Meeker. Eden had turned around on the route when bad weather began building. While downclimbing the steep snowfield at the base of the route, he slipped and was unable to self-arrest with his ice ax. He slid 200 feet down the snow, went over a 15-20 foot rock band, and then tumbled another 100 feet. Eden sustained a fractured right tibia and soft tissue injuries to the left orbital area of his face. Eden then crawled a quarter mile over the next six hours until two climbers heard his calls for help. The climbers stabilized Eden with a sleeping bag and hiked out to notify Rocky Mountain National Park Rescue Team for the evacuation.

Analysis

Although the Left Gully is an easy to moderate snow climb, it becomes icy in mid-summer and demands respect. Scot Eden was only moderately experienced at most in snow and ice climbing techniques, and he obviously learned about the risks of solo climbing on this accident. Downclimbing snow and ice is always more difficult than ascending. Three points of contact with the snow/ice need to be maintained at all times when downclimbing, and often you have to consciously remind yourself to go more slowly and deliberately. Mistakes on icy slopes must be corrected immediately or corrections may become impossible. Falls with crampons often result in ankle injuries, as it is difficult to keep crampons from snagging on something while falling.

There are alternatives to downclimbing in case of retreat on Left Gully. From the

notch behind the Flying Buttress where Left and Right Gullies come together, one may rappel one long or two short rope lengths to a ledge system, which is then followed out toward the left. One could also rappel icy sections of the Left Gully on rock or by cutting bollards for anchors on the ice. The final snowfield where this accident occurred may also be skirted to the south on scree. (Source: Jim Detterline, Longs Peak Supervisory Climbing Ranger)

FALL ON SNOW, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, NO BELAY, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Colorado, South Maroon Peak

On August 16, Aspen climber Hillary Trish (21) fell while descending from a successful climb of 14,156-foot South Maroon Peak. Trish fell in clear, warm weather at mid afternoon while attempting to descend the top of the southeast couloir. She was climbing in light hikers without crampons, facing outward and using an ice ax. She was wearing a helmet. The couloir is full of snow year-round and, at the top, rises to a 50 degree angle. Trish fell forward and tumbled approximately 400 vertical feet on snow and rock before coming to rest on a small mud ledge in the south side of the east-facing couloir, around 12,850 feet.

Her fall was witnessed by another climber on nearby Pyramid Peak, who was able to make a scratchy and barely comprehensible cell phone call to the Pitkin County Sheriff. A two-man hasty team was dispatched from Aspen at 1545 to try to assess whether an accident had indeed occurred.

Trish was attended to by one of her climbing partners, an EMT, while her second partner descended another 2,500 feet to a valley floor trail for help. Both the second partner and the initial RP (who made the cell phone call) met the hasty team on the valley trail at 1650. The hasty team continued to climb and reached the victim and her partner at 2100.

On initial assessment, both subjects were suffering from early stages of hypothermia, despite clear, calm weather. They were situated on an east-facing, sloping, mud-covered ledge about 12 by 3 feet, with loose rock on one side and a ten-foot drop into the bergschrund along the side of the couloir's snow on the other. The snow wall rose up about five feet above them.

Trish was A&O x O and combative, with respirations of 28, an uneven carotid pulse of 48 and no evident radial pulse, probably due to cold. She was not responsive, but would talk gibberish every few minutes. Eyes did not track, but pupils were responsive to light. Her partner reported she had been in and out of consciousness. She had a bruise between her eyes and dried blood from her nose. When first encountered she was sitting in her partner's lap. He was holding her to keep her from falling into the bergschrund, which she would have done because of the way she struggled.

The team managed, with some difficulty, to get her into a sleeping bag and onto a Thermarest, then to heat water and place hot water bottles and heat packs around her in the bag. This caused her to calm down and sleep for much of the night. Medical control advised allowing her to sleep, since there was no ability to alter her care if her situation deteriorated.

An attempt the following morning to lower gear from an Army National Guard helicopter was aborted because of rockfall hazard. During two attempts to lower a haul bag from a side winch on a Blackhawk, the bag began to swing, knocking large rocks off the