

In the meantime, J.R. was reported overdue by his roommate at 1000 on February 22. Details were sketchy about his destination; all that R.P. knew was that his roommate had gone to the Icefields, and possibly to Mt. Snowdome. Upon further investigation, it was determined that J.R. was likely attempting Slipstream. J.R. left a note with R.P., saying that if he was not back on Monday that something had gone wrong. J.R. was a very skilled ice climber with minimal winter mountaineering experience.

Wardens initiated an investigation, which included a ground search party skiing towards the base of Slipstream, and a helicopter response. The search party found no evidence of human activity, however visibility was poor due to high winds, blowing snow and obscured skies. The helicopter was on standby waiting for suitable flying conditions. By 1700, the helicopter was still grounded. At 0200 on February 23, R.P. called wardens to inform them J.R. had returned home, and was in the hospital with frostbite.

Analysis

Soloing has become increasingly popular, but there are several hazards that go along with it, aside from the obvious lack of belay capabilities. Most notably, the summit of Snowdome, as well as the lower glaciers, is riddled with crevasses, making unroped travel hazardous. The probability of staying healthy on the Columbia Icefields in bad weather with no bivouac gear is considerably reduced when alone. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, victim)

FALLING ICE, FALL ON ICE

Alberta, Banff National Park, Mount Wilson, Oh Le Tabernac

On March 17 the lead climber of a party of two was ten meters up the first pitch of Oh Le Tabernac, a water ice Grade 5+ route. He was just above his second screw when he heard a cracking noise. He told his belayer about it just as the ice he was standing on broke free. A ten by three-meter piece broke off and he crashed to the ground sustaining multiple fractures and serious head trauma. His partner stabilized him and ran to the road to get help. He was evacuated by heli-sling by a warden service rescue crew, flown to the Banff hospital, and then flown to Calgary. He died a few days later from his injuries.

Analysis

This route usually has a horizontal crack across it due to the detached nature of the pillar. Although many climbers comment on this feature, this is the first serious accident resulting from it. It is unclear how much ice fell on the victim, but given his injuries, it is likely that he was hit by the large piece which broke free. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

CORNICE FAILURE

Alberta, Jasper National Park, Columbia Icefield, Mount Andromeda

At approximately 0230 on May 30, two climbers (22 and 23) departed the climbers' parking lot to ascend the Skyladder route on Mount Andromeda. Later that morning, they overtook another climbing party of three from Seattle near