

**WEATHER, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, INEXPERIENCE****Alberta, Jasper National Park, Mounts Charlton and Unwin**

On July 15, two inexperienced climbers (both 25) climbed Mount Charlton in the company of two American climbers whom they met on the mountain. In late afternoon, in deteriorating weather, the inexperienced pair continued from the Charlton-Unwin Col up the East Ridge of Mount Unwin towards its summit while the American climbers returned to their bivouac site. The inexperienced pair were soon engulfed in a whiteout and became disoriented and lost. They wandered around the upper mountain over numerous crevasses and to the edge of the large icefall on the North Face. Finally, they bivouacked in a shallow snow cave on Unwin's East Ridge. The whiteout continued the next day, and the subjects became even more disoriented. They had minimal clothing, minimal food, and no water. They built a second snow cave below the summit of Mount Unwin on the North Ridge/Face, and as they prepared for another night out, they were spotted and evacuated by helicopter.

The two Americans reported the climbers overdue when they did not return to the lower bivouac site. The weather had been very poor for three days previous, with over 40 centimeters of new snow deposited in 48 hours accompanied by high winds. A helicopter search of the mountain revealed several large new avalanches, and tracks on the lower glacier. The upper mountain was obscured in cloud, so a ground party was placed on the glacier to search on foot. The ground party followed tracks to the col, and ascended Unwin to just below its summit while the helicopter continued to search by air. The subjects were spotted by air on the opposite side of the mountain, but due to fluctuating low cloud levels, it was not possible to sling to them. After several unsuccessful attempts to reach the subjects, a warden was slung in to a point below their location. The warden climbed up to the subjects, who were guided down to a lower elevation where sling evacuation was possible.

**Analysis**

Poor weather, heavy snowfalls, and whiteout conditions are the primary contributing causes of this mishap. The subjects lacked the judgment to turn back when the weather deteriorated, and did not plan for white-out navigation. The col and lower East Ridge of Mount Unwin are very broad, and in poor visibility it is extremely difficult to route find without a map and compass or wands. The Charlton-Unwin massif is large and serious, and is prone to poor weather. It has serious objective hazards on all routes, including icefalls, crevasses, bergschrunds, cornices, and avalanche slopes above and below all routes. It is very easy to get lost on the upper mountain, due to the featureless nature of the terrain. Climbers attempting this massif should get thorough information on routes and hazards, and have adequate navigation and bivouac equipment. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

**FALL ON ICE, CLIMBING UNROPED, and STRANDED, INEXPERIENCE****Alberta, Jasper National Park, Columbia Icefield, Mount Athabasca**

On July 19, a party of two (both 38) were ascending the Northeast Ridge of