

Due to recent avalanche activity elsewhere on the mountain, an avalanche pit was dug above Glacier Vista and avalanche conditions were assessed to be relatively stable for slopes of similar aspect and elevation. The team then proceeded downhill below the moraine alongside the Nisqually Glacier. While gearing up for glacier travel, the visibility began to improve and a party of four followed by a party of two was witnessed crossing the Nisqually Glacier below the "Fan." When the party of four reached the Rangers, it was confirmed that the following party was the German party. When the German party reached the Rangers, they appeared to be traveling at a reasonable pace and were in good spirits. Rangers took the contents out of German's pack to carry down to Paradise. The German party was assisted back to the Paradise Old Station where a detailed report of the incident was obtained. Medical evaluations were refused; however, the patients both signed EMS release forms. The German party indicated that they would seek further medical evaluation at Harborview Hospital in Seattle and report back the results of their evaluations to the Old Station by phone. (Source: Report prepared by Glenn Kessler and Jennifer Erxleben, NPS Rangers, Mount Rainier National Park)

Analysis

David German wrote a report describing the details found above. He indicated that on the ascent, when they had reached the Wilson Headwall and Fuhrer Finger, Judy "suggested that we turn back." By the time they reached the crater rim, it was a complete whiteout. "Judy again suggested turning back, but the summit was so close!" His concluding statement was this: "We had survived. Poor judgment cost us dearly, but competent mountaineering skills (and some luck) brought us back alive (barely). Skills and technical competence are requirements for mountaineering, but nothing will ever substitute for good judgment." (Source: Jed Williamson)

FALL INTO CREVASSE, CLIMBING UNROPED, OFF ROUTE

Washington, Mount Rainier, Interglacier

On July 22, Thomas Porro (41) fell into a crevasse on the Interglacier. He was traveling with a partner, Mike Spillane, but they were not roped. Porro said he saw a snow bridge and crevasse on each side, but decided not to follow the trail around the crevasse. The bridge collapsed while he was crossing. He fell at least 50 feet to a ledge. He believes his pack saved his life by breaking the fall. His partner lowered a rope and Porro was able to tie in before hypothermia and shock reduced his mobility.

Rangers effected a rescue. They found that Mr. Porro had a fractured right foot, sprained left knee, and a contusion and laceration of the right eye orbit. He was extricated from the crevasse, then helicoptered from the mountain. (Source: David Orsatti, NPS Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

FALLING ROCK

Washington, Mt. Rainier, Kautz Cleaver.

On the evening of July 24, Rainier National Park rescuers, aided by an Army Reserve Chinook helicopter, rescued Tony Leak (47) from the 12,200-foot

level of Kautz Cleaver on Mount Rainier. Leak and his two sons Joshua (17) and Caleb (15) were climbing on Kautz Cleaver and had stopped to camp. Leak had removed his climbing helmet to set up camp when spontaneous rock-fall struck the trio. Mr. Leak sustained head injuries. One of Leak's sons called 911 on a cellular phone and was connected to Climbing Rangers at Camp Muir.

A Ranger team on the summit was dispatched to the site and reached the Leak's after considerable effort. A Ranger/EMT, assisted by doctors through a radio and phone link to a local hospital, assessed Leak's condition and determined that it was more serious than anyone originally thought. Equipment and additional rescuers were lowered to the scene by the Chinook. Leak was hoisted to the helicopter after being lowered by sled to the landing zone and flown to Madigan Army Medical Center for treatment. (Source: Steve Winslow, NPS Ranger, Mount Ranier National Park)

Analysis

"People think this was a climbing accident, but actually the mountain just cut loose and dumped on me as I was getting ready for bed," Leak said from his room at Madigan Army Medical Center. He was in stable condition recovering from a broken neck, back and head injuries.

Caleb, who has been climbing with his father for about four years, said the harrowing trip brought the family together. "It was kind of rough at times. But it was well worth it," he told *The Seattle Times*. Leak said he owes his condition today to the boys' first-aid assistance.

(Editor's Note: There was a considerable amount of cell phone conversation involved in this incident. The rangers called Mr. Leak's wife. She had received calls from her husband and sons. She informed the Rangers that she did not think the boys could be of help, given their level of experience. Initially, Mr. Leak told the Rangers he thought he could descend without assistance, but this did not prove to be the case.)

HAPE

Washington, Mount Rainier, Fuhrer's Finger

Tim Hartman contacted Mount Rainier National Park at 7:08 a.m. on August 12 to report that his partner Neil Shriner (41) was very ill. Shriner's symptoms included difficulty breathing, gurgling lung sounds, and dizziness when standing. Hartman and Shriner had climbed to 12,000 feet on the Fuhrer Finger route the previous day, setting up their camp when Shriner started to feel sick. His condition deteriorated during the night. Hartman believed that his partner was suffering from High Altitude Pulmonary Edema and that they would need a rescue, as Shriner was unable to move safely.

A helicopter rescue was effected by park rangers by 3:30 p.m. At Madigan Hospital, he was diagnosed with HAPE. (Source: Mike Gauthier, SAR Ranger, Mount Ranier National Park)

Analysis

This report is included to remind us that High Altitude Pulmonary Edema can come on quickly, even at moderate altitude. (Source: Jed Williamson)