

descended to the valley and drove away to get help. A party on the opposite side of valley who had heard calls could find no one at the road, so they drove down the gravel road looking for the vehicle they had seen earlier. They caught up to other climber who was having car trouble. At this point, they would have been within cell range or only a few minutes away from it. They discussed the situation and decided to go back to the site and try and move the victim down to the road. Once back at the scene, there was more discussion on moving the victim or going for help. One of them again left the scene, got in a vehicle, and, around the same location where the two vehicles had met earlier, was able to make a cell phone call. This call came in about three hours after the accident at 1700. Warden Service rescue crews responded. The patient was removed by heli-sling and flown to Banff Hospital.

Analysis

Fractured femurs are serious and considered potentially life threatening. It appears that the discussion on whether to try and move the patient rather than go for help revolved around the concern of rescue costs. They did not incur any rescue costs. It would have been very difficult to lower this patient a few hundred feet over scree and rough ground to the valley below without a stretcher. If the patient had survived this, the multi-hour trip over rough roads to the nearest hospital would likely have seriously exacerbated the situation. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, Marc Ledwidge)

FALL ON ICE, PROTECTION PULLED OUT—ICE TOOL

Alberta, Jasper National Park, Shades of Beauty

On November 25, three experienced ice climbers were climbing Shades of Beauty (III WI4), a three-pitch waterfall ice route in the Sunwapta River Valley of Jasper National Park. L.P. (33) had led the first pitch, and at the base of the second pitch, R.W. (35) decided to take over the lead. This second pitch has an initial 15-meter section of steep ice. R.W. led up this for about two meters and was preparing to place his first ice screw. He hooked his tool behind a chandelier feature in the ice and upon weighting it to replace his other tool, it pulled. He fell about two meters to a sloping ice ramp at the base, where his crampons dug in while his body carried forward and sideways, resulting in serious fractures to both ankles. R.W. ended up sliding past the belay to the lip of ice at the top of the first pitch, where he was stopped by L.P.'s belay. L.P. quickly constructed an improvised rope rescue system to haul R.W. back up to the belay stance. Parks Canada wardens were quickly notified by radio, and an immediate rescue response was initiated.

A Park Warden was slung in by helicopter with first aid and heli-evacuation gear. R.W.'s ankles were splinted and he was slung out to the roadside staging area, where Jasper paramedics were waiting. After initial treatment there, he was flown to Banff hospital and eventually transferred to Calgary hospital, where he underwent surgery the next day. It is estimated he will take several months to recover.

Analysis

R.W. was very familiar with this climb, as this was his third time there this season. He is also a very competent and experienced ice climber. Haste may have played a role in this accident. It is possible the hook placement of the ice tool was not weighted and tested before he pulled out his other tool. The constantly changing nature of the ice may have also been a factor. R.W. may have been successful with hook placements the week before, but on this day (a cold one) the hardness of the ice may have made a similar placement less secure.

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

British Columbia, Golden Canyon, Lady Killer

On March 11, while leading the first pitch of Lady Killer (II W13), A.M. fell after placing three screws on the first half and then running it out to the top. He fell to the ground and sustained pelvic and spinal injuries. Volunteer SAR groups from Golden responded by ground and treated the patient. Since the injuries were severe and lowering the patient problematic, assistance was requested from the Warden Service of the National Parks nearby. The patient was evacuated to an ambulance below by Heli-sling by Warden Service rescue crews.

Analysis

Even on easier angled ice, topping out on a pitch can have disastrous results if no protection is available. In this case, the climber pulled out both his tools and was severely injured. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, Marc Ledwidge)

SLIP ON SNOW, CLIMBING UNROPED, UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

British Columbia, Selkirk Mountains South, Mount Billy Budd

On August 18, J.C. and G.H. departed from a climbing camp located on north side of Houston Lake on a “day off” hike to Houston Pass at about 1200. J.C. was a very experienced mountaineer with between 20 to 25 years experience. The two climbers were outfitted with mountaineering boots and ski poles, but had no rope, helmet, crampons, ice ax, or climbing gear. Upon reaching the Pass, J.C. and G.H. followed the south-east ridge from Houston Pass that went over the Vere Summit to the summit of Billy Budd. The climbing was uneventful and was enjoyed immensely by J.C. and G.H. as it was a beautiful day. After resting at the summit of Billy Budd, J.C. and G.H. started their descent to the Houston Lake camp with J.C. in front, basically following the route of the previous day’s Mount Billy Budd climbing teams. They initially followed tracks across a glaciated section (crevasses easily identified and navigated around) and then scrambled down on rock outcrops. About 1815, mid-way down the descent, at a point about 250 to 350 vertical meters above camp, J.C. and G.H. stepped off a rock outcrop to again follow tracks, this time on a traverse of a northwest-facing