

There were five bouldering incidents—which is an increase from previous years. These falls were from ten to twenty feet off the deck with inadequate spotting or padding as a contributing cause.

One injury of note resulted when a lead climber pulled a two-cinder block sized rock loose and almost completely severed his right index finger. He was able to rappel and self-evacuate. The finger was successfully reattached.

One of the two rappel incidents happened in November when a climber was down-climbing to a rappel point. As his protection popped out due to “mushy ice” lining the crack, he fell fifteen feet, resulting in a fractured tibia and fibula.

The average age of the climbers injured was 30, and 20 out of the 28 were males. The climbing routes were mostly of moderate difficulty. (Source: Mohonk Preserve)

FALL INTO CREVASSE, UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, POOR POSITION

Oregon, Mount Hood, Standard Route

On May 30 at 8:30 a.m., there were climbers both ascending and descending the mountain along the standard route. A team of four climbers (Team A) was on its way down. Leading the way was HS (43), followed by CK (43), RR (49), and BW (50). All climbers were separated by about 35 feet of rope. All four members of Team A had reached the summit, and after a rest break were in the process of descending. Of the four, the most experienced climbers were HS and CK. BW was an active climber with less experience, and RR was on his first climb.

Below Team A, also descending, was a two-man climbing team (Team B), consisting of TH (46) and JB (63). Team C, consisting of two rope-teams, was working its way up the mountain. The first rope-team contained JP (39), CoJ (15), and JM (26), all of whom were about 20-40 feet above the Bergschrund crevasse. The second rope-team contained DB (28), SM (33), CIJ (48), and CH (33). This rope-team was about five feet below the crevasse ascending the mountain behind the first rope-team of Team C.

For an unknown reason, the top two members of Team A lost their footing and were unable to arrest their fall. These two individuals subsequently pulled the other two members of their four-person team into an uncontrolled slide. Party A fell out of control until their team’s rope became entangled with the rope of Party B, who were then pulled into the slide. All six members of parties A and B eventually hit the first rope-team of party C.

All of these subjects involved in the fall went into the crevasse below them. Mr. William Ward, Mr. Richard Read, and Mr. John Biggs were killed. Mr. Harry Slutter, Mr. Chris Kern, Mr. Tom Hillman, and Mr. Jeremiah Moffitt were critically injured, while Mr. Jeff Pierce and Mr. Cole Joiner received minor injuries.

A mountain rescue operation was initiated and the injured survivors were extricated from the crevasse and transported to area hospitals.

Analysis

At the time of this incident it was full daylight conditions, the sky reported to be clear, an occasional light wind, the temperature at about freezing. At the Timberline Lodge at 8:00 a.m., the temperature was 52 degrees F and the average wind speed nine mph. Since the snow surface conditions at 10,900 feet were reported as frozen, crampons were required and provided good purchase by step-climbing in the snow.

The bergschrund was visible, there was a snow bridge across it, some climbers were choosing to cross over the snow bridge, some to detour around it. Above the bergschrund is the steepest part of this climb, continuing upward through a steep gully, several outcroppings of rock named "The Pearly Gates," and then a short ascent to the summit of the mountain, the high point 11, 239 feet.

Mr. Butler later said that he was pausing to give Pierce's team a few minutes to get back on the ridge before Butler's group began the detour around the crevasse. At this time the two highest climbers of the involved parties, Bill Ward and Rick Read, lost their footing and fell. This happened very fast, Chris Kern said that he saw a blur in his field of vision; it happened so fast that he did not remember any verbal warning from the falling climbers.

Mr. Kern went into the arrest position as soon as he saw the blur, but the weight of the other two climbers pulled him right off the mountain.

All four were properly equipped for the climb and in good physical condition. Mr. Slutter, in the lead climbing down, had considerable experience in alpine mountain climbing, as did Mr. Kern behind him. Mr. Ward in the trail position also had experience in alpine mountain climbing. Mr. Read, who was in good health, was on his first alpine climb, and the team of four had spent considerable time practicing climbing techniques prior to starting. He had no problems on the climb up the mountain to the summit.

Several lessons can be learned from this incident.

1. Climbing on steep snow or ice, roped without the use of anchors, can, under certain circumstances, be a dangerous practice. It may be unrealistic to presume that a climber who has fallen and is unable to self-arrest will be able to be stopped by another climber or climbers set in self-arrest position. The forces involved can simply be too great for other members of the rope-team to arrest the fall. In these cases, the rope becomes a liability to the group, ensuring that a fall will involve numerous climbers, rather than only the climber who initially slipped. Generally speaking, if a snow or ice slope is steep enough to require a rope, then it is probably steep enough to require using anchors.

2. Positioning is an important aspect of climbing. Climbers must be aware of hazards above (be they falling rock, ice, cornices, avalanches, or other climbers). It is interesting to note that in this incident, the climbers with the worst injuries were the ones who fell the longest overall distance. The climbers who were simply knocked into the crevasse generally did not sustain life-threatening injuries. However, in the weeks following the acci-

dent, many climbers were seen taking a climbing line that took them directly underneath the rotten gendarmes that rain ice and rock down the route, instead of circumventing the crevasse and returning to the apex of the Hogs Back where rock and icefall is lower. Climbers should evaluate hazards holistically; in this case it is probably safer to stay on the ridge rather than climbing under rotten rock for an extended period of time.

3. Climbers should consider climbing unroped on moderate terrain where the risk of a fall is low and the risk from objective hazards, such as falling rock, ice, or other climbers, is high. The use of ropes and anchors will slow a climbing party down and may restrict individuals options for evasive action should an emergency occur.

4. Be aware of the risks of helicopters in mountainous environments. Helicopters should only be used when there is no other practical resort, where lives are at stake, and time is of the essence. Climbers may joke about calling in air support for blisters or a pizza drop, but the fact of the matter is that helicopters can set up extremely dangerous conditions and lives can become at risk when they are used in the mountains. Helicopters cannot be depended on to perform in all conditions. Rescuers and rescuees must always make contingency plans, even if a helicopter is initially available to assist in the rescue.

5. Pay attention and follow the instructions of mountain rescuers; they are trained in the risks and techniques of conducting mountain rescues. In this case, several bystanders and some members of the involved climbing teams assisted with the rescue efforts. This assistance was extremely helpful and appreciated and may have saved lives. However, when rescuers directed everyone not directly involved with the hoist operation to clear the area underneath the helicopter, some bystanders declined to descend. As a result, far too many lives were put at risk when the helicopter crashed. (Sources: Steve Rollins—Portland Mountain Rescue, and Tim Baily—Criminalist Investigator)

(Editor's Note: The story of the helicopter crash was thoroughly covered by television and several newspapers. Details are not provided here for that reason and because it was not a mountain climbing accident.)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, BELAYER NOT ANCHORED Oregon, Smith Rock, Spiderman

Nathan Sanborn (27) was climbing the first pitch of Spiderman, a four star classic climb rated 5.7 by Alan Watts (trad gear to three inches) when he slipped off about three feet above his last protection and fell an estimated 12 to 15 feet due to rope stretch and an inadvertent dynamic belay. The toe of one foot struck a bulge on the low-angled rock, hyper-extending his foot and breaking a bone in his ankle. Additional tissue damage was done as well, and the injury was very painful.

Nathan was lowered off about 50 feet and the party called 911 for assistance. Redmond Fire and Rescue arrived in about one hour and Deschutes