

For the second time in less than a week, the Teton crew prepared for a 2,500-foot technical lowering of Cho down to the 14,200-foot camp. Rickert attended the patient during the lowering. Two-and-one-half hours after we started, Cho was in the medical tent at 14,200 feet.

This rescue was successful because the many people who were involved, but without the valiant and on-site efforts by the Teton crew, it would have had a different outcome for the Korean climber Cho.

OVERDUE—INADEQUATE COMMUNICATIONS

Alaska, Denali National Park, Mount McKinley, Cassin Ridge

On June 3, Ranger Joe Reichert requested a search for overdue climbers Sue Nott and Karen McNeill of the “Best Chilled” expedition climbing the Cassin Ridge. According to Reichert, the party reported they had five days of food and seven days of fuel when they departed the 14,200-foot camp on May 25. By June 3 they had been out for nine days. At 1131, a tent was spotted on the summit by the NPS Lama helicopter. A subsequent flight confirmed that the two climbers who were camped on the summit were wearing clothing similar to that of Nott and McNeill. The party was confirmed to be Nott and McNeill at 1657 when they arrived at the 17,200-foot camp.

Analysis

This is an example of what is often referred to as “preventive” search and rescue. By using the helicopter for aerial searches, climbing rangers did not need to gather resources for a ground search and expose themselves to harsh weather conditions and technical climbing dangers while not certain about whether or not a serious condition did exist for those that were, in theory, overdue. Rangers were able to locate the climbing party quickly and without putting large numbers of resources into the field. The climbers were aware that they were overdue according to the information that they left with the NPS Rangers, yet made no motion for assistance when they encountered the NPS helicopter.

This search may have been prevented if the team had taken their radio. They could have called either the 14,200-foot camp or the basecamp manager at the 7,200-foot camp and asked them to inform NPS personnel that they were doing well and not in need of any assistance. McNeill later stated that, “... when it came down to packing (for the climb), the antenna was misplaced.” The decision to take a radio is a personal one and one that must be weighed by each individual party. As it turned out for McNeill and Nott, this option was eliminated by the misplaced antenna.

The NPS will now take route specific information regarding equipment, number of days of food and fuel, communication equipment and overdue dates at remote duty stations. Climbers who leave this information will be told of the NPS intention to start a search approximately 48 hours after

their overdue date, unless there are conditions that may indicate a search is warranted before such time.

Up until now, a team was not officially considered overdue until after the return date given to the Rangers at the Talkeetna Ranger Station. This has proven to be a problem for those parties climbing multiple routes over the course of many weeks. NPS Rangers have taken informal itineraries over the years, but this incident highlighted the need for formal recording of itineraries and due dates for short climbs that are to be completed before the official return date left in Talkeetna. Climbers must also be advised that they will be considered overdue approximately 48 hours after the return date given to the Ranger at the remote location and that they need to remember to notify the Ranger upon their return to camp.

AMS

Alaska, Denali National Park, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

On the evening of June 6, the Russian Denali Expedition requested the assistance of the NPS volunteer doctor at the 17,200-foot camp on the West Buttress of Mount McKinley because one member of the team was ill. Upon investigation, Dr. McLean discovered Ludmila Korobeshko (29) sick with acute mountain sickness and possibly high altitude pulmonary edema. Reichert and McLean escorted Korobeshko down to the 14,200-foot ranger camp where she remained on oxygen for 30 hours before descending with her team to basecamp.

Analysis

During and interview with Dr. McLean, Korobeshko stated that she had had a persistent headache during her two days at 14,200-foot camp. In hindsight it appears that Korobeshko had acute mountain sickness beginning at this camp. Climbers need to be honest with themselves and their partners with regards to their health. Korobeshko should have rested at the 14,200-foot camp until she felt 100 percent.

The National Park Service recommends a time line for ascending the West Buttress that provides most climbers adequate acclimatization. The prescribed time is ten to 13 days up to the high camp at 17,200 feet. The Russian team moved to this camp on their 9th day on the mountain and climbed to the summit on their 9th day. It is fortunate that more of the team did not get seriously ill.

Every year there are some who will push themselves to climb Mount McKinley as fast as they can. While some succeed without event, the consequence of becoming sick high on the mountain can be fatal.

DEEP-VEIN THROMBOSIS—INADEQUATE MEDICATION SUPPLY

Alaska, Denali National Park, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

On June 6, Anatoli Lakteonov of the same Russian team as above was brought by members of his expedition to the NPS Basecamp. Patient was