

exceedingly lucky to survive this accident in remote, highly technical terrain. (Source: From a report by the Rocky Mountain Rescue Group)

FALL ON SNOW—UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST, FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS Colorado, Indian Peaks Wilderness

On June 12, Mark Oveson (36) was traversing the snowfields between North Arapaho Peak and “Deshawa Peak” (point 12,800’ on the USGS map) when he slipped. He tried to self-arrest, but lost his ice ax. He then tried to stop his slide with his feet. He was wearing crampons. One caught his leg, but he did not feel anything until he stood up at the end of his run. He had fractured his fibula and a bone in his ankle.

Analysis

Traversing across the top of the snowfield was tedious. At the time of my fall, I was wishing that we were at the bottom of the snowfield so that we could walk on relatively flat snow to our objective. I knew the runout was safe, so I was being careless in my steps. I should have either taken off my crampons and slid to the bottom or used caution to avoid falling. I now know that any fall while wearing crampons is serious.

Also, my ice ax was not tethered to my wrist. This was a careless oversight. If I had fallen where the runout was not safe, it could have been a tragic error. (Source: Mark Oveson)

RAPPEL/LOWERING FAILURE—FALL ON ROCK, NO HARD HAT Colorado, Boulder Canyon

On June 22, two climbers were on a route behind Boulder Falls in Boulder Canyon. The leader, who had more than 20 years of rock climbing experience, topped out and placed an anchor. He was then lowered on that anchor by his belayer. While he was still 25 feet above the ground, the belayer lost control when the end of the rope ran through his belay device. The leader was dropped and sustained numerous injuries, including a serious head injury.

Analysis

The leader survived with a severe head injury. The two climbers reportedly had recently met and were doing their first climb together. The climbers underestimated the length of the climb and over estimated the length of their rope. The belayer was not watching the end of the rope nor was there a safety knot tied to prevent the end from passing through. The leader was not wearing a helmet. (Source: From a report by the Rocky Mountain Rescue Group)

STRANDED, EXPOSURE—HYPOTHERMIA, INADEQUATE CLOTHING/ EQUIPMENT, CLIMBING ALONE, WEATHER, EXCEEDING ABILITIES Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Longs Peak

On September 4 at 0400, Sudheer Averineni (26) from Fort Collins began an

attempt on Longs Peak with two other companions starting at the Longs Peak Trailhead. They had intended to complete their ascent within one day and were not equipped to stay out overnight. At 1030, the solo mountaineer separated from his group at the Keyhole Formation (13,100 feet above sea level), and continued on alone, in a snowstorm, towards the summit. Two mountaineers descending the Keyhole Route saw him at the base of the Homestretch, and later said that he did not appear to be in any difficulty.

The blizzard intensified with winds up to 60 mph, low temperatures to 5 degrees F, lightning, low visibility, and snow accumulations of up to six inches. The solo mountaineer's friends left the area and at 1627 reported him as missing/overdue to Rocky Mountain National Park Communications Center.

On September 5, a park ranger found his body on the summit of Longs Peak. He was lightly dressed in a hooded sweatshirt over a T-shirt, blue jeans, wool gloves, cotton socks, and sneakers. There was no extra clothing in his pack. He had a cell phone in the pocket of his sweatshirt, and although he may have attempted to call out, there was no record of his call with any of the surrounding 911 emergency communications centers. The cause of death was exposure.

Analysis

This fellow had unsuccessfully attempted Longs Peak via the Keyhole Route on two earlier occasions in 2004. In interviewing friends and mountaineers who had contact with him on the mountain, the investigator concluded that he apparently had a case of being goal oriented. He was inexperienced but apparently had great mental drive to get him to where he wanted to go. It is not known for certain why he did not attempt to descend.

He was inadequately clothed and equipped for winter conditions and a technical ascent. He failed to heed the advice of available literature and bulletins, friends, fellow mountaineers, and even park staff.

This was only the second year since the 1868 first-reported ascent of Longs Peak that the Keyhole Route was not rated as a non-technical hike at any time. Rangers had posted current peak conditions and weather forecasts at the Longs Peak Trailhead, advising of the "technical" conditions and the incoming blizzard. (Source: From a report submitted by Jim Detterline and Rich Perch, Park Rangers in Rocky Mountain National Park, and the *Rocky Mountain News*, September 8, 2004)

FALL ON ROCK—OFF ROUTE, DARKNESS

Colorado, Eldorado Canyon, Anthill Direct

On October 21, Angus McInnes (39) and his companion, a young Russian man (17) who had emigrated with his family to the U.S. four months earlier, were climbing Anthill Direct (5.9) when apparently they got off route.