

them there. Guide Dave Staheli was the third person on a four-person rope team as they descended. As Staheli and his team moved below the rock band, the last client on the rope slipped and fell. Staheli immediately went into self-arrest and was pulled off his stance. Staheli came to rest about 20 feet downhill on an ice bridge, over a bergschrund. His client fell approximately 15 feet into the bergschrund and out of site. The rope was taught and a single picket was holding the weight of the client and Staheli. Chenoweth went down to Staheli and helped him out of the system as Falley fixed and reinforced Staheli's rope. Using another rope, Chenoweth and Staheli built a raising system and hauled the client out of the bergschrund. At 0500 all parties returned to High Camp and after medical assessment, no injuries were found.

At 1200 a reassessment of Vinhate indicated he had minor frostbite to one hand and that the team was fit to descend on their own. Also evaluated was MT-14-Staheli client Mark Howard, who sustained frostbite to two fingers from the tip to the distal knuckle. He was also able to descend with his team. Both were advised to check in with NPS staff at the 14,200-foot camp.

Analysis

On the morning of June 16th the weather looked promising for a good summit day and teams were lured out. The weather on Denali can change quickly, forcing teams to make difficult and important decisions. These three groups were very high on the mountain as the weather changed, but because the winds and temperatures remained tolerable they continued upward. All teams underestimated the newly snow loaded slopes and the ramifications of the low visibility conditions. Summit day usually takes anywhere from eight to fifteen hours. All teams were slowed down on the decent, the longest day being 20 hours. A day this long creates other problems such as extreme fatigue and increased exposure to weather. Under these conditions one small mistake could mean disaster and often does. Fatigue, difficult slab conditions, and a lack of sufficient wandering on the traverse back to High Camp caused problems for all teams. When the weather changes high on the mountain, it deserves acute attention. On summit day, anything less than a perfect day warrants concern. (Source: Tucker Chenoweth, Ranger, Denali National Park)

EXPOSURE (TOOK GLOVES OFF) – FROSTBITE

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

KAJ Denali 2008 (from Croatia) expedition members Jadranko Mlinaric (40) and Kristina Marjanovic made a summit attempt on June 27th, turning around at Denali Pass. Mlinaric stated that he removed his gloves for no more than ten minutes. But this resulted in frostbite to all ten fingers. The

team then returned to camp at 17,200 feet. On June 29th, an NPS patrol led by Ranger Kevin Wright contacted Mlinaric at 17,200-foot camp and offered assistance and medical help. NPS VIP physician Sven Skaiaa noted full-thickness frostbite on his fingers and advised him of the seriousness and possibility of amputation. All help was declined. Kristina Marjanovic went solo to the summit on the 29th, leaving Mlinaric in camp by himself. On June 30th, Mlinaric again declined assistance in the morning. They said they would descend the ridge using their own resources. After attempting to break camp in excellent weather on the afternoon of June 30th, the team came to the NPS camp and requested help in getting down the mountain. The Park Service team consisting of Ranger Kevin Wright, volunteers Nick Armitage, Weston Morrison, Roanna Wick and Sven Skaiaa, made a plan to leave the next morning if conditions were favorable. On the morning of July 1st, Dr. Skaiaa dressed the patient's fingers and prepared him for the descent. The Park Service team short-roped Mlinaric down the ridge from 17,200 feet and lowered him down the fixed lines, reaching 14,200-foot camp in the afternoon. He was re-evaluated by Park VIP and paramedic Rocco Pergola. On the morning of July 2nd, the Park Service Lama helicopter transported Mlinaric to basecamp where he was transferred to an air taxi and then taken to Alaska Regional Hospital in Anchorage.

Analysis

The initial frostbite was caused from removing gloves during very cold and windy conditions. This is one of the most common causes of severe frostbite on Denali. Most patients report being surprised at the speed of onset and resulting severity of their injuries. Mlinaric's injury may have worsened due to remaining at high camp rather than descending during the first available opportunity. He denies that any refreezing occurred during that time; however, the delay in seeking medical treatment could affect the degree of permanent damage to his hands. (Source: Kevin Wright, Ranger, Denali National Park)

SUDDEN DEATH ON SUMMIT

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

This Alpine Ascents International climbing expedition flew into the base camp of Mount McKinley on June 20th with two guides and six clients, one of whom was James P. Nasti (51), a first time client of that company. The two guides were Michael Horst (lead guide) and Suzanne Allen (assistant guide). The expedition departed base camp early in the morning of June 22nd and arrived at the 14,200-foot camp on the evening of June 28th. The trip to 14,200 feet was uneventful with the exception that one client was sent back, at his request, to base camp on June 25th. The expedition conducted one carry of food and gear on July 1st to acclimatize, then moved to the