

pro. The second possibility is that there was ice coating the inside of the crack. When pressure was placed on the pieces they slowly melted out and released suddenly. The helmet was recovered but no damage or blood was found on the shell and chin strap assembly. This suggests that the helmet was either not being worn or the chinstrap was not secured during the time of the fall. (Source: John Loomis, Mountaineering Ranger)

## **FALL ON SNOW – SKI MOUNTAINEERING**

### **Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress**

On June 28 at 1315, a climber (32) fell while skiing down from the fixed lines on the way to the 14,200-foot camp. National Park Service Ranger Dave Weber and a Volunteer-In-Parks doctor watched as the climber fell towards the bottom of his run. He fell forward while moving at a high velocity and a sudden deceleration brought him to an abrupt halt in the snow. Due to the fact that the skier was ambulatory very soon after the fall, NPS personnel did not respond immediately to the scene. At 1400, one of the climber's partners reported, "He thinks that he broke a rib." His partners were instructed to assist the climber from their tent to the NPS medical tent.

The patient assessment care report (PCR) notes pleuritic left focal anterior rib pain and vital signs within normal limits (except an elevated blood pressure, of which the patient had a history). Due to the fact that the NPS helicopter was in close proximity on another mission, the climber was continuously monitored to determine whether an evacuation would be required. Although he did not exhibit any signs or symptoms of an underlying lung injury, concerns about the possibility of a pneumothorax prompted continued assessment. Later that afternoon it was determined that an evacuation would be necessary and this information was relayed to Talkeetna.

During a resupply flight that afternoon, the climber was loaded into the helicopter and flown to the 7,200-foot camp. He was released to return to Talkeetna via an awaiting taxi service plane.

### **Analysis**

The potential for a life-threatening injury was the justification for the air evacuation of the climber from the 14,200-foot camp. This evacuation emphasizes an important point concerning rescues facilitated by the NPS on Denali. Due to the remote and dynamic mountain environment, evacuation decision-making differs markedly from that in the 911 emergency system. The risks involved with rescue operations, including air evacuation, from 14,200 feet, although manageable, can never be negated. It is for this reason that we do not utilize these resources before careful scrutiny. It is always prudent to make evacuation decisions based on likely scenarios and the information gathered during on-going patient assessments. However,

there are times that due to weather, resource availability, and other external factors, decisions must be made based on the possibility of the worst-case scenario unfolding. (Source: David Weber, Mountaineering Ranger)

*(Editor's Note: There were a number of medical issues on Denali this year. These were not considered "accidents" because they did not happen as a result of climbing. The HAPE and HACE cases that happened because of ascending too rapidly, however, are counted—and reported on—though not all appear in the narratives above. The medical episodes included several separate guided clients and two non-guided climbers developing AMS and then HAPE signs and symptoms after a normal ascent time; and a 55-year-old client with a previous history of a kidney stone who experienced severe abdominal pain. All these resulted in evacuation from the mountain.)*

## **BEE SWARM – STRANDED**

### **Arizona, Mount Lemon**

On August 11, a rock climber was stung more than 1,000 times when he and his three partners encountered a beehive about 6:30 p.m. and were attacked atop Mount Lemmon.

His partners were able to escape the swarm, but he was stranded for several hours. Search and rescue crews were able to rescue him about 9:15 p.m. after rappelling down to his location.

The four climbers suffered more than 1,300 bee stings, with the stranded climber suffering more than 1,000 stings. Three of the four were hospitalized. (Source: Edited from a posted report by Brian Pederson, on the *Arizona Daily Star* site)

*(Editor's Note: It has been a few years since the last report of bees being encountered by climbers. Bees are a common hazard in some climbing areas, so it is good to check with locals and/or land managers before climbing.)*

## **ROCKFALL, FALL ON ROCK, BELAYER LOST CONTROL WHEN STRUCK BY ROCK**

### **Arizona, Prescott National Forest, Granite Mountain**

On December 12, Elise Anderson (21), Jeff Rome (21), and Chris Shanehofer (26), went to climb at Granite Mountain. Their route for the day was Granite Jungle—two pitches of 5.6 leading into the third pitch of Chieu Hoi—5.9. They started their hour and a half hike to the base of the cliff at 0730. They left their packs at an open ledge called the "Front Porch" and scrambled the 300-meter climber trail to the base of the route.

Elise chose to lead the first pitch, as she had previously followed it. She protected the bottom of the pitch with two evenly spaced pieces of gear. About 40 feet above the base, she assessed a large block wedged in the crack and chose to sling it as natural pro for her third protection point. (Local climbers attest to testing, pulling, and standing on this block in the past. It