

**ACCIDENTS IN NORTH AMERICAN MOUNTAINEERING
FIFTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SAFETY
COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB**

This is the fifteenth annual report of the Safety Committee and the second in conjunction with the Alpine Club of Canada. The addition of the reports from Canada has been worthwhile and documents more completely the accidents that have occurred in North America.

Although the data thus far are limited from Canada certain comparisons can be made with those data from the United States. The percentage of death is approximately the same in both groups. On the other hand there are two marked differences: namely that in Canada accidents on snow are more numerous than those on rock, and the older age group contributes more than the younger age group. The converse tends to be the case in the United States. Some of this can be explained by older American climbers enjoying the pleasant snow and ice climbing in Canada, becoming victims, and thus increasing the accident rate in Canada. Whether this pattern will continue over the years remains to be seen.

Certain accidents occurred in 1960 that were not previously reported. These have been included and the tables have been corrected accordingly. In addition, all the previously collected data for the United States have been reviewed with the purpose of standardizing the types of accidents included in the tables. This resulted in the elimination of certain borderline ones that were not strictly mountaineering. The data for the ten-year period 1951-60 have been used in the tables for comparison with the data for 1961.

Loss of control during voluntary glissade is still a relatively common cause of accidents and indicates that more practice in this art is required. There were also a large number of cases of frostbite that occurred in the Alaska-Yukon territory area. The extreme cold conditions encountered in this area must not be underestimated. Well-insulated and properly-fitting boots are a necessity. The need for easily fitted facemasks and the use of silk or cotton undergloves are demonstrated in one of the McKinley accidents.

Hard hats should also be a definite item of equipment for all rock climbers. The number of accidents in which their use could have prevented or reduced injury is continually increasing. In last year's report we commented that there should be a special club for those whose life had been saved or who had escaped serious injury because of the protection afforded by a hard hat. There is such a club—The Turtle Club. For those who have legitimate claims or interest, contact E. W. Bullard, 2680 Bridgeway, Sausalito, California. Incidentally, there are 12 cavers (spelunkers) who are members. The hard-headed individuals who continue to frown on the use of hard hats may some day find, to their or their families' regret, that hard hats really are a necessary item of climbing equipment. Doubters should read the account of the 1960 accident on El Capitan in this report.

An accident not strictly mountaineering but occurring during the use of mountaineering techniques has been brought to the Committee's at-

tention. This involved a belaying practice session in a gymnasium at the University of Colorado. A 150-lb. rock was used as the victim. All belayers were anchored. One girl (19) after holding a number of practice falls was thrown off her feet and badly shaken up by a later attempted belay. This was apparently caused by one or more of the following: slack in the anchor rope, the anchor rope not being in a direct line with the pull of the belay rope, or gripping the belaying rope too tightly. Her injuries were minor but this incident does emphasize the need for practice. Even practice under ideal conditions such as these requires constant supervision concerning the safe operation of a belay and the safe anchoring of the belayer.

Attention is called to three articles by the Mountain Rescue Association (MRA). They are:

1. Rescue Responsibility and Rescue Group Formation
2. Mountain Safety Education—Lectures
3. Mountain Safety Education—Basic Information

Persons interested in extra copies should contact either the AAC or the MRA, P.O. Box 67, Seattle 11, Washington. The various rescue groups and the areas covered are listed in one of the appendices.