

**ACCIDENTS IN NORTH AMERICAN MOUNTAINEERING**  
**TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE**  
**SAFETY COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB**

This is the twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Safety Committee of the American Alpine Club and the eleventh in conjunction with the Alpine Club of Canada.

Data from accidents not previously reported have been obtained and the statistical tables have been corrected to include them.

Like last year we have an increased number of reported accidents. Most of these have been minor and have involved inexperienced persons being stranded on cliffs that were beyond their capability. In addition there seems to be better reporting of minor accidents or episodes in which no injury occurred. It is important to re-emphasize the need for such reporting. It shows that not all accidents in the mountains are necessarily lethal. It also indicates situations which require more education and training, such as inexperienced climbers being stranded on cliffs. These episodes may also present a serious hazard to the rescuers.

As in previous years not all accidents are included in the write-ups. Certain ones have been selected that seem to have educational value. Although no actual cases of high altitude pulmonary edema were reported this year, other medical problems or other reactions to altitude occurred. The Kensler incident emphasizes the insidious nature of the effects of high altitude as does the Hoeman incident. The bad effects of high altitude must be considered whenever one goes to altitude. Adams Carter reported that there were two incidents of high altitude pulmonary edema in Peru this summer, one of which was in a person who had climbed extensively and been to such altitudes before. Thus failure to develop high altitude pulmonary edema does not mean one will be immune in the future.

The need for regular and continued training in ice-ax arrests are manifest again this year. Examples are the Eggers accident on Mt. Niobe, and the accident in Colorado on St. Mary's Glacier. Other episodes not written up also occurred in the Grand Teton National Park.

Attention is also directed to some of the problems resulting from climbing the vast walls. In the past much attention has been paid to the planning and equipment for such climbs. As more persons make these attempts, or as more difficult climbs are attempted, we may see more problems associated with this type of climbing. The accidents or episodes in Yosemite are the best examples. In this report we call attention to the accident involving Roy Naasz on the Lost Arrow, and Caldwell and Frederickson on El Capitan. In addition the concern created by the extraordinarily long duration of the climb by Harding and Caldwell on El Capitan underscores this too.

The cases of frostbite in the Japanese party on McKinley could probably have been prevented by adequate footgear. Bad weather is always a possibility and the slip accident on Shiprock demonstrates this problem. The rescue teams and others who helped deserve a great deal of credit for this fine cooperative effort.

Bad weather may also not necessarily imply snow or freezing conditions. The episode on Mt. Bensen was associated with exposure under conditions of snow and probably near-freezing temperatures. It is not clear how much exposure and/or fatigue played in this situation. The Committee also received the report of a young boy who had climbed above timber line on Mt. Washington, N.H., in wind, rain and cool temperature. He was literally dragged into one of the AMC Huts when he was cold and semiconscious. His body temperature was extremely low. Fortunately he did respond to the warming procedures and survived. But it was a very close situation.

Most persons do not realize the hazard that exists under cold but above freezing temperatures, with wind and rain. It is possible to "freeze" to death under such conditions—actually one succumbs to hypothermia or low body temperature. Certainly Caldwell and Frederickson were aware of this on their climb on El Capitan.

Although no reports on equipment testing are included this year, there has been a recent report in the German mountaineering literature. The results were consistent with those reported in an early report from this Committee. The reference is: *Was Halten Unser Karabiner?* by Pit Schuberl, *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Alpenverein* 94, 214-224, 1969.

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