

SLIP ON SNOW, FALL INTO MOAT, CLIMBING ALONE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

Utah, Mount Timpanogos

On May 23, 1982, Terrence Brown (28) left his residence at 0700 to hike up Mount Timpanogos. The following day, at 1000, he was reported missing. His dog was found with his vehicle at the Aspen Grove trail head. A hasty search revealed he had fallen 25–30 meters into a large moat, probably while glissading. The spot was approximately where two people had died two years previously. (See *Accidents in North American Mountaineering 1980.*) (Source: Dr. Richard Wallin and Owen Quarenberg)

Analysis

This accident illustrates the high perils of travel over snow in areas of buried runoff channels, buried high-angle rock and other hidden dropoffs. Only knowledge and a high index of suspicion can prevent such an event. Proper safety precautions, including ice-ax probing, knowledge of self-arrest technique, wearing a hard hat and, perhaps, glacier travel technique, best meet the demand. (Source: Dr. Richard Wallin, Salt Lake City)

SLIP ON SNOW, FALL INTO MOAT, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, INEXPERIENCE

Utah, Mount Timanogos

On July 7, 1982, Mark Gordon (14) was with a group of five companions (ages 11 to 22) when he slipped while descending a snow slope in a cliff area. He fell into a deep moat and apparently died instantly. His companions were unable to extricate him. (Source: Dr. Richard Wallin, Salt Lake City)

Analysis

In addition to the comments made in the previous analysis, Dr. Wallin suggests the possibility of public service announcements on local conditions for would-be mountain travelers. Many areas use posted signs which indicate general conditions and, in some cases, give specific information regarding avalanche danger and other hazards. Mount Timpanogos seems like a good candidate for such a system. (Source: J. Williamson)

RAPPEL FAILURE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Utah, Diamond Fork

On September 24, 1982, Lyal Holder (56) was the course instructor for a beginning rock-climbing class from Brigham Young University's Education Department. The class was practicing rappelling. The victim was making his second descent. Each member of the class had made one descent on the rope which was anchored around a rock. Witnesses described the victim as moving down three meters, then "fidgiting" with the rope, as if there were a problem. The rope then "popped" off of the anchor rock. The victim fell about 20 meters and died instantly. (Source: Dr. Richard Wallin, Salt Lake City)

Analysis

Repeated rappels, especially when made by inexperienced people, call for back-up protection in the form of anchors. It is also common practice to belay rappellers, including the instructor. (Source: J. Williamson)

AVALANCHE

Utah, Pfeifferhorn

On November 21, 1982, John Rehmer (29) and Dave Bjorkland (25) skied the five-hour approach to the base of the East Ridge of the Pfeifferhorn without realizing the recent build-up of high-ridge windslab. They then dropped their skis at the base of the Class 4, snow-covered route. Because of previous uneventful ascents, Rehmer suggested that little thought was given to the snow conditions. There had been an unusually early accumulation of snow together with 36 hours of intermittent high winds. The previous day, large releases had been reported in the Park City Area and high hazard reports were available on information phone lines.

Approximately 130 meters up the 60-degree ridge, a point release 76 centimeters deep occurred on the ridge crest just above the climbers. They were swept down the steep, hanging south snow field over a rock band. After each had been buried at least once, they were deposited 100–130 meters from their point of origin. Both were on top of the deposition. After recovery, the two returned to their skis and skied to their car in the dark. Rehmer had a fracture of the upper left pelvis and large lacerations of the left leg and scalp from impact with talus. Bjorkland had a scalp laceration. Both were wearing Pieps-type locators and carried probes and shovels. (Source: Dr. Richard Wallin, from an interview with the climbers)

Analysis

Rehmer felt strongly that the accident was strictly an error in judging the avalanche potential and that both climbers were otherwise well within their potential. Attention to available warning, taking time to evaluate the conditions and traveling separated might also have averted the accident. (Source: Dr. Richard Wallin, from an interview with the climbers)

PROBABLE CORNICE COLLAPSE, CLIMBING ALONE

Washington, Mount Index

On March 23, 1982, Alan Van Lue (29) left his vehicle at a KOA campground near Mount Index. On March 27, when he had not returned for it, the campground management notified the sheriff. His family was located through a license check in an adjacent county but were unconcerned because they considered him highly competent and able to take care of himself. The ensuing search located his high camp in the Index-Persus Saddle, where a stove, a bivouac sack, and various other pieces of gear were found intact. Repeated searches of the mountain revealed nothing. The search was suspended but, over the next several months, Sergeant John Taylor flew the area repeatedly searching for clues; he found none.

In late July, a climbing party reported seeing an ice ax lodged on a small ledge on the East Face, about three meters below the ridge line and very close to the