

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