

scary move, which could result in a possible three-meter fall.

Sorry this is so late. It is very difficult to write about this stuff, even though I am a Ph.D. psychologist with four years of experience dealing with trauma victims). (Source: Shawn Kenderdine)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING SOLO, NO HARD HAT, INEXPERIENCE

British Columbia, Rocky Mountains, Mount Wardle

On June 23, 1989, Ben (21) and his brother Uli (23) decided to make an attempt to climb Mount Wardle via the East Face. After completing a very difficult bushwhack to reach the base of the climb, they worked their separate ways to the bottom of the face. Uli, who had gotten onto a ridge, hurt his ankle and decided to turn around and head back to camp, leaving his brother who wanted to continue on.

This was the last time Uli saw his brother alive. Ben continued on until he was about three quarters of the way up the face. It was at this point that he fell 300 meters to his death, ending up near the bottom of the face. The next morning, Uli notified the Kootenay Park Warden Service that his brother had not returned. The Warden Service used a Parks Rescue helicopter to sling in to the site and remove Ben's body. (Source: Kootenay National Park Warden Service)

Analysis

Neither brother had done more than a little rock climbing. They were climbing in running shoes with no rope or other protection. The bottom part of the East Face of Mount Wardle is easy climbing, but as one gets higher on the face, the climb increases in difficulty, tending to lure an inexperienced climber into a position from which it is hard to downclimb. The fall may have been caused by rockfall or by an attempt to downclimb. (Source: Kootenay National Park Warden Service)

FALL INTO CREVASSE, CLIMBING UNROPED

British Columbia, Bugaboo Mountains, Bugaboo Spire

On September 13, 1989, while crossing the Crescent Glacier after climbing the Kain Route on Bugaboo Spire, John Ulricson (45) fell ten meters onto a snow bridge in a crevasse. I was traveling behind, carrying a rope. After about 30 minutes of work, John was out of the hole, but not without some dramatic moments. (Source: T. J. English (43), Hopewell, NJ)

Analysis

After seeing many other climbers traverse this short stretch of glacier unroped on a well established snow trail, we did not give the matter much thought. Normally, when we crossed glaciers, we roped up, but in this case we assumed Crescent was a benign glacier. Obviously this was not the case.

Additional Comments: John was wearing his helmet, parka, and harness. The helmet protected him on impact, the parka kept him from getting hypothermic, and the harness allowed him to securely tie in the rope from above.

In the fall, John lost one crampon and would have lost his ice ax if he had not had a leash. Without his remaining crampon and ice ax, I am convinced I would not have pulled him out of the crevasse. (Source: T. J. English, Hopewell, NJ)

FALLING ROCK

British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Mount Waddington

On September 13, 1989, Richard Thomas (35) was ascending a steep snow gully at 1980 meters on Mount Waddington with two companions when a large falling rock struck him on the head, shattering his helmet and inflicting fatal injuries.

His two companions descended to lower on the mountain where three other members of the expedition were camped. They stamped out an "SOS" in the snow. This was spotted the same afternoon from a passing aircraft. A helicopter flew in that evening, but was unable to reach the victim. The five survivors were flown out the next day by helicopter, and Thomas' body was recovered one day later by North Shore Rescue members. (Source: Ian Kay, West Vancouver, BC, from press reports)

Analysis

This appears to be the sort of accident that could only have been avoided by staying off the mountain. Falling rock is a constant hazard on Waddington, and it is not clear from the information available whether another route might have been practical and safer. The party was fortunate that its distress signal brought such a quick response. (Source: Ian Kay, West Vancouver, BC)

SNOW BRIDGE COLLAPSE, FALL INTO BERGSCHRUND, UNROPED, NO HARD HAT

British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Mount Tantalus

On the morning of August 5, 1989, 18 members of the North Shore Rescue Team were beginning a three-day training exercise in the Mount Tantalus area. Bob McGregor (28) and Darrell Freeman (25) were approaching the bergschrund at 1980 meters at the west foot of the gully leading to the Tantalus-Dione col. They were unroped. The snow collapsed under McGregor and he fell and slid 35 meters into the bergschrund, sustaining massive head injuries.

Freeman immediately rappelled into the bergschrund for the full length of his rope, but could neither reach bottom nor locate McGregor. He jumarded out and went for help, but over two hours elapsed before another party could reach the scene. A further three and a half hours were needed to give first aid and raise McGregor to the surface, by which time hypothermia was added to his other injuries. A helicopter previously summoned by cellular phone flew him to the Squamish hospital, but he died shortly after arrival. (Source: Ian Kay, West Vancouver, BC)

Analysis

Bergschrunds, like any other crevasses, must be approached with extreme caution. A hard hat would have mitigated the victim's injuries and might have saved his life. Valuable time might have been saved if both men had been provided with two-way radios. This is perhaps a counsel of perfection, but as it was, the pair's one radio went into the bergschrund with the victim. The principal lesson from this tragedy is that it