

FALL ON ROCK, INSUFFICIENT PROTECTION

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Barrier Bluffs

While leading the route called Cadillac Jack on June 3, 1990, T.C. fell and struck a ledge. Her partner lowered her to the ground, where it was obvious she had severely injured her right ankle. Numerous other climbers assisted the victim, applying a splint and giving her three tablets of a pain killer. The accident was reported to Kananaskis Rangers by phone from Barrier Information Centre at 1735. Rangers arrived at the accident site at 1810 and prepared T.C. for ground evacuation by Cascade stretcher (normally a half-hour walk on the narrow downhill trail through rubble and forest), but requested helicopter evacuation about 1825, as the victim was in extreme pain and showing symptoms of shock.

A machine from Canadian Helicopters was dispatched to the area via Bow Valley Provincial Park, and a ranger was slung to the accident site at 1920 for an aerial pickup. The victim was lowered to a Barrier Lake parking area at 1930 and attended by medical personnel before transfer to an ambulance for transport to Calgary. It reached Foothills Hospital at 2000 and T.C.'s injuries were confirmed as a fracture and dislocation of the right ankle.

Analysis

There may be a tendency, especially among new climbers, to overestimate the powers of the rope. In this case, the overall protection system was inadequate to prevent a severe and extremely troublesome injury. (Source: George Field, Alpine Specialist, Peter Lougheed Provincial Park)

FALL ON SNOW AND ROCK

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Blakiston

On July 7, 1990, a party of five climbed the Class 4 south gully on Mount Blakiston. They were beginning their descent by traversing a small, moderately angled slope when the leader slipped and slid 15 meters into rocks, suffering a broken tibia and several gashes and contusions. With the help of his group, he was able to continue the 1000-meter descent to the valley trail. One person had been sent ahead to alert the Waterton Warden Service, who then completed the evacuation, using a wheeled mountain stretcher.

Analysis

More snow existed on this route than has been the norm for that time of year. The group carried ice axes, but no ropes or crampons, and did not appear to be aware of the immediate consequences of a fall on steep snow. By avoiding the snowfields, or being prepared to self-arrest, they may have prevented the accident. (Source: B. Kozachenko, Warden Service, Waterton Lakes National Park)

ANCHOR FAILURE WHILE LOWERING OFF

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Cascade Mountain

During a climb of Mother's Day (5.6) in April, 1990, the leader placed a Friend and used it to lower back down. This anchor pulled out and he fell about three meters to a ledge, sustaining a broken ankle. He was grabbed by a companion and saved from a much longer fall. A third member of the party rappelled off and scrambled down for help.