

CANADA

CORNICE COLLAPSE, UNROPED, INATTENTION

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Saddle Mountain

On January 29, 1991, about 1500, Jacques and France had just completed a ski ascent of Saddle Mountain, with their dog accompanying them. They were walking along the corniced ridge to the summit when France broke through the overhanging cornice and fell down the vertical quartzite cliffs into a gully, a total distance of 400 meters. Jacques skied down to report the accident. The area was searched by helicopter in failing light, and two rescuers were slung in to the site. They located France's body, but due to darkness, it was not recovered until the following morning.

Analysis

Cornices along ridges can present a significant hazard. In this case, the victim may have been led too close to the edge while trying to get her dog away from it. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

(Editor: In reference to the last comment, it would be a most unfortunate case of self-endangerment in attempting to protect another party member.)

FALL ON WATERFALL ICE, UNROPED, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, HASTE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Rundle, Professors Gully

A group of experienced climbers had finished the first pitch of the Professors Falls, a popular waterfall route near Banff. The climb consists of a series of short, steep pitches with wide, flat shelves in between. One climber began the second pitch solo and fell off. His lower right leg was broken during the fall. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

Analysis

The victim (44) was eager to get moving, and the pitch looked reasonable to solo, but he was a little "rusty" and both his hand tools pulled out of the ice when he was about four or five meters up. A crampon caught in the ice during his fall, and the resulting twist caused his injury. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION FAILURE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Banff Area, Sunshine Slabs

Sunshine Slabs is a short practice cliff just west of Banff. One summer day in 1991, a climber (30) was leading on steep, loose corners to the right of it when he slipped off. The victim fell 15 meters to the ground when a small tree used for protection was pulled out by the force of the fall. He suffered a spinal injury and head and knee lacerations. His companions had him immobilized on a scrap of plywood when Emergency