

rope and protection is intended to nullify falls of all causes, not just those that result from pushing the limits. (Source: Orvel Miskiw)

AVALANCHE, POOR CHOICE OF ROUTE

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Plain of Six Glaciers

Two climbers visiting from Europe attempted to reach Abbot's Pass from Lake Louise on May 11, 1993. They turned around due to the evident avalanche hazard, but on the way back they were hit by a large class-three wet avalanche as they crossed a ledge on the summer trail.

J.U. (29) was near the edge of the slide and escaped by pasting himself under a slight overhang, where the avalanche roared over him. His female companion was swept over a short cliff and carried about 100 meters, but luckily ended up on top of the huge deposit with no serious injuries other than a broken leg. J.U. relocated her to a safer spot and went for help.

Analysis

It is unusual for people to approach Abbot's Pass this early in the season. They realized the difficulties of the glaciated basin known locally as the "Deathtrap" as they approached it, but were avalanched late in the afternoon of a hot spring day, on what appeared to be relatively tame ground on the way back down the valley. Also, following the summer trail put them in a position of crossing an obvious huge slide path on dangerously exposed ledges, while an alternative route was available. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED, NO HELMET

Alberta, Front Ranges, Canyon Creek Crag

L.O., an experienced and capable rock climber who had pioneered many difficult routes, went climbing alone on May 25, 1993, at Canyon Creek in the Elbow West district of Kananaskis Country. He was reported overdue that night about 2330.

Cochrane RCMP contacted Kananaskis Emergency Center and requested a search dog. District Rangers began to assemble resources for a search, and reached Canyon Creek about 0030. They began to scan the area from trucks with floodlights powered by an emergency generator about 0115 (May 26), and the RCMP began a ground search with their dog about 0130.

At 0420 the RCMP dog master called in to report that the subject had been found dead about 200 meters down and across the slope from his rope, which indicated the section of cliff on which he had been climbing and apparently from which he had fallen. He was wearing friction shoes and had a chalk bag, but no helmet. Disturbed vegetation and broken twigs made it clear he had survived the fall and had crawled some distance. An RCMP investigator arrived at 0555, and the Medical Examiner's unit arrived at 0655 to remove the body. Recovery operations were complete by 0800, May 26. (Source: George Field, Kananaskis Country Alpine Specialist)

Analysis

The victim was well-known in the Calgary-Canmore climbing community and to some of the Parks staff for his efforts in route development. He would typically be working on

more than one climb at any time, and would sometimes rig ropes between them to help him traverse to a new route which had an extreme start, and so discourage casual climbing attempts by others. The arrangement of his rope on the rock at the time his body was found suggested it was being used for such a purpose, and that he had been soloing without protection well off to the side of the rope when he fell. (Source: Orvel Miskiw)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Lake Louise, Back of the Lake Crag

D.L. was leading a pitch at the Back of the Lake Crag on June 6, 1993 when he fell. His protection pulled, and he hit the ground, sustaining a compound fracture of the ankle. He was evacuated by the Parks Canada Warden Service rescue team, by helicopter.

Analysis

It seems that the victim was climbing on uncharted terrain; the route was dirty, and protection appeared to be marginal. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

STRANDED, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, WEATHER

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Andromeda

A party consisting of two men and a woman set out to climb the "Sky Ladder" route on Mount Andromeda on the morning of June 21, 1993. By 1400 they were on the summit. As they approached the descent route, the weather began to deteriorate. As a result of poor visibility, fatigue, and the exposure of the descent route, the woman decided not to continue. After a lengthy discussion, the group decided that they would build a shelter for her to stay in while the two men continued down to ask the Warden Service to help her off the mountain. They then worked their way down, reaching their car at 2338, and then notified the wardens.

Because of poor weather conditions in the morning, it was necessary for rescuers to climb to the position of the stranded climber, and she was found in surprisingly good condition, considering the extreme weather she had to endure. Shortly after their arrival, a small break in the weather allowed a helicopter to reach and evacuate them.

Analysis

The leader overestimated the experience and abilities of the team members, and he underestimated the length of the outing. The decision to leave one member alone high on the mountain is generally not recommended, although it may have been the best choice in this case, especially if they had not registered with the Parks Service. A lone person attempting a hazardous descent through the badly crevassed exit route would not stand a good chance of reaching safety and help at all.

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Whyte

D.L. was soloing the north ridge of Mount Whyte on August 1, 1993, when he fell on fourth-class rock. He is unsure of how far he fell, but was in a lot of pain when he regained consciousness. He descended to the Whyte-Niblock col and met a party coming from Mount Niblock. They sent for help and started descending to Lake Agnes with