

Mount Athabasca, when they encountered technical, exposed terrain. One was hesitant about climbing through this section, so the other climber offered to unrope, solo the difficult section, and drop a top rope down from above. While soloing out onto the south slopes, the climber encountered a thin veneer of ice on the rock. With both crampons and an ice ax in the thin ice, the sheet of ice gave way, and the climber fell approximately 100 meters. He sustained serious injuries to his head and both legs. Both spent the night on the mountain. The uninjured climber anchored himself to the mountain with a snow picket, but was afraid to move from his location. The next morning, with two broken legs, the injured climber crawled over the Boundary–North Glacier Col and made his way down the mountain to a telephone to call for help.

A helicopter was brought over from Golden, and two wardens were slung in to the stranded climber. It was dicey terrain, but the rescuers were able to remain on the heli-sling rope, hike up to the stranded climber and hook him on. All three slung off to the staging area.

Analysis

The route was in poor condition, being plastered in snow and verglas. The rock quality on the lower section of this ridge is extremely poor and is generally avoided by most climbers, who prefer to access the ridge higher up. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALL ON ROCK, WRONG ROUTE, INAPPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

Alberta, Banff National Park, Castle Mountain

On July 27 a party of two began climbing what they thought was the popular Brewers Buttress route, II, 5.6. Unfortunately, they were one buttress too far to the north. On the first pitch, the leader fell about 20 meters with his belayer stopping him one meter above the ground. His highest piece of protection failed but the next one held him and prevented a ground fall. He sustained hand and arm fractures as well as head trauma. His partner was able to call for help with a cell phone. He was evacuated by heli-sling shortly afterwards.

Analysis

The injured climber was planning on using this multi-pitch rock route as “training ground” for alpine routes. He was wearing plastic boots. Most climbers use rock shoes in this terrain. It is fortunate that the one piece of protection held and that his belayer was able to stop him before he hit the ground. One can only speculate what kind of difficulties they may have encountered higher up in this uncharted terrain. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALL IN CREVASSE

Alberta, Jasper National Park, Columbia Icefield

At 1840 on August 5, two climbers came off the Columbia Icefield to report that two members of their party of ten were injured and needed helicopter evacuation. All members were Russian Canadian and were planning to travel down the Columbia Glacier icefall from the trench. T.S. (37) was the middle member of a three-person rope team. She lost her balance while crossing a