

## **FALL ON STEEP ICE WHILE SKIING**

### **Washington, Mount Rainier, Liberty Ridge**

A climber at Thumb Rock high camp on the Liberty Ridge called Mount Rainier National Park with a cell phone on the evening of May 24 to report that his climbing partner was missing after a skiing accident en route. David Perrson (31) was telemarking Liberty Ridge from the top when he lost an edge and cart-wheeled out of control, disappearing down the Willis Wall. Perrson fell from the 12,500-foot level near the Black Pyramid, a 50–60-degree icy section of the route.

Rangers Brenchley and Gauthier flew reconnaissance the next morning and identified a body at the 9,800-foot level on the Carbon Glacier. The body lay in the avalanche debris cone of *Thermogenesis*, a climbing route notorious for ice and rock avalanches. Shortly after they spotted Perrson, a tremendous avalanche of ice ran the route and partially covered the body. Recovery operations were postponed due to the increasing daytime temperatures and obvious objective hazards. Plans were then drawn for a predawn recovery next morning before the sun warmed the ice cliffs above.

At sunrise on May 26, pilot Hagerman inserted Rangers Gauthier and Olson near the accident. No sign of Perrson could be found. Pilot Uttecht flew avalanche reconnaissance while Rangers Gottlieb and Patterson provided safety and support for the recovery team. An hour of search was needed to locate the body. It had been pushed a substantial distance down slope and reburied by successive avalanches the previous day. There was no chance that Perrson survived the fall and moved under his own power. The body was retrieved without incident and flown off the mountain.

### **Analysis**

David Perrson was an accomplished climber and athlete. He soloed Liberty Ridge the day before just after reaching high camp, then telemarked back down it that evening. Perrson clearly understood the level of commitment and risk involved in such extreme adventures and sadly paid the price for his passion. (Source: Mike Gauthier, SAR Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

## **DROPPED GEAR, INADEQUATE FUEL AND FOOD, WEATHER, DEHYDRATION, EXHAUSTION**

### **Washington, Mount Rainier, Liberty Ridge**

A cell phone call late June 30 revealed that Mike Matelich and Larry Sverdrup were stranded on Liberty Ridge and in need of assistance after dropping one of their packs. The pack was lost while breaking camp from an unplanned bivouac above Thumb Rock. Unfortunately, the pack contained their ice screws, which the team felt were necessary to safely complete the route. Complicating matters, one member was having crampon troubles and the weather was deteriorating. Another forced bivy in a crevasse and a few broken cell phone calls later expressing their concern initiated a rescue.

A helicopter was dispatched that evening and inserted teams of rangers at the base of Liberty Ridge and Camp Schurman. A cloud cap prevented flights above 10,000 feet. It was hoped that one of the teams would climb the moun-