

Analysis

S. said that the bolt looked good when he clipped it, and suspects that the rock surrounding the bolt may have failed. Climbers should be cognizant of the fact that poor rock or poorly placed or old bolts can be prone to pulling out or breaking. However, considering the number of bolts that are clipped every year by sport climbers in North America, this type of incident is relatively rare. (Source: Nancy Hansen)

FALLING ROCK-DISLODGED, FALL ON SNOW, NO BELAY OR PROTECTION Alberta, Banff National Park, Mount Lefroy

On August 18, four climbers were ascending the 45-degree snow-and-ice route on Mount Lefroy. They were traveling as two independent rope teams, moving together with short lengths of rope between the climbers. At 3400 meters, the route narrows into a gully bordered by rock. One of the lead climbers dislodged a rock which struck the lower climber, causing both members of the team to lose their balance and fall about 300 meters down the route. The other two climbers climbed down to assess and stabilize them. One climber descended to the Abbot Pass Hut to use the emergency phone. Upon discovering that the phone was not working, he began heading further down the mountain for help when he ran into another climber with a cell phone. Both climbers were evacuated via heli-sling by Warden Service rescue crews. They had sustained multiple fractures, bruising, and puncture wounds from crampons.

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It is common practice for climbers to travel together with a short length of rope between them on straightforward terrain. Part of the challenge and risk in mountaineering includes assessing when the terrain and conditions dictate setting up anchors and pitching out the route. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

FALLING ROCK Alberta, Banff National Park, Mount Little

On August 29, a party of four was ascending the normal route on Mount Little during an Association of Canadian Mountain Guides Assistant Alpine Guide exam. Two candidates were roped together and a third was roped to the examiner. As they were walking along the base of the ridge a large rock fell from the ridge crest about ten meters above them and struck the examiner on the head. The other climbers attempted resuscitation, but it appeared that the victim had died instantly. They attempted to call Park Dispatch by radio, but the radio was not functioning. Two of the climbers descended to Moraine Lake to report the accident. One stayed with the victim and continued resuscitation attempts. He had a cell phone with which he was eventually able to get a connection through to Warden Service dispatch. At this point, it was snowing heavily and the rescue helicopter was only able to land on the toe of the upper glacier. Warden Service rescue crews climbed to the scene and confirmed the fatality. The weather deteriorated further and the helicopter was unable to fly