

Very high snow levels had created unusual avalanche conditions in the northeast. DEC Ranger Wesley Hurd: "In New York State we never have avalanches. I've been doing this for 26 years and this is the first one I've ever had anything to do with that had any people involved." In Vermont, state officials told Stowe Mountain Resort and Smuggler's Notch Ski Area to warn backcountry skiers and snowboarders of significant risk of avalanche in Smuggler's Notch. (Source: Neil Van Dyke, Stowe Hazardous Terrain Evacuation)

(Editor's Note: This incident is included because backcountry skiing and snowboarding are becoming more popular in the Northeast. It is important to understand the conditions that can result in avalanches.)

VARIOUS LEADER FALLS ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT (4), INADEQUATE PROTECTION (2), OLD WEBBING BROKE WHEN WEIGHTED (1) New York, Mohonk Preserve, Shawangunks

There were 17 climbing incidents reported from the Preserve this year. Fourteen happened to lead climbers and three while bouldering. The latter would be considered "normal" falls, though they resulted in sprains because of the way the climbers landed. Several of the lead climbing incidents were exacerbated because protection was inadequate or came out. One leader was 20 feet from the top when she was bitten by a snake (species unknown), but suffered no serious consequence. One cliff rescue was performed from the Grand Traverse ledge in the Trapps. A climber (31) attempting to begin the third pitch of the popular Andrew (5.4) got off route and wandered into Three Vultures (5.9). As the leader attempted to aid through a move by grabbing an old piece of sling attached to a piton (hints at the age), the sling broke, resulting in a fall of about 30 feet with impact to the cliff. He was lowered to the GT ledge by his belayer, lowered off the cliff in a litter by rangers, carried down the talus and taken to an ambulance via ranger truck. He sustained a fractured pelvis (in three places) and fibula, and required stitches on a laceration to his left knee.

One case to note occurred to a man (66) who is a veteran of the cliffs. He was starting up on a fairly easy climb—Three Pines—but had placed only one piece of protection. He was 20 feet up when he fell. His protection came out, so he hit the ground and tumbled additional distance, crushing his pelvis. However, he feels strongly that his helmet saved him from possible death or at the very least mental debilitation. It is to be noted that of all the incidents reported, in only two cases were helmets being worn. A final observation: The average age of those involved in leader falls was 37! The graying of the Gunks. (Source: From the Annual Report submitted by the Mohonk Preserve and Jed Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION—FAILURE TO ASSESS ROCK FORMATION, INADEQUATE BELAY, EXCEEDING ABILITIES, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE

Oregon, Mount Washington

At sunrise on June 29, Eric Seyler (28) and Kurt Smith (26) left their bivouac high on the North Ridge of Mount Washington to climb Central Pillar, de-