

CANADA

FALLING ICE—FALL ON ICE, POOR POSITION

Alberta, Banff National Park, Johnson Canyon Upper Falls

On January 19, J. G. was standing at the base of an ice pillar when a climber above dislodged large pieces of ice. One of the pieces hit her and she fell about ten meters down a slope, suffering a compound lower left leg fracture. One person ran out for help. J.G. was evacuated by heli-sling by Warden Service rescue teams.

Analysis

Standing under ice climbers is hazardous, particularly when one is on sloping ground and not tied in to an anchor. Falls on ice with crampons frequently result in lower leg injuries due to the crampons catching while sliding. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

INADEQUATE BELAY—CLIMBER LOWERED TOO QUICKLY

Alberta, Jasper National Park, Malign Canyon

On February 10, at 1600, a Jasper Warden was contacted via cell phone by B.C., who reported his partner had stabbed his right knee with his left crampon while being lowered after top-roping a climb. The Warden Service evacuated B.C. with a wheeled stretcher to the trailhead.

Analysis

His partner lowered the victim too quickly, and as a result, he caught his crampon on the ice causing him to spin and then stab his right knee with his left crampon. Belayers should always pay close attention to their partners while lowering, and the speed should be slow enough so the descending climber can safely negotiate the terrain s/he is being lowered over. Occasionally, a fast lower can result in the belayer completely losing control over the lower, resulting in serious injury or even death. (Source: Jasper National Park Warden Service, L.P.)

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Alberta, Banff National Park, Louise Falls

On February 14, T.T. was leading the final crux pitch of this popular Grade 4+ ice climb. He placed two or three ice screws above the belay on the steepest part of the pillar, the last one protecting the exit moves onto a low angled section. He began to climb the final steep step, when he fell approximately 30 meters to the bottom of the pillar, bouncing off the low angled section and onto the lower angled terrain below the belay. He sustained an ankle and back injury in the fall. Two mountain guides were guiding clients nearby and lowered the injured climber to the base of the route. The accident was reported by cell phone to Banff Warden Dispatch. Warden Service rescue crews arrived as the injured climber reached the base of the route. He was then evacuated by heli-sling to the valley below.