

and kicked one foot into a free-hanging icicle when it broke. The climber barn-doored backward, then fell, hitting the ground shortly after the large icicle. He landed feet first then rolled a short distance downslope. He suffered a broken tibia and fibula in his left leg.

Analysis

The climber gambled on an unprotected move onto a risky icicle, with the potential of groundfall as a consequence. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, Brent Kozachenko)

FALLING ICE

Alberta, Banff National Park, Louise Falls II WI4+

On March 7, three climbers were climbing the left line of Louise Falls. The temperature in the Lake Louise area had been at around zero degrees C, then dropped to -26 degrees C in the couple of days before March 7. The lead climber had lead the left edge of the crux pillar and up to a tree belay. He led the route using two 60-meter 8.5mm ropes. His two partners were anchored to two ice screws below the left edge of the pillar. The lead climber brought up most of the slack in both ropes up to the top belay. He clipped the one rope into the end of his daisy chain and put the other line on belay. Climber #2 was belayed up to the anchor. J.D. (37) was waiting in the belay cave to begin his ascent of the final pitch. The rope to J.D. suddenly became taut with sufficient force to blow out all but the last bar-tacks in the lead climber's daisy chain. J.D. had been standing in a cave under a large veil of hanging ice. This veil of ice cracked off, fell and crushed him when the ropes dragged him into the path of the ice. He fell 10 to 15 meters down the face of the ice climb and came to rest hanging from his harness on the rope.

Two other climbers were just approaching the base of the pillar on the climber's right hand side when the accident occurred. They rappelled at an angle over to the fallen climber and reported that the victim had no vital signs—no pulse, pupils fixed and dilated. The two other climbers lowered the victim to the bottom of the climb. The accident was reported to Warden Service Dispatch and the deceased victim was later evacuated by heli-sling by Warden Service rescue crews.

Analysis

Free hanging icicles and veils of ice pose a hazard to climbers at any time. Hazards are increased whenever there is rapid and significant change in temperatures, as ice responds by contracting or expanding. This can cause the ice to crack and to become more susceptible to breaking. An earlier climbing party had noticed the ice near the pillar had made loud cracking noises twice during their ascent. They were unconcerned because the crux pillar was supported from below and their route was not underneath any free hanging curtains. It is unclear whether the victim's party was present when these cracking noises occurred. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, Marc Ledwidge, Edwina Podemski)