

FALL ON ICE, PROTECTION PULLED OUT—ICE TOOL

Alberta, Banff National Park, Professor Falls,

On March 10 at 1130, T.M. was leading the last pitch of Professor Falls (III WI4). She was having some difficulty placing a screw due to the brittle nature of the ice and clipped the rope into her tool to rest. She was a little over ten meters above her last piece. When she weighted the rope to rest, her tool pulled. She fell 25 meters and broke her right ankle in the fall. Her partner, R.H., lowered her to the bottom of the pitch and improvised a splint for her leg. Because her pack with extra clothes, food, ensolite and thermos was down at the bottom of the next pitch, the party took some time to lower and rappel down to that point before R.H. left to get help. T.M. was later evacuated by heli-sling by Warden Service rescue crews. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, Marc Ledwidge)

FALL THROUGH CORNICE, OFF ROUTE, UNROPED

Alberta, Banff National Park, Mount Balfour

On April 12, N.F., a ski patroller from Whistler and member of the ACC Whistler section, was skiing the Wapta Icefield traverse with two companions, D.S. and G.M. They were equipped with a copy of Murray Toft's Wapta Traverse composite topo map and compasses. They had conversed with guides at one of the huts who had informed them that the snowpack was large this year. The visibility over the previous few days had been intermittent with some whiteout conditions. They had had no trouble with crevasses on the traverse. When they reached the Balfour Hut, they were joined by another party of two, S.F. and E.N., who were equipped with a GPS, compasses and an emergency radio. The two groups decided to combine forces on the ascent over the Balfour High Col to the Scott Duncan Hut.

They were skiing roped up in two teams. The skiers were using a Rutschblock cord tied to their ski poles and flicking it ahead of them to assist in defining the changes in the terrain. They periodically checked their bearings by compass and GPS and switched leaders. At one point N.F. believed that the group had veered too far left and corrected their course. As the group climbed toward the Col, visibility was initially quite reasonable and no worse than on previous days. As the group approached what they believed was the Col, the visibility dropped sharply. They were actually off-route to the extreme left edge of the traverse at this point.

The group checked their bearings by GPS and decided to unrope for the descent, as they felt they were beyond the obvious crevasses and could navigate reasonably well. They also removed their skins and Rutschblock cords and were having to travel shoulder to shoulder at that point in order to keep track of each other in the whiteout conditions. Each member was using a compass and/or GPS. N.F. was using a compass. His closest companion, G.M., noticed that he pushed off a couple times and then took a reading on his compass. He skied off away from the group, slightly to the left. It was at that moment, when N.F. was about 20 to 25 feet away, that