

to slide about 200 feet, flying over the bergschrund. Despite losing his ice ax, he stopped sliding before reaching the fumarole. He dragged himself up to the safety of the Hogsback. He had fractured his leg. Unsuccessful in attracting attention, he lowered himself about 1,000 feet to a remnant structure where he splinted his leg using abandoned timbers. He survived the night under a tarp and made voice contact with two climbers the next morning, who notified authorities. Portland Mountain Rescue lowered him in a litter about 1,000 feet to a waiting snowcat.

Analysis

Late season climbs on exposed volcanic rock are predictably hazardous. Solo climbers must be particularly self-reliant on communicating their situation (signaling devices, radios, alert by family or friends when overdue, etc). It is worth noting that Marcuson was able to keep his crampons off the snow surface during his slide, thus preventing a tumbling fall. (Source: From a report by Jeff Sheetz, Portland Mountain Rescue)

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Oregon, Mount Hood, Sandy Glacier

On November 4, Kenny Dale Kasselder and Shaun Olcott (both 37) had crossed the Sandy Glacier, roped, and were beginning to ascend the headwall. One of them slipped and pulled the other off, as they had not placed any protection. They fell about 100 feet, landing in a crevasse. Olcott suffered a broken arm while Kasselder had injured his back. He lapsed into unconsciousness and died. Olcott was carrying a cell phone and was able to place a distress call to 911.

Analysis

They were simply low on the headwall when the accident occurred and had not yet placed any anchors, yet the fall was still sufficient to sustain significant injuries. After the rescue, Olcott reported that his helmet was shattered.

Readers will recall the most dramatic example of the risks of non-anchored rope travel on Mount Hood. On May 30, 2002, one climber slipped at the Pearly Gates on the South Side. He started a “domino” effect, sweeping the rest of his rope team and three other teams down the mountain. Nine total climbers landed into the bergschrund. Three climbers were killed, and four were seriously injured. (Steve Rollins, Portland Mountain Rescue)

(Editor's Note: On March 13, Beau Clark (30) died from a heart attack while climbing with friends on Broughton's Bluff. He had made it to a ledge. His friends said they heard a weird noise, and when they looked down., he was hanging about 30 feet above the ground. This is not considered to be a climbing accident, but worthy of mention.)

FALL ON ROCK—LOWERING ERROR, COMMUNICATION PROBLEM

Utah, Big Cottonwood Canyon

On June 16, Doug Grennan (18) and eight friends were top-roping sport climbs in the upper S-Curves area of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Doug was

climbing a 5.10 route on the right side of the buttress, most likely Urban Sprawl (10a). When Doug reached the chains, he clipped in and cleaned the draws, as no one else planned to climb the route. He untied, threaded the rope through the chains, and tied back in. At this point he was still on belay, but with lots of slack in the rope. His plan was to have his belayer lower him. Because of an overhang below him, he and the belayer had a hard time seeing or hearing each other. Doug leaned out for a better look and yelled, "Take."

As he did, his feet slipped and he fell 60 feet to the ground, with the rope running through the belay device. He suffered a fractured sacrum, and bruised heels and sternum. Two friends ran to the road to call for a rescue. SAR team members immobilized Doug in a bean-bag vacuum splint and lowered him five pitches down and across scree fields to the trail. Once at the road, he was transported to the hospital by ground ambulance.

Analysis

Even with lots of slack in the rope, an attentive belayer should be able to catch a top-rope fall without any difficulty. The problem is that in this situation, where the climber re-rigs at the top of the route, the belayer may stop paying close attention, since a fall is not expected.

The belayer was using an ATC, which is a fairly low-friction belay device. Once the rope starts sliding quickly, there is almost no way to stop the moving rope.

Communication problems between climber and belayer produce an accident in our area every few years. Doug could have minimized the need for communication by rappelling down instead of being lowered. This is also a better choice for preserving the chains at the top of the route. (Tom Moyer, Salt Lake County Sheriff's Search and Rescue)

(Editor's Note: There was another Utah rappel/lowering incident reported in which the climber failed to tie his webbing sling properly. The knot came undone when weighted and he fell 30 feet to the ground, sustaining only bruises!)

VARIOUS FALLS ON ROCK, SOME SOLO, SOME INADEQUATELY PROTECTED, ETC.

Utah, Various Locations

We received some sketchy reports on several other accidents in Utah. They are summarized as follows.

On March 2, Robert Moor (35) fell 100 feet to his death when the ice he was attached to broke off. He was climbing with a friend in Sanpete County's Maple Canyon when the ice broke away from the face. Moore died on impact. It is suspected that weather related freeze/thaw was a contributing factor.

At 7:00 p.m. on May 29, a 21-year-old man was free-soloing with some friends at the Moss Ledges picnic area when he apparently slipped on a wet rock and fell backward into the creek. Witnesses said the man fell approxi-