

UNITED STATES

ISCHEMIA AND CORONARY OCCLUSION

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Rib/Cassin

On April 26, H. Dean Barkley, Jr. (47) and his partner were attempting to climb the West Rib and Cassin routes of Denali. Barkley had a history of cardiac problems. Approximately two hours out of basecamp, he experienced a cardiac event. The team was able to return to the Kahiltna Basecamp without assistance. They arrived at 2100 and contacted the NPS Ranger stationed there. At 2115 Ranger Gordy Kito contacted Talkeetna via radio, advised the IC that they had a probable cardiac event occurring and requested immediate evacuation of the patient. The Lama was scrambled from Talkeetna at 2153 to perform the evacuation, arrived at the 7,200-foot camp at 2229 and returned at 2300. The patient was placed into an ambulance and then transferred to Life Flight at 2320. He was ultimately diagnosed and treated for severe ischemia and a coronary occlusion.

Analysis

Injuries and illnesses are to be expected during a mountaineering expedition and, unfortunately, can occur regardless of planning. However, in this case the climber had suffered a coronary blockage six months prior and had had a stint inserted. The patient was taking several potent coronary drugs for his condition but was also forthcoming about his condition when questioned about any existing medical problems or history during the mandatory climbing briefing conducted before they flew onto the mountain. Prior to the climb, he had consulted with his physician and had passed a stress test.

It was fortunate that this happened at the start of his planned climb. Had it occurred later while on the technical part of the route, the evacuation would have been much more difficult and the outcome could have been different.

Climbing Denali requires a monumental physical effort, and any attempt to climb it, especially via one of the more challenging routes, requires individuals to be at peak physical capacity. (Source: From a report by John A. Loomis, Ranger)

FALL INTO CREVASSE—UNABLE TO BE RESCUED QUICKLY BECAUSE OF POSITION

Alaska, Wrangell Mountains, Mount Bona

On May 17, Will Hurst (56), who was climbing with two guides and another client, fell through a snow bridge. At the time, they were on snowshoes and at an elevation of 9,700 feet. He was roped and leading when the bridge collapsed and he dropped 20 feet, becoming wedged in a such a way that he