

CANADA

FALL ON ICE – PLACED NO PROTECTION, INEXPERIENCE

Alberta, Canadian Rockies, Waterton National Park

On January 1, a group of climbers met at a popular ice climbing area in Waterton National Park. Upon arriving at the base of the climbs, it was discovered that another party had begun up the easier of the climbs, French Kiss. Of the group, only one felt confident enough to lead the harder climb, Quick & Dirty. The climber moved slowly and appeared to be having trouble placing an ice screw near the top where his protection was dangerously run-out. He eventually fell a distance that landed him within a few metres of the bottom of the climb. It is estimated that the distance was between 40 and 50 feet. The climber landed upside down with the screw he was trying to place in one hand and one axe in the other. His helmet was cracked on one side. Miraculously, he suffered no immediate injuries, but was still taken to emergency services and monitored thereafter. (Notes: The biggest fall any of us had witnessed—including rock climbing. The climber was using double ropes. The one that held the fall was retired. The ice screw held the fall. It was retired due to the magnitude of the fall, even though there was no observable damage. The Yates screamer that was attached to the screw fully deployed.)

Analysis

In hindsight, as the climber proceeded up the climb it was noticed that he moved slowly. He placed protection earlier than normal off the start of the route and neglected to place protection on an easier ramp before the final crux, leaving him dangerously run-out by the time he was tired. The climber was the youngest of the group (early 20s) and visiting from Quebec. He claimed to be quite involved with ice climbing there. Even though he displayed initial confidence in leading the climb, the older and more experienced climbers (who knew they were not in shape to lead it) should have acted on the warning signs earlier. They could have at least suggested he place a screw at the ramp before heading up to the crux. The climber could have retreated long before realizing he was in trouble. (Source: Aaron Davydiuk, climbing party member)

FALL ON ROCK – HANDHOLD CAME LOOSE

Alberta, Kananaskis Country, Mount Yamnuska

On May 23, a climber had a leader fall approximately 140 metres up the route Bottleneck (5.8, seven pitches) on Mount Yamnuska. The leader sustained a broken ankle. The party was unable to self-rescue or descend further. They