

FALL ON SNOW, UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST, INEXPERIENCE

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Paintbrush Divide

On July 18, at about 1350, Stewart Laing (47) slid about 30 feet on snow, then cart-wheeled another 75–100 feet on talus near the summit of Paintbrush Divide (east side) after the snow that he was crossing collapsed. He suffered a significant injury involving an open, tibia-fibula fracture to his left leg. He was on overnight excursion and carrying a large pack. He had left with his brother, Jim Laing (50), earlier that day from the Lower Paintbrush camping zone.

After stabilizing S. Laing with the help of two hikers, J. Laing ran down Paintbrush Canyon until he was able to call out via cell phone. He was placed in contact with Rescue Coordinator G. Montopoli via Grand Teton Dispatch. After a brief interview with J. Laing, Montopoli immediately initiated a rescue operation at 1515 via a Jenny Lake page and requested the contract helicopter.

Ranger J. Springer ran Operations at the Lupine Rescue Cache, while Rangers J. McConnell and R. Schuster were flown to the scene with R. Johnson acting as spotter. The helicopter landed on a snowfield on the west side of the top of the divide at 1620. McConnell and Schuster hiked to the accident scene about 200 feet below the Paintbrush Divide summit. After medically evaluating the injuries to S. Laing, contacting Medical Director Dr. Will Smith, surveying the scene, and discussing rescue options, a helicopter short-haul was determined to be the best method of evaluation.

S. Laing was extracted from the accident site and flown unattended to the snowfield at the top of Paintbrush Divide. He was then flown to the Lupine Meadows Rescue Cache, transferred to the Park Ambulance and transported to St. John's Medical Center in Jackson for advanced medical care. (Source: George Montopoli, Incident Commander)

Analysis

This traverse is a very popular route and is done both west to east and east to west. Usually the snow is gone by the end of July. But if it isn't, a different level of mountaineering skill is required.

At least this hiker, who became a climber because of the conditions, had an ice ax with him and he had it in hand. However, due to inexperience, he was unable to self-arrest when he fell on his back. (Source: Jed Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE, OFF ROUTE, NO CLIMBING EXPERIENCE

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Garnet Canyon

On July 20, Jillian Drow (21) fell to her death while descending into the South Fork of Garnet Canyon after an ascent of the Middle Teton.

Drow was a member of a party of eight that left the Lupine Meadows Trailhead at approximately 0500. Seven people planned on climbing the