



AAC Publications

Fall on Snow - Ice Axe and Helmet in Pack

Oregon, Mt. Hood, South Side Ride

This fatal accident on February 6 was not witnessed, so many details remain unknown. Jared Townsley (31) was reported overdue from a solo climb on the South Side Route. He was last seen by other climbers descending near Crater Rock. A search team from Portland Mountain Rescue located his body on the upper White River Glacier (9,320-foot elevation) the next day. From the body position and a slide path, it appears Townsley suffered a long fall down the headwall of the White River Glacier. He succumbed to a catastrophic head injury.

Analysis

Weather conditions were reported favorable, and the climbing surface was typical melt/freeze crust. It is not known what triggered the fall. A successful self-arrest may have prevented the accident, but Townsley's ice axe was stowed on his backpack. A helmet may have limited the head injury, but his helmet also was stowed inside his pack. Crampons were found in the debris field, but it is not known if they were worn just prior to the accident. For some unknown reason, Townsley relaxed his vigilance during the descent and failed to benefit from the safety equipment that he carried in his pack. (Source: Bob Alexander, Portland Mountain Rescue.)

Images

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