



AAC Publications

Slip on Ice, No Crampons, Probably Fatigue

New Hampshire, Mt. Adams

On January 10, Gregory Frux (53) and Matt Burd (52), who had climbed Mt. Tripyramid North Peak the previous day, were joined by Nick Jaques (52) for a mountaineering adventure. They ascended the Lowes Path for 3,000 vertical feet to the Grey Knob RMC Hut, encountering icy trails and using crampons the entire way. The following morning they attempted Mt. Adams, secondhighest point in New England at 5,774 feet, via the Spur Trail. Conditions above treeline were fair, with snowdrifts and blowing snow. Visibility declined to near whiteout conditions, and the party was insecure about routefinding. At 5,200 feet they turned back and safely returned to Grey Knob Hut for another night. The following morning, in good weather, they descended via the Hincks Trail, a more gentle descent. Travel was fast, and they reconnected with Lowes Path via the King Ravine Trail. At this junction they decided to remove their crampons, because the terrain had minimal snow cover and travel was on frozen mud, rocks, and some ice. A short distance beyond this point, at 2,300 feet, Matt slipped and was hurt trying to stop his fall. The party assessed the lower left leg, below the knee joint. They agreed Matt should not remove his mountaineering boot, and Nick splinted the limb with two birch branches and duct tape built around the boot. Matt first determined that he could stand and second that he could walk with the support of two ski poles. Based on map and altimeter readings, they estimated they were a little over a mile from the road and about 900 feet above it. Given that it was 12:30 p.m., they agreed that self-rescue was possible. Matt hobbled and slid down the trail for the next four hours, while Greg and Nick shuttled his pack forward. Several stops were made for water, tea, and food. They reached the car at 4:30 p.m. At the hospital Matt was diagnosed with a fractured fibula, which was minimally displaced.

Analysis

Wearing or not wearing 12-point crampons at the place we removed them was a judgment call, since there was some hazard to each option. Matt's attending physician suggested use of micro-spikes as a good alternative. One contributory factor may have been relaxation of attention near the end of the hike. The team was well satisfied with the choices made after the rescue was initiated and felt they worked very well together. The amount of time involved in self-rescue was surprisingly long, and would have become a much more serious problem had the accident happened higher on the mountain. (Source: Edited from a report sent in by Gregory Frux.) (Editor's note: The White Mountains in winter are considered to be a serious mountaineering environment. Winter incidents are usually above timberline, but the trails can require climbing equipment and technique.)

Images

Article Details

Author	
Publication	ANAM
Volume	10
Issue	66
Page	65
Copyright Date	2013
Article Type	Accident reports