



## AAC Publications

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### **Stranded - Exceeding Abilities**

Alberta, Banff National Park, Mt. Bell

On July 10, while climbing the Northeast Ridge of Mt. Bell near the Lake Louise area, a party of two contacted Parks Canada and requested a rescue. Although

they'd started early in the morning, they were only halfway up the route by 5 p.m. They stated that their slow progress was the result of one team member being very nervous and not comfortable with the terrain. Eventually, this team member did not want to move up or down the ridge, and the decision to call for a rescue was reached.

Parks Canada received the call and responded via helicopter to Mt. Bell. The climbers were located on the ridge at approximately 2,750 meters, anchored to several pinnacles. Rescue personnel landed at a staging area below, set up the rescue sling equipment under the helicopter, and were slung onto the ridge near the climbers. Rescuers then climbed approximately 25 meters to the climbers and short-ropeed them to a pickup location. Once this was done, the helicopter slung out two people at a time to the staging area below.

### **Analysis**

There were no injuries involved with this incident, but simple mistakes contributed to the need for a rescue. First, overestimation of their abilities: One team member had very little experience mountaineering, and when faced with exposure on a loose, narrow ridge, the team's progress slowed to a crawl. Second, underestimation of the difficulty: The experienced team member had done the route nearly 20 years previous, and did not accurately remember how involved it was. This member stated, "I thought it was just a hike in the sky." Third, underestimation of the length of the route: They were a considerable distance from the summit at 5 p.m. when they decided to stop where they were.

The climbers did do something right, though. They stopped and accurately assessed their situation. With one person paralyzed with fear, and the second person unable to guide them up or down the route, they called for assistance. An all-night epic of trying to get off the mountain—or worse, an accident—was avoided by getting evacuated.

## Images

## Article Details

Author	
Publication	ANAM
Volume	10
Issue	66
Page	102
Copyright Date	2013
Article Type	Accident reports