



AAC Publications

Slip on Snow or Ice, Stranded - Exceeding Abilities

Alberta, Banff National Park, Mt. Victoria, East Face

On September 9 two experienced climbers decided to turn around before making the summit of Mt. Victoria. On their descent, the female member of the climbing team fell and slid down the northeast face for approximately 45 meters. She miraculously managed to self-arrest. Her climbing partner was unable to assist her. He went down to the hut and called Banff Dispatch.

A team of two Visitor Safety Specialists was dispatched from Banff. They made several unsuccessful attempts to access the stranded climber's location. Due to poor visibility and strong winds, they were forced to land at the Plain of Six Glaciers Tea House. Eventually, they returned to Lake Louise to refuel, and then they made a successful trip to get the team members into Abbot Pass. The two rescuers were able to climb up and meet the non-stranded male member of the climbing team. They left him at that location and continued up, searching for the stranded climber. They made voice contact at nightfall. The rescuers placed a piton anchor in the rock above the patient, who was found 45 meters below ridgeline on the northeast face. One rescuer was lowered down and clipped into the stranded climber's harness. The rescuer and stranded climber were then belayed back up to the ridgeline. From here, the rescue team guided the uninjured climber back down to her climbing partner, now in complete darkness. Each rescuer guided one member of the climbing team down to the Abbot Pass Hut, where they all spent the night. The next day, a helicopter picked up the climbers, along with the rescuers, and flew them back to Lake Louise.

Analysis

The climbing party admitted that they were unprepared and under-experienced for climbing Mt. Victoria. Equally important, when things went wrong, they lacked the skills to be able to rectify their situation. Furthermore, they explained that they had learned about climbing from reading books. The lack of formal instruction and/or genuine mentorship from an experienced person was the major contributing factor that led them into their predicament on Victoria.

Images

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