



AAC Publications

Injured Scrambler

Alberta, Waterton Lakes National Park, Mt. Crandell

Around 8:30 a.m. on July 12, one scrambler in a group of five dislocated his shoulder while climbing on Tick Ridge on Mt. Crandell. The climber did not fall and was able to reverse his moves onto lower-angle terrain, but was in a great deal of pain. After some discussion, a smart phone was used to find a number for the Waterton Lakes National Park wardens using a Google search. With no answer at a now-unused number found on the Internet, 911 was called and a connection made to the Lethbridge Dispatch Centre and the Visitor Safety team in Waterton Lakes National Park.

Visitor Safety received the call at 9:10 a.m. The GPS coordinates from the party helped confirm their location. The party had used a triangular sling to support the injury and minimize further aggravation. Visitor Safety advised the party that if the injury and terrain allowed, they should move down the mountain slightly to become more visible and easier to access. The party was given the cell phone number of the rescue leader and asked to call if they had any problems or further questions.

By 10:20 a.m., Bighorn Helicopters arrived from Cranbrook and a reconnaissance flight was conducted. Because of the open spot chosen by the party and their use of high-visibility flagging tape, it was easy for the Visitor Safety technicians to find the party and determine a plan of action. A phone call was then made to the group to check on the patient's condition, inform them of the plan of action, and advise them to stay off to the side of the clearing to avoid any rockfall generated by the helicopter.

At 10:35 the first rescuer landed on the site and assessed the patient. A second rescuer was flown in immediately with a Bauman Bag and vacuum mattress. The patient was able to walk to a flat spot and position himself on the vacuum mattress for packaging. Even with gentle handling the patient was in extreme pain, and the slightest contact or movement caused distress. The patient was secured laterally to the vacuum mattress and flown to the helipad at 11 a.m., where he was transferred to waiting Waterton EMS staff and brought to the Cardston Hospital for treatment.

Excess equipment was slung off of the ridge, and the second Visitor Safety technician descended with the remaining four members of the party, reaching the road by 12:25 p.m.

Analysis

Even the strongest and most experienced mountaineers can be injured unexpectedly. If an injury causes a fall when moving unroped, the consequences can be exceptionally severe. Carrying basic first-aid supplies allowed this party to stabilize the injured limb, which undoubtedly contributed to the patient's comfort. The use of a cell phone to call for advice in this situation was a critical move. It is always a good idea to call for help or advice. Although it was only an upper-body injury and the patient could walk a short distance in simple terrain, it would have been hazardous to both the patient and the rest of his party to descend the rough terrain to the road. Some of the most serious incidents in the mountains occur as a result of problems compounding to a point where things are out of control, when early correction may have avoided further mishap. Remaining available for further telephone contact allowed rescuers to stay up to the minute on the patient's condition and inform the scramblers about relevant hazards seen at the rescue site from the air. The use of high-visibility flagging tape assisted the rescue team and pilot to see the party and gave the pilot some

information on local winds at the rescue site.

If this party had researched the current emergency phone number prior to leaving, their rescue would have happened even sooner. A phone number that was in use five years ago in the back of the guidebook or written on some random Internet site may no longer work. If in doubt, call before you go to check the number, and make sure that all members of your party know how to call for help in an emergency. The Waterton Park emergency number is currently 403-859- 2636.

Images

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