



AAC Publications

HAPE (Two Cases), Appendicitis (One Case)

Alaska, Denali National Park, Mt. McKinley, West Buttress

On June 16, a guided climber (53) descending from the summit of Denali began experiencing signs and symptoms of HAPE. The climber was able to descend to Denali Pass, at 18,200 feet, but could not travel any further under his own power. The climber's guides from Alpine Ascents International (ALP) were able to successfully lower/pendulum the climber from Denali Pass to approximately 17,400 feet. A National Park Service (NPS) patrol responded to this team's request for help, brought the patient into camp, and rendered medical assistance. No improvement was noted in the patient's condition after 14 hours of medical care, so he was evacuated from the 17,200-foot camp via the NPS contract helicopter.

In a separate incident on June 25, guides from an Alpine Ascents International expedition on the West Buttress contacted rangers at the 14,200-foot camp because one of their clients (53) was experiencing signs and symptoms of altitude illness. Doctor Andy Luks evaluated him at the ranger facility. Dr. Luks believed that the client was suffering from HAPE, and he was treated accordingly. He remained in the care of the NPS until June 29, when his condition and the weather improved enough for his team to walk him down the mountain while he was on supplemental oxygen.

On June 28 an NPS ranger patrol descending from high camp continued to the 11,200-foot camp to assist a guided Mountain Trip expedition with a client (35) who was displaying signs and symptoms of acute appendicitis. After waiting one day for weather to clear in order to evacuate the patient from camp via helicopter, rangers and the two guides escorted him to a location near 10,000 feet, where the weather was better. The patient was flown off from this point with the NPS helicopter and transferred to a LifeMed flight. (Sources: Chris Erickson, Mountaineering Ranger, and Coley Gentzel, Lead Mountaineering Ranger.)

(Editor's note: AMS, HAPE, and HACE are common occurrences on Denali, the great majority of which are experienced by guided clients. The latter fact is just the luck of the draw, because guides bring their clients to critical altitudes at a reasonable pace. As for appendicitis, it is a bit of bad luck, and not really counted as a climbing accident.)

Images

Article Details

Author	
Publication	ANAM
Volume	10
Issue	66
Page	27
Copyright Date	2013
Article Type	Accident reports