



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock, Climbing Alone and Unroped

Colorado, Elk Mountains, Thunder Pyramid

On June 23, Steve Gladbach (52), a highly experienced mountaineer, was reported missing by two companions who had summited Thunder Pyramid (13,932 feet) with him. Gladbach was downclimbing and was ahead of his partners when they realized he had not arrived at a rendezvous point. Gladbach had told them that he was going to check out a waterfall that he planned to climb next winter.

The climbers searched for Gladbach for a couple of hours before activating their SPOT. A helicopter search was unsuccessful. A National Guard Black Hawk helicopter dropped eight members of Mountain Rescue Aspen (MRA) onto the mountain on June 24. The pilot then decided to search another area and spotted Gladbach's body. MRA members recovered the body, which was flown to Maroon Lake and then driven to Aspen Valley Hospital.

Analysis

Thunder Pyramid is regarded as one of Colorado's most dangerous mountains. It has been site of several deadly accidents over the years. Gladbach likely fell a couple of hundred feet on terrain notorious for its loose rock and exposure. (Source: Chad Abraham, *Aspen Daily News*.)

Images

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