



## AAC Publications

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### **Stranded, Exceeding Abilities**

Washington, North Cascades National Park, Black Peak

On July 28 a party of four from the Seattle area attempted the northeast ridge of Black Peak (8,970 feet). The climbers split into two rope teams, but quickly found that the first rope team was ascending at a faster pace. The first rope party summited the peak and then descended the south face back to their camp, having lost contact with the other two climbers.

The two climbers who had summited could see their friends about midway up the ascent route, and observed that they were stationary for hours, well into the night. The two stranded climbers began flashing headlamps, presumably to alert their friends. The climbers at camp asked other visitors who were leaving the area to call 911 and request assistance when they got into cell phone range. Rangers received this call for assistance at 2 a.m. on Monday morning. It was unclear if either of the stranded climbers was injured.

Early on Monday, rangers made a recon flight to Black Peak. They made visual contact with the climbers, and were unable to rule out injuries. By then, the climbers had been at the same location for almost 24 hours, just before a steep pitch on the most technical part of the route.

A ranger team, using the park's contracted HiLine Helicopter, evacuated each climber individually to their base camp by short-haul. The rescued climbers appeared shaken up by the experience, but were uninjured. All parties agreed that steep, technical mountaineering routes above massive glaciers are much more difficult than climbs of a comparable grade in a gym, to which they were accustomed. (Source: Edited from an NPS Morning Report.)

**Images**

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