



AAC Publications

Rappel Error/Failure

Canada, Alberta, Jasper National Park, Mt. Redoubt, Northwest Ridge

In the afternoon of August 15, Visitor Safety received a call about an overdue solo climber on the northwest ridge of Mt. Redoubt (3,120 meters, Grade III, 5.6) in the remote Tonquin Valley in Jasper National Park. Initial investigation found that the climber had missed his scheduled check-in time using a satellite phone the night before. Visitor Safety Technicians found his vehicle at the trailhead and performed a hasty search of the area, which revealed nothing. The next afternoon, as the weather lifted, the climber's body was located from the air, 500 meters below the summit on a small patch of snow in a gully on the west face. It appeared as though he had been rappelling, but it is not clear what caused him to fall or lose control of the rappel.

The steep walls prevented the helicopter from safely deploying the recovery team right at the site, so three Visitor Safety Technicians were slung to a buttress near the climber, and they climbed broken ledges to access a site above him. From here, a technician was lowered onto the steep snow patch to package and sling the subject off the face.

Analysis

This climber was very experienced and thoughtful. He understood the risk he was taking and had the necessary skills and fitness. He also had a solid check-in plan with his family. By all accounts, the route was well within his skill set, and he had the means to retreat from the route. It appears that this was a rappelling accident, but it is not clear if he had slung a block with his rope and the block failed, if there was a failure of equipment at his anchor, or if the weather played an issue (afternoon thunderstorms and high winds).

Images

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