



AAC Publications

Fall on Snow – Cornice Collapse, Climbing Unroped, Poor Position

Oregon, Mt. Hood, South Side

On May 13, Robert Cormier (57) attempted to summit Mt. Hood via the popular South Side Route with two companions. One team member suffered a leg cramp, and the party separated as Cormier summited ahead of his companions. He traversed too far north from the summit rim and caused a cornice collapse. This resulted in a 700-foot fall over very steep terrain onto the upper Eliot Glacier, causing fatal injuries.

ANALYSIS

Corniced summits and ridges are often deceptive, as the cornices usually cannot be seen when approaching from the windward side. When in doubt, a climbing party should protect themselves with a belay. When cornicing is suspected or visible, staying well below the crest of the cornice may prevent it from fracturing. Warm air temperatures can increase the hazard by weakening the snow and ice. (Source: Jeff Scheetz, Portland Mountain Rescue.)

Images

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