



AAC Publications

Illness

Canada, Yukon, Kluane National Park and Reserve, Mt. Logan, East Ridge

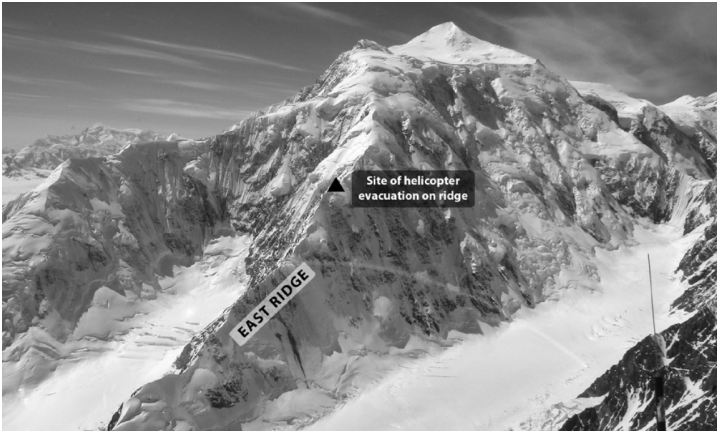
On June 6, at 11 a.m., the Parks Canada Visitor Safety team in Haines Junction received a call regarding a male climber in medical distress and requesting evacuation. The initial call came in via the Delorme InReach coordination center. Fortunately, the party of four climbers also had a satellite phone, and reliable information on the patient's condition, exact location, and weather conditions was quickly conveyed.

The patient was experiencing severe whole-body cramping, dizziness, an altered level of consciousness, and an inability to climb up or down. Their location was at approximately 3,400 meters (11,155 feet) on the east ridge of Logan. This area is just up from a knife-edge ridge at the base of a large snow slope. Weather at the site was clear and calm, and the forecast showed a 10-hour window of clear, stable air before the next unstable weather moved in. A Parks Canada pilot and rescuer flew one hour to the site to assess the terrain and prepare for a rescue. At 3 p.m., the pilot and rescuer were able to toe-in under power, load the patient, and return to Haines Junction. The patient was treated at the local health center for dehydration, electrolyte imbalance, and exhaustion. It remains undetermined if altitude was a complicating factor.

ANALYSIS

The importance of reliable two-way communication in such a remote environment cannot be overstated. A satellite phone allows critical information to flow directly from party leader to rescue leader. This minimizes delays in response or aborted rescue attempts due to poor weather. That said, in remote northern environments, particularly at altitude, parties must be prepared to self-rescue, descend to an accessible location, or wait for considerable delays in organization of a response. Technical rescue resources in this immediate area are limited. In this case, the weather window was perfect. However, it is common to wait days or a week for a storm to clear enough to access the mountain by air. (Source: Scott Stewart, Visitor Safety/Fire Coordinator.)

Images



Approaching a stranded party at 3,400 meters on Mt. Logan's east ridge.

Article Details

Author	Scott Stewart, Visitor Safety/Fire Coordinator
Publication	ANAM
Volume	10
Issue	68
Page	114
Copyright Date	2015
Article Type	Accident reports