



## AAC Publications

---

### Fall on Snow - Poor Position

Canada, Alberta, Banff National Park, Moraine Lake, 3/3.5 Couloir

**A party of two decided to climb the 3/3.5 Couloir (so named because it lies between peaks 3 and 3.5 in the Valley of the 10 Peaks), located at the far end of Moraine Lake.** It was July 15 and had been a fairly warm and dry summer in the Rockies, so the couloir was only partly covered in ice and snow. They left the parking lot at 11 a.m. with the intention of climbing as high as the snow coverage would allow and then turning around. While descending around 3 p.m., they decided to glissade. They both lost control in the soft, unconsolidated snow and fell several hundred meters down the couloir. A hiker witnessed the fall and reported it to the front desk staff at the Moraine Lake Lodge, who in turn called Banff Dispatch.

A coordinated response from Visitor Safety (VS) staff in Banff and Lake Louise was mobilized. One climber was uninjured, and the other was still mobile but had unknown injuries. Both subjects were able to self-evacuate to the bottom of the technical terrain, and they were picked up by a rescue helicopter and transported to the ambulance at Moraine Lake.

### ANALYSIS

The 3/3.5 Couloir is a steep, 900-meter snow and ice slope that is sometimes skied in the spring. It was once popular in the summer as an access to the Mt. Fay area.

However, the 3/3.5 Couloir is subject to a high amount of rockfall, especially when rocks emerge from under snow in dry summers. Because there are two other well-used and safer access routes to the Mt. Fay area (the Perren and Schiesser/Lomas routes), the 3/3.5 couloir is not recommended in summer. Luckily for them, the climbers were not hit by rocks and the soft snow still present in the gully decreased their total fall distance, preventing more serious injuries.

**Images**

Article Details

Author	Robert Chisnall, Alpine Club of Canada
Publication	ANAM
Volume	10
Issue	68
Page	120
Copyright Date	2015
Article Type	Accident reports