



AAC Publications

Frostbite

Alaska, Denali, West Buttress

On May 11, two members of Team Kodiak made a summit bid from 17,200 feet on the West Buttress. Conditions made progress slow. The team reached 19,800 feet before retreating and spent the night out during the way down, not returning to high camp until midmorning on the 12th. Due to the prolonged exposure to subzero temperatures, both climbers suffered frostbite on their feet. Patient 1's condition was serious enough to warrant an air evacuation from the 14,200-foot camp. This flight took place on May 13, and he was able to see a doctor the next morning. (Source: Denali National Park Case Incident Report.)

ANALYSIS

It is difficult to maintain adequate blood flow to the extremities when moving slowly or stopped. If the climbers detected cold or numb feet during their ascent, they would have been better off stopping to rewarm their feet and then descending to high camp. (Source: The Editors. See "Essentials: Frostbite," by Denali ranger and lead medic Dave Weber, in Accidents 2015.)

Images

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