



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock (Scrambling)

Canada, British Columbia, Yoho National Park, Mt. Daly

At 8:30 a.m. on August 23, a group of three scramblers left the parking lot near the Great Divide Lodge in Yoho National Park to scramble up the southwest slopes of Mt. Daly. After hiking up the trail to Sherbrooke Lake, they followed the route to the east side of the col between Mt. Niles and Mt. Daly. Following the normal scrambling route, they climbed a steep slope of talus and rubble up to a short cliff band with an exposed traverse along the top of the cliff. They then proceeded up the southwest slopes to the summit.

On their descent, at approximately 4:30 p.m., the first two members of the group made it back across the exposed traverse and then observed the third person slip and fall partway along the traverse. That person fell between 15 and 20 meters down the cliff band before tumbling approximately 100 meters down the steep talus slope below.

The remaining two members of the group made their way down to the injured person as quickly as possible. The patient was unconscious but breathing, and he was bleeding profusely from a significant head injury. The two friends bandaged the patient's head, positioned the patient to allow for easier breathing, and wrapped the patient in extra clothing. One of the scramblers then ran for help while the other friend stayed with the injured person.

While descending for help, the reporting person met two other hikers on the trail. One of these hikers ran ahead to the Great Divide Lodge while the other accompanied the reporting person down to Sherbrooke Lake and attempted to call for help using a cell phone.

At 6:47 p.m., a broken cell phone call came into Banff Dispatch from Sherbrooke Lake describing the incident, followed soon after by a call from the Great Divide Lodge. Three Visitor Safety staff flew to the accident site with Alpine Helicopters Inc., and after 10 to 15 minutes of searching they located the injured patient and friend. Two Visitor Safety staff slung into the accident site, packaged the patient with the help of the friend, and slung the patient out to the staging area 100 meters below. The patient was then loaded into the helicopter and flown to Lake Louise, where the scramblers were transferred to EMS for further treatment and ground transport to the Mineral Springs Hospital in Banff. After being assessed and stabilized in Banff, the patient was transported by STARS Air Ambulance to Calgary. The remaining rescuers and the friend were picked up by helicopter and brought down to Lake Louise just before dark.

ANALYSIS

This group had the experience and skills to complete this trip, and they made good decisions when the accident happened. They reached the patient as quickly as possible, carefully placed the patient in a position of comfort, and stopped the bleeding as best they could. They also wrapped the patient in warm clothing and placed extra padding beneath the patient to minimize heat loss. Subsequently they sent out a reporting person to call for help, which allowed just enough time to complete the rescue before dark. The assistance of the two hikers who the scrambler met on the trail was also key in getting the call for help out as quickly as possible.

There are several useful reminders that came out of this incident. The first is the importance of

checking your hand and footholds carefully when scrambling. Tapping a handhold or foothold to check its integrity prior to putting your weight on it will help you to move safely on steep terrain in the mountains.

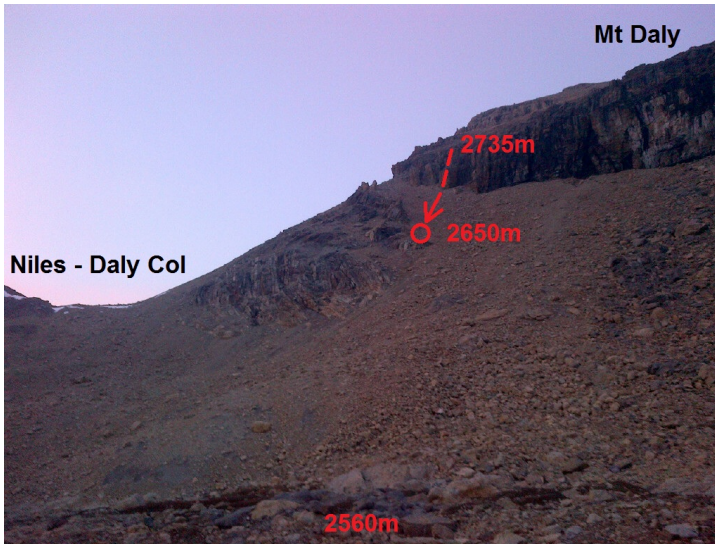
The second is the benefit of wearing a helmet while scrambling in steep terrain. Helmets are typically used in areas where falling rock or ice is expected, but they can also help minimize the consequences of a fall. While there is no way of knowing whether a helmet would have prevented a serious injury in a fall of this magnitude, wearing one might have benefited the patient.

The third reminder is the usefulness of having some form of emergency communication device, such as a satellite phone or satellite communicator like a Delorme® inReach or SPOT device. These devices can save significant amounts of time in a rescue response, as well as help pinpoint the exact location of the emergency. Devices that allow for two-way communication are particularly useful in establishing the nature and severity of the incident.

Finally, it is always a good idea to maximize the amount of daylight you have in case things go wrong. While this group had a reasonably early start, beginning even earlier would have given the rescue teams a bit more time, had it been required.

– Robert Chisnall, Alpine Club of Canada

Images



Accident location on the southwest slopes of Mt. Daly, as seen from the helicopter staging area.

Article Details

Author	Robert Chisnall, Alpine Club of Canada
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	69
Page	125
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Accident reports