



## AAC Publications

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### **Frostbite**

Alaska, Denali, West Buttress

**On June 12, guide Michael Horst of Alpine Ascents International contacted rangers by radio to say he was attending to a patient with frostbite at 17,200 feet.** The patient was stable and non-critical but had frostbitten all 10 fingers while setting up camp. Ranger Tucker Chenoweth, at 14,200 feet, consulted with Horst to facilitate basic care for frostbite. The following morning, Chenoweth and VIPs (Volunteers-in-Parks) Frank Prestion and Andrea Tupy climbed up to 16,200 feet. There they met the patient, who had descended with his own team from 17,200. Chenoweth lowered the patient down the fixed lines, while his team traveled down independently. At the bottom of the fixed lines, the patient, his team, and Chenoweth all roped together and descended to 14,200 feet and the NPS medical tent.

The patient's fingers were deemed to be unusable for his descent to base camp and a risk to himself and his team. The patient was flown from 14,200 camp by the NPS contract helicopter and released at base camp, and he flew out of the mountains via fixed-wing aircraft. (Source: Denali National Park Case Incident Record.)

### **ANALYSIS**

Early recognition of the signs of frostbite is essential. Had the patient realized he was in danger and let his teammates finish the work of setting up camp, he might have minimized the damage. Practice essential climbing and camp skills while wearing gloves or mittens. Liner gloves can protect against contact with metal tent poles, fuel bottles, etc. (Source: The Editors.)

See also "**Essentials: Frostbite**," by Denali ranger Dave Weber.

## Images

## Article Details

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