



AAC Publications

Fall on Snow – Glissading With Crampons

California, Mt. Shasta, Avalanche Gulch

On June 16 a female climber was descending the Avalanche Gulch Route with crampons on her boots. While glissading just below the Red Banks, at about 12,000 feet, both of her crampons caught in the snow, breaking her ankles and taking her for a good tumble. Other climbers splinted her ankles with ski poles, and a team of six helped her down the mountain. She was approximately 600 vertical feet above the Lake Helen ranger base camp when climbing ranger Matt Dooley arrived on scene.

The climber was in stable condition, with strong vital signs, but had sore ribs and could not bear weight on her feet. It was decided that a helicopter should be ordered due to the likelihood of two broken ankles. Dooley placed the climber on a short rope and assisted the team in getting her to Lake Helen base camp. A California Highway Patrol helicopter arrived at about 4 p.m. and flew her off the mountain.

ANALYSIS

The Mt. Shasta rangers constantly stress that climbers never should glissade while wearing crampons. Regardless, a few slip through the cracks. Double broken ankles should teach a powerful lesson. (Source: Mt. Shasta Wilderness Climbing Ranger Report 2015.)

Images

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