



AAC Publications

Fall on Snow or Ice

California, Mt. Shasta, Hotlum-Bolam Route

At approximately 10 a.m. on October 10, rangers Forrest Coots and Matt Dooley received a radio transmission reporting a climber (male, mid-20s) with a broken ankle on the Hotlum-Bolam Route. The climber reportedly fell above 12,000 feet on an ice sheet and tumbled some distance; his crampon eventually snagged and broke his ankle. His climbing partners retrieved a tent and sleeping bag from their campsite at 10,500 feet and sheltered the injured climber until help could arrive.

A California Highway Patrol helicopter was requested and available; however, gusty 50–60 mph winds prevented the helicopter from picking up the injured person. Coots and Dooley coordinated with Siskiyou County SAR, and at 1:45 p.m. they tied in with three members of the SAR team and started climbing toward the injured party. At 5:30 p.m., after three miles of steep climbing, the rescue team arrived on scene at 12,000 feet, higher than originally reported. Their location was on a scree ridge in the Bolam Glacier area. Coots assessed the climber and confirmed a broken ankle, then splinted and stabilized the injury. The team decided to get the injured climber down to the 10,000-foot base camp and reassess.

At 6 p.m. the team began their descent with the injured climber in a soft litter. The terrain was very rough and high winds made travel very slow. At 10 p.m. the team reached base camp, and Coots and Dooley decided to keep descending with the climber, with the help of the SAR team. An hour later, at 9,500 feet, the team was able to transfer the climber into a hard litter brought up by another SAR team and continue the descent. At 1:30 a.m. the rescue team reached a wheeled litter and continued toward the Northgate parking lot, which they reached at 4:30 a.m. The climber was transferred to the hospital by ambulance.

ANALYSIS

The injured climber was fortunate to have strong, able partners who could call for a rescue and care for the climber until help arrived. The rescuers made a good decision to continue the arduous descent throughout the night, getting the injured climber to the hospital as soon as possible. The doctors said if he had been out much longer, they might have had to amputate the foot due to vascular complications. (Sources: Mt. Shasta Wilderness Climbing Ranger Report 2015 and Siskiyou County SAR.)

Images



Rescuers carry an injured climber with a broken ankle down from 12,000 feet on Mt. Shasta. They reached the road at 4:30 a.m. Matt Dooley

Article Details

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