



## AAC Publications

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### Fall on Ice

Oregon, Mt. Jefferson, Jefferson Park Glacier

**A husband and wife team of experienced climbers, ages 32 and 29, were attempting to summit via the Jefferson Park Glacier on November 29. The two had to maneuver around a crevasse field and past an area of rockfall, and they encountered much hard ice on the glacier surface.** They crossed over to the Whitewater Glacier in hopes of finding sun and better snow conditions, but at 1:45 p.m., around 9,600 feet, they decided to turn back. After some discussion they elected to downclimb the way they had come.

By this point the climbers were getting tired, and the man began cutting steps into the ice to help his wife move down steep sections more easily. He would kick his crampons into the ice to get solid footing, then cut a step with his ice axe, move down a few feet, and do it again. At 3 p.m., while cutting one of these steps, the climber slipped and was unable to self-arrest. He fell approximately 500 feet and slid into a crevasse, at about 8,800 feet, suffering fatal injuries. The woman called for help via text message and spent the night on the mountain in difficult conditions before a team from Corvallis Mountain Rescue Unit could reach her early on Monday. The victim's remains were recovered by helicopter the following day. (Sources: Corvallis Mountain Rescue Unit and news reports.)

### ANALYSIS

Climbers have to be ready to adapt to changing or unexpected conditions, either by roping up (and belaying if necessary) or by retreating before climbing into difficulty. These two climbers were traveling unroped, and rescuers agreed this was not inappropriate for the route they were climbing: "We felt that this team of climbers were doing things right but fell victim to a tragic accident." (Source: The Editors.)

Editor's note: Another fatality on a central Oregon volcano occurred on September 20. A 22-year-old man fell approximately 700 feet after unroping atop the small summit pinnacle of Three Fingered Jack. Appropriate anchor systems should be maintained in such exposed locations.

**Images**

## Article Details

Author	Corvallis Mountain Rescue Unit
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	69
Page	90
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Accident reports