



AAC Publications

Stranded – Exposure, Weather

Washington, Mt. Rainier

On June 11, Kyle Bufis, 25, and his partners, Derek Gavelis and Mathew Wiech, topped out on the challenging Liberty Ridge route on the north flank of the mountain. After reaching Liberty Cap, the trio got caught in high winds and whiteout conditions. They decided to hunker down in a crevasse near Liberty Saddle, the broad col at over 14,000 feet between Liberty Cap and Rainier's main summit, and wait out the storm. They soon realized they'd left their stove behind while resting earlier. Bufis offered to retrieve it and left the crevasse. He never returned. The other two climbers sent a text message asking for help, and on June 12, unable to find their partner, they downclimbed in high winds to Camp Schurman and met rangers there. Bufis' body was located the following day, "several hundred meters" from where he was last seen. (Sources: Mt. Rainier National Park and news reports.)

ANALYSIS

Although it was admirable to volunteer to retrieve the stove, Bufis and the team would have been better off remaining in the relative shelter of the crevasse until conditions and visibility improved. The exact circumstances of his fate are unknown, but it's likely Bufis simply got lost in the whiteout, in an area of the mountain with few landmarks, and succumbed to exposure. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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