



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock

Canada, British Columbia, Yoho National Park, Chancellor Peak

On August 7, a pair of climbers set out to attempt a new route on the north face of Chancellor Peak. After climbing a considerable distance, they encountered poor conditions and decided to traverse to the northwest ridge to complete their ascent. As the lead climber was gaining the ridge, a hold broke and he fell 10 to 15 meters, sustaining injuries to his knee and a large laceration on his leg. The pair was able to move over to a small ledge where they used their first-aid skills to close the wound and stop the bleeding. However, they realized they would not be able to continue climbing, and they used their cell phone to call for a rescue.

At 8:37 p.m., Banff Dispatch received the call. After confirming the location of the climbers and determining there was enough daylight left to attempt to reach them, two Visitor Safety staff members flew out to the accident location with Alpine Helicopters Inc. The two climbers were located on a small ledge at an altitude of approximately 2,900 meters, and a staging area was set up at the Chancellor-Vaux Col (2,580 meters). Using a line below the helicopter, a Visitor Safety member was slung onto the ledge next to the climbers. The two climbers were then slung out to the Chancellor-Vaux Col, loaded into the helicopter, and flown to Lake Louise just before dark.

ANALYSIS

This accident took place in steep terrain near the end of the day. The fact that the injuries were relatively minor and that the climbers were rescued that night is largely a result of the preparedness and prompt actions of the climbing team.

The reporting person had a cell phone with good service and was able to provide Banff Dispatch with a very good description of their location and injuries. This good two-way communication also allowed Banff Dispatch to advise the climbers on how to get organized for the rescue, which helped the Visitor Safety team complete the mission before dark.

During the fall, the climber was flipped upside-down and fell headfirst. Fortunately, he was wearing a helmet. He stated that his helmet took several major impacts, but he did not sustain any head injuries.

The team had substantial knowledge of first aid and was able to assess and care for the injuries prior to the arrival of the Visitor Safety team. The climbers were also able to move to a safer and more accessible location and wait for help. These steps allowed for a very efficient rescue.

Finally, the team had enough equipment to spend the night outside, had this been required. This gear helped them stay warm while they waited for the arrival of the Visitor Safety team.

Images



Location of an accident and rescue on the northwest ridge of Chancellor Peak. Parks Canada

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