



## AAC Publications

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### **Leader Fall on Banff Ice Climb**

Canada, Alberta, Banff National Park, Professor Falls

**On February 21, a party was climbing Professor Falls on the slopes of Mt. Rundle and attempting to combine pitches in order to complete the route quickly.** The leader, a very experienced climber in his 50s, climbed and protected the upper portion of the second pitch, walked across a low-angle ice ledge to the base of the third pitch, and started up. As he stopped to place an ice screw, he slipped and fell, slid back across the ledge, and fell down the pitch he had just climbed. He fell approximately 30 meters before being stopped by his belayer just above the belay ledge. He fractured his pelvis, vertebrae, and ankle, along with other more minor injuries.

Nearby climbing parties assisted with stabilizing the patient, while a combination of a personal locator beacon and cell phone were used to call for help. At 2:45 p.m., three Parks Canada Visitor Safety staff were slung into the scene by helicopter. The patient was packaged, slung out to a waiting ambulance, and taken to the hospital in Banff.

### **ANALYSIS**

Why the climber fell is uncertain, but with a lot of rope out on low-angle ground, without any protection, he fell a long way. The easiest way to manage this hazard would have been to stop and belay on the sloping ledge, since protecting the low-angle ice would have resulted in a lot of rope drag for the leader on the next steep ice. The fact that he had protected the lower steep section, which allowed his belayer to stop him before the next ledge, certainly contributed to a better outcome.

This party was prepared with both a cell phone and a satellite communicator to call for help. As a result, the location and nature of the injury were quickly established, and the rescue was completed quickly. This helped prevent very serious injuries from becoming life-threatening.

## Images



Accident scene on Professor Falls, Mt. Rundle.



Diagram of accident scene on Professor Falls, Mt. Rundle.

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