



## AAC Publications

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### **Stranded on Mt. Hunter by Avalanche Danger**

Alaska, Mt. Hunter, West Ridge

**A climber departed Talkeetna on January 21 for a planned 65-day winter solo expedition on the west ridge of Mt. Hunter. At 7 a.m. on April 1, the Alaska Region Communication Center (ARCC) received an emergency notification and GPS coordinates from the climber's SPOT device.** At 10 a.m. the state's Rescue Coordination Center deployed two aircraft from Alaska Air National Guard to the GPS location of the SPOT notification. A fixed-wing aircraft was able to establish radio communication with the climber from above a thick cloud layer. The climber said he was at approximately 8,600 feet on the west ridge and was not injured but was low on food and fuel. He was unable to ascend or descend due to avalanche conditions, and he requested evacuation.

Weather prevented further rescue efforts for the remainder of April 1 and all of April 2. By this time, NPS mountaineering rangers Chris Erickson and Dave Weber and the park's contract H125 helicopter both had returned to Talkeetna from work elsewhere and were able to assume control of the mission. At noon on April 3, pilot Andreas Hermansky and rangers Erickson and Weber executed a successful short-haul evacuation of the climber via rescue basket and returned him to Talkeetna.

#### **ANALYSIS**

This climber was well prepared and traveled judiciously throughout his lengthy expedition. Even with ample arctic solo-expedition experience and sound logistical decision-making during his trip, the climber was stranded for nearly a week by a storm delivering high snowfall. As his supplies neared exhaustion at his camp on the ridge, he made, as he described it, "the horribly difficult decision" to call for a rescue. To his credit, this climber had contemplated myriad potential solutions and attempted numerous retreats before determining that he could not extract himself safely without assistance.

(Source: Denali Mountaineering Rangers.)

## Images



Red circle marks the location of a climber stranded on Mt. Hunter's west ridge by high avalanche danger during an attempted winter ascent.



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## Article Details

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