



## AAC Publications

---

### **Fall From Red Banks – Failure to Follow Route, Inexperience**

California, Mt. Shasta, Avalanche Gulch

**At 9:30 a.m. on August 11, I (Ranger Forrest Coots) received a call from Siskiyou County Search and Rescue coordinator Mike Burns while patrolling the lower elevations of the south side of Mt. Shasta.** Officer Burns stated that a 911 call had come in for an injured male climber in Avalanche Gulch. The climber had fallen off the Red Banks and down the upper mountain, left of the Heart, at about 12,500 feet.

Burns started the search for available aircraft, and California Highway Patrol (CHP) and Air National Guard helicopters responded out of Auburn and Sacramento. At noon, Burns received a call from a party who had downclimbed to the injured climber and stated that the climber was unconscious but breathing. At 12:30 p.m., the reporting party called back and said the injured climber might have stopped breathing.

The CHP helicopter H-24 landed at the Bunny Flat rescue cache at 1 p.m. and configured for lowering SAR members to the scene. However, winds prevented this operation. At 1:55 p.m., the Air National Guard's Spartan 630 arrived at Bunny Flat and successfully performed a hoist. The injured climber was transported to Mercy Medical Center in Mt. Shasta, where he was pronounced dead.

#### **ANALYSIS**

This climbing party was a father and son team. The father, 53, had some mountaineering experience, but the teenage son had never climbed. Other climbers on the mountain described the father and son ascending left of the Heart and attempting a much more difficult and dangerous route than usual through the Red Banks. The thin, icy gullies or chimneys through very loose pumice on the left side of the Red Banks are rarely climbed, and for good reason. The son was able to climb one of the ice chimneys, and he waited at the top for his father. As the older man was reaching the top of the chimney, the son heard his dad yell and saw him fall through the chimney and slide approximately 500 feet before coming to rest.

These two climbers were inexperienced and off route. The easier routes around the right side of the Red Banks formation are easily viewed from below, so it is unknown why these climbers chose to attempt the loose and more technical ice chimney. (Source: Ranger Forrest Coots, Mt. Shasta and Castle Crags Wilderness Climbing Ranger Report 2016.)

**CLEAR CREEK ROUTE FATALITY:** There was one other climbing fatality on Mt. Shasta during the 2016 season. On July 3, a 76-year-old man fell at approximately 9,600 feet on the Clear Creek Route, failed to self-arrest, and slid into a rock. The patient died from his injuries that night.

## Images



The Avalanche Gulch route with the Red Banks spanning the top of the photo. The normal routes breach the Red Banks on their right side.

## Article Details

Author	Ranger Forrest Coots / Mt. Shasta and Castle Crags Wilderness Climbing Ranger R
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	70
Page	37
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Accident reports