Crevasse Fall – Climbing Unroped

Alaska, Alaska Range, Denali

At 2:40 p.m. on May 26, Alpine Ascents International (AAI) guide Stuart Robertson reported that a climber on an independent team had fallen into a crevasse while traveling unroped at 8,300 feet on Denali's West Buttress Route. Robertson and fellow AAI guide Michael Hutchins extracted the verbally responsive climber from about 20 meters below the glacier surface while NPS personnel organized evacuation plans. The guides had the patient out of the crevasse at 3:02 p.m. Following an assessment of the 45-year-old male climber by Hutchins, further NPS assistance was requested. As the patient's mental status returned to normal, his chief complaint was severe flank pain; the guides also were concerned about hypothermia.The patient was monitored in a tent until NPS personnel arrived on scene.

Rangers determined that the potential for a lower back injury meant the most appropriate means of transport would be to wait for clear weather to fly the patient to Talkeetna in a vacuum mattress and cervical collar for full spinal-motion restriction. Mountaineering ranger Mik Shain and two NPS volunteers monitored the patient through the night. The following morning, helicopter pilot Andreas Hermansky, with NPS volunteer Jeff Lane as an attendant, flew the patient to Talkeetna, where he transferred to an ambulance at 11:12 a.m.

ANALYSIS

All five of the climbers in this team were on skis but not roped together. Although skis or snowshoes add a margin of safety, rangers discourage unroped or solo travel on Denali's glaciers. Whether roped or unroped, every member of the team mustbe prepared with both the skills and the equipment to rescue their companions.These climbers had to rely on the good will and fortunate timing of other climbers in the vicinity to rescue their partner. (Source: Denali Mountaineering Rangers.)

Images

Article Details

Author	Denali Mountaineering Rangers
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	71
Page	22
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Accident reports