



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Snow – Failure to Self-Arrest, Loss of Equipment**

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Mt. Owen

**On August 26, at 12:30 p.m., ranger Jim Springer received a cell phone call from two climbers attempting the Koven Route on Mt. Owen.** (A second pair in the same party was attempting the route separately.) According to the caller, the climbers were attempting to traverse around to the south side of the summit when the one of them (female, age 23) slipped on snow and began sliding. She was unable to self-arrest and then lost her ice axe. She impacted a rock ledge at the base of the snowfield, injuring her left ankle.

After speaking with ranger Springer, the two climbers and their friends decided to attempt their own rescue by descending the Koven Couloir to their camp on the Teton Glacier. It took approximately six hours to rappel and downclimb the couloir. Back at their camp, the group of four decided to call again for help. At 8:30 p.m., one of them hiked to Amphitheater Lake to get cell service and called Springer, who advised them to be prepared for evacuation in the morning. The patient and her partner were flown to Lupine Meadows the next day. (Source: National Park Service Search and Rescue Report.)

#### **ANALYSIS**

Nearly every year, climbers are injured or killed due to falls on snow in the Tetons, compounded by their inability to self-arrest. Prevention of falls on snow and ice begins with assessing snow conditions and using the appropriate boots and equipment, as well as good footwork on snow of varying angles and proper use of an ice axe. Practice self-arrest before entering terrain with serious consequences. “Danger Zones: The Grand Teton” (Accidents 2016) and “Know the Ropes: Snow Climbing” (Accidents 2014) are good basic references. Field training with a guide or skilled mentor is the best way to learn. (Source: The Editors.)

## Images

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