



AAC Publications

Sliding Fall on Skis – Failure to Self-Arrest

New Hampshire , Mt. Washington, Hillman's Highway

On February 25, after climbing two-thirds of the way up Hillman's Highway and not finding a ton of good snow, our group transitioned for an icy ski descent. There was a small ribbon of wind slab on the skiers' right side of the slide. My two partners sideslipped the ice to a good point of safety. I tried the wind slab, but after a few untrustworthy turns, I bailed for the more predictable icy surface. However, on my second turn, I went down and started to slide.

I have practiced self-arresting on snow with a Whippet [self-arrest pole grip] and skis on, but not on ice. I tried to self-arrest with no luck. I slid for about 200 feet before managing to slow myself down in some soft snow piled on top of a rock. Unfortunately, as I came to a stop, I fell off the side of the rock, landing on my shoulder and dislocating it. My partners and I tried to reset the joint with no luck. We slung and secured my arm, I transitioned to crampons, and we self-rescued down to Pinkham Notch. (Source: Anonymous report to Mount Washington Avalanche Center.)

ANALYSIS

Once momentum is gained from an unchecked fall, it is doubtful that self-arrest ski poles or even a well-deployed ice axe would work on an icy and steep surface like the one encountered in this report. Skis also complicate self-arrest, because they may hinder a person from rolling into the best position. Downclimbing, rappelling, or sideslipping icy sections will be more secure than attempting to turn. (Sources: Mount Washington Avalanche Center and the Editors.)

Images

Article Details

Author	Anonymous report to Mount Washington Avalanche Center
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	72
Page	64
Copyright Date	2019
Article Type	Accident reports