



AAC Publications

Fatal Slip During Descent – No Helmet

Washington, North Cascades, Washington Peak

About 3:50 p.m. on August 4, climbers used an inReach device to notify the North Cascades Communication Center that a man had fallen while descending Forbidden Peak (8,816 feet) and was in need of help. The man was later identified as Eric Lindblom (60).

After a summit attempt on the west ridge, Lindblom and three others were descending unroped on moderately exposed slabs above their bivouac site in Boston Basin. The rock was wet from snowmelt and slippery. Lindblom lost his footing and fell about 90 feet, landing in a pool of glacier water. He survived the fall but was unconscious and had a fractured leg and severe skull fracture. He had removed his helmet shortly before his fall.

Park personnel gave the climbers instructions on how to care for Lindblom while a rescue attempt began. A helicopter crew arrived around 5 p.m., and Lindblom was pronounced dead just before 6 p.m., having never regained consciousness. (Sources: North Cascades National Park incident reports and published accounts.)

ANALYSIS

Accidents happen on the way to and from climbs, not just on the route. Wearing a helmet until the descent was completed could have meant a less tragic outcome. It's quite possible that fatigue and haste also played a role in the fall. A storm was moving in (rain, wind, and lightning hampered the rescue operation), and the team may have felt time pressure. Timeliness is often critical in the alpine, but in exposed terrain it's important to move cautiously, choose your route carefully, and rest frequently. (Source: The Editors.)

FORBIDDEN PEAK RESCUES: The Navy search and rescue team based on Whidbey Island conducted two helicopter rescues on Forbidden Peak in the summer of 2018. On June 19, two climbers were hoisted from the mountain in a nighttime operation. On August 2, the Navy crew rescued a climber who had fallen at around 7,500 feet and was wedged between rock and ice with multiple fractures. Additional details were not available.

Images

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