



AAC Publications

Stranded – Off-Route, Inadequate Protection, Darkness

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Teewinot Mountain

On June 16, at 11:23 p.m., Teton Interagency Dispatch Center received a call from an uninjured father (33) and son (13) in the vicinity of the southwest couloir of Teewinot, at roughly 11,000 feet. They reported leaving the trailhead that morning at 9:30 to climb the east face of Teewinot. They had carried ice axes but no crampons, one headlamp, and one rain jacket between them. By 11 p.m., they reported, they had made six rappels down the southwest side of Teewinot, then stopped as they did not want to continue rappelling with one headlamp into unknown terrain. They were not carrying overnight gear. Light rain and lightning persisted between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. Coordinates for the father and son were found via a 911 “ping” as well as the Gaia app on the father’s smart phone. At 2:30 on June 17, a ranger team headed up the mountain, and at 7:30 a.m. they made contact with the two individuals and began a technical snow lower into Glacier Gulch. After warming the father and son, the rangers walked everyone out to the Lupine Meadows Trailhead. (Source: National Park Service Search and Rescue Report.)

ANALYSIS

These two were under-equipped and under-prepared for a climb as significant as Teewinot in mid-June, when the east face is a moderate but long snow climb. They started much too late for such a big route (more than 5,500 vertical feet). Asked why they did not return down the east face route, the father told rangers he was not comfortable descending the terrain they had just ascended, even though they were equipped to rappel. Instead, they headed down unfamiliar technical terrain. The two made a good decision to stop when they did, as continuing down in darkness and storm, with only one headlamp and significant fatigue, might have led to a much worse outcome. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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