



AAC Publications

Crevasse Fall–Snowboarding, Unable to Self-Arrest

Alaska, Denali, West Buttress

On May 8, a 42-year-old male climber fell while descending on a snowboard at Windy Corner (approximately 13,500 feet). The climber lost an edge while traversing, fell, and was unable to arrest his slide before dropping into a large open crevasse. The climber fractured multiple ribs when he landed at the bottom. The party was unable to self-rescue due to the significant pain from the climber's injuries. His climbing partner alerted the NPS rangers in Talkeetna of the incident, requested assistance, and was in regular contact throughout this extended rescue. The climbers were able to set up camp inside the crevasse, and due to adverse weather and winds at the location, they were forced to shelter there for five days until NPS personnel were able to reach them via ground and air. Ultimately, the climber and partner were rescued via helicopter short-haul.

ANALYSIS

Denali provides the unusual—and often dreaded—opportunity to ski or snowboard downhill while roped and with heavy loads. These skills are often new to climbers, and extreme care should be taken—many expeditions and climbing seasons have ended due to injuries sustained during these activities. Consider double-carrying equipment down through zones with high fall likelihood or descending on foot through these sections. (Source: Denali Mountaineering Rangers.)

Images



The mid-elevation area of the West Buttress route on Denali, showing (A) Windy Corner, (B) 14,200-foot camp, (C) headwall with fixed ropes leading to the upper West Buttress, and (D) Denali Pass. Summit is off-picture to the right.

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