



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall at Bergschrund–Inexperience**

Alaska, Denali, West Buttress

**On May 10, a 65-year-old male climber injured both knees (injury details unknown) during a fall at 15,200 feet on the West Buttress route. He was attempting to surmount the bergschrund at the base of the fixed lines on this steep section of the route when he fell.** This climber was alone, but he was able to crawl down to 14,200-foot camp and notify NPS personnel by radio of his need for a rescue. The climber also developed frostbite injuries to his fingers during the crawl back to camp. Another climbing team in camp assisted the injured climber until he could be flown off the mountain three days later when the weather cleared.

#### **ANALYSIS**

The bergschrund at the base of the headwall leading from 14,200-foot camp to the crest of the West Buttress can be a substantial obstacle, especially while carrying a heavy pack. This early season climber was clipped to a fixed line but still fell hard enough to injure his knees. Although he was able to self-rescue to the camp 1,000 feet below the scene of his accident, he required other climbers to care for his injuries while awaiting rescue. The need for conservative decision-making and self-reliance when climbing alone cannot be overstated. (Source: Denali Mountaineering Rangers.)

## Images

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