



AAC Publications

Skiing Fall

Alaska, Denali, West Buttress

On May 20, a 24-year-old male climber fell while skiing above 14,200-foot camp. The skier was assessed and treated for a suspected dislocated right hip by NPS rescuers and then transported in a rescue toboggan back to camp. After further assessment and with consultation, NPS rangers determined this climber should be flown to definitive care for reduction of a likely dislocation.

ANALYSIS

Extremely varied snow conditions exist in the Alaska Range. This is especially true at higher elevations, due to the greater effect of wind and other weather. Skiers and snowboarders should ride defensively at all times. This skier was fortunate in that he was relatively close to a camp with rescue personnel and because flyable weather allowed for efficient helicopter evacuation. If those two factors had not been in his favor, an extended time period with a dislocated hip could have had a vastly different outcome. (Source: Denali Mountaineering Rangers.)

SKIING ON DENALI: The 2019 Annual Mountaineering Summary for Denali noted a “disturbing trend” of more climbers skiing and snowboarding above 14,200-foot camp on the West Buttress route. “The drastic and variable ski conditions found on the upper mountain are often well above the abilities of the climbers witnessed by the ranger staff,” the report said. “There is terrific terrain for skiing on Denali, but that terrain has high— and possibly fatal—consequences. This fact must be considered and prior experience should be gained before skiing/snowboarding during a climbing expedition.”

Images

Article Details

Author	Denali Mountaineering Rangers
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	73
Page	21
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Accident reports