



AAC Publications

High Altitude Pulmonary Edema

Alaska, Denali, West Buttress

Late in the evening on June 22, a team of five climbers began calling for help over the radio. This team had ascended to the Football Field at 19,500 feet on the West Buttress when one of their teammates became ill. The sick climber, a 67-year-old male, seemed unable to descend. With medical guidance over the radio from NPS rangers and help from a guided group in the vicinity, the group was able to slowly descend. The patient was helped down from Denali Pass to 17,200-foot camp by NPS rescuers and then treated in high camp throughout the night for symptoms of HAPE. With minimal improvement by morning, a call was made to evacuate this patient by helicopter for further care.

ANALYSIS

It's fortunate that this climber's team, other climbers in the area, and rangers were able to assist the climber down to high camp, as helicopter rescues at the elevation of the Football Field are rare. (Source: Denali Mountaineering Rangers.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: For the second season in a row, there were no climbing-related fatalities from accidents or illnesses in Denali National Park.

Images

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