



## AAC Publications

---

### **Slip on Ice While Descending – Unable to Self-Arrest**

California, High Sierra, Mt. Sill, North Couloir

**Two 23-year-old males were descending the L-shaped snow field below Mt. Sill's North Couloir in the late afternoon of October 20. Both were wearing helmets and crampons and using ice axes to descend extremely firm, sun-cupped, late-season snow.** One climber slipped and tumbled approximately 400 feet, destroying his helmet and sustaining unknown but severe injuries. His partner notified the Inyo County Sheriff's Office via his Garmin inReach. A helicopter attempted to rescue the patient that night but was unable to land or hoist due to the high elevation (about 13,200 feet) and gusty north winds. The patient succumbed before rescuers could reach him.

On October 21, Inyo County Search and Rescue team members were inserted by helicopter near the patient's location. The helicopter hoisted the deceased climber, and the SAR team assisted his partner to a point where they could be extracted.

#### **ANALYSIS**

Late-season snow is typically very icy and can be difficult to ascend or descend safely, even for experienced climbers. A single misstep in firm conditions can easily lead to a sliding or tumbling fall that is nearly impossible to arrest. Climbers should consider running belays or snow-free routes if they have concerns about either their level of experience or the level of risk. (Source: Inyo County Search and Rescue.)

**Images**

## Article Details

Author	Inyo County Search and Rescue
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	73
Page	44
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Accident reports