



AAC Publications

Unroped Falls in Class III/IV Terrain

Montana, Beartooth Mountains, Granite Peak, Southwest Ramp

Two falls occurred within the same week in August on the Southwest Ramp route of Granite Peak, the highest point in Montana. On August 20, a 50-year-old female climber slipped on a section of snow in the couloir portion of the route and was unable to self-arrest. She tumbled approximately 300 feet through rocky terrain and suffered a severe head injury along with fractures to an arm and leg. Her partner, along with help from another party, was able to contact search and rescue, and the injured climber was short-hauled from the mountain and transferred to a local hospital.

On August 24, a 65-year-old male climber fell approximately 50 to 100 feet after losing his footing in fourth-class terrain about 200 feet below the summit. At this point on the climb, the couloir ends and the route-finding becomes more challenging; the terrain can go from third-to fourth-class very quickly if you get off-route. The climber sustained extensive injuries, and efforts by his son (33) and other climbers to resuscitate him were unsuccessful.

ANALYSIS

Although the Southwest Ramp (sometimes called the Southwest Couloir) is climbable without a rope, many trip reports recommend carrying one for use by parties who are uncomfortable in exposed class III and IV terrain and to allow for an easier descent via rappel. See "Know the Ropes: Safer 4th Class" in *Accidents 2018* for more ideas on moving safely and efficiently through such terrain.

(Sources: Gallatin County Search and Rescue and the Editors.)

Images

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