



AAC Publications

Fall on Ice – Inexperience, Climbing Alone

Oregon, Mt. Hood, South Side

On May 5, an inexperienced 39-year-old solo climber slipped while traversing a summit route, falling several hundred feet into a fumarole in the Hot Rocks area. With the assistance of another climber who witnessed the fall, he extracted himself, but he had suffered minor abrasions, lacerations, and bruises during the slide. A nearby Portland Mountain Rescue (PMR) member escorted the climber down to the Timberline Ski Area for a medical evaluation. The climber was wearing a helmet, which likely prevented more serious injuries.

ANALYSIS

Solo climbing on Mt. Hood should be undertaken only by experienced climbers. Identifying hazardous conditions, terrain, and changing weather requires experience that is best gained with qualified partners. In some cases, the terrain characteristics (slope, ice, etc.) may make self-arrest exceedingly difficult, even when it's practiced regularly. For difficult surface conditions and high-consequence exposure, climbers should consider using a rope and belay to limit fall distances. When climbing above fumaroles, the risk of toxic gas exposure adds to the danger of falls. (Source: Jeff Scheetz and Pearce Beissinger, Portland Mountain Rescue.)

Images

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