



## AAC Publications

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### **Slide on Snow – Inadequate Equipment**

Utah, Wasatch Range, Mt. Olympus, West Slabs

**On June 9, Salt Lake County Search and Rescue (SLCOSAR) assisted an injured climber who had fallen while descending Mt. Olympus.** A team of three climbers, including the 27-year-old female, had descended from the West Slabs route, a long, moderate rock climb, and entered the gully at the bottom of the slabs. This approach gully is steep and narrow and often stays filled with snow until early summer. The woman slipped on the snow, and without an ice axe to self-arrest, she slid into a large snow moat. She dropped about 12 to 15 feet into the moat, hitting rocks at the bottom and suffering a puncture wound to her left calf, broken ribs on the right, and an open fracture of her right lower leg.

SLCOSAR sent several members to hike up from the bottom of the mountain, and two members were inserted by helicopter just above the injured party. The two teams got to the patient about the same time and began treating her and prepping her for extraction. The team was able to build snow anchors and move her out of the moat to a location where she could be helicoptered off the mountain.

### **ANALYSIS**

There are several descents from this popular route, none of them quick or easy. For the gully approach or descent, an ice axe (and possibly crampons) is recommended for each climber when snow is present. If this climber had been carrying an axe and had the know-how, she likely could have arrested before sliding into the moat. (Sources: Salt Lake County Search and Rescue and the Editors.)

**LOST ON DESCENT FROM WEST SLABS ROUTE:** On July 28, three female climbers became stranded high on Mt. Olympus after climbing the West Slabs route and getting lost on the descent. The three summited the mountain after completing the climb late in the day and did not locate the descent trail, but instead dropped into Tolcat Canyon to the south of the main trail. Around 10:30 p.m., they called for help. Salt Lake County Search and Rescue members started up the mountain around 12:30 a.m. At 2:30 a.m., a Utah Department of Public Safety helicopter was able to locate and pick up the stranded climbers.

**Images**

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