



AAC Publications

Fall on Ice – Crevasse Fall – Roped with no Protection

Washington, Mt. Baker, Squak Glacier

About 6:30 a.m. on August 31, a male climber (54) was injured while trying to ascend Mt. Baker via the Squak Glacier. His party of three roped climbers was moving up the dry, bare-ice glacier using a 60-meter rope, with approximately 10 meters between each climber. The middle climber slipped after turning a corner and fell, pulling the lead climber and the trailing climber off their feet. The leader was pulled into a four-foot-deep crevasse, where he became wedged, thus arresting his fall as well as the slides of his partners. The leader suffered numerous injuries, including a puncture wound and fractured lower jaw from his ice axe, three fractured ribs, and a fractured wrist. The middle and trailing climbers suffered only minor bruising.

ANALYSIS

The Squak Glacier is considered an easy snow climb in spring and early summer, and while climbers will be roped up for crevasses, running protection (screws, pickets, etc.) is typically not used. In late season, glaciers in the Cascades often have a firm snow or hard ice surface, and stopping a slip from becoming a slide is difficult. Protection should be considered. The distance between climbers on the rope drastically affects the ability to hold a fall. Typically, climbers should stay closer together on bare ice or firm conditions. On easy ground, consider unroping to not jeopardize the entire team. (Sources: Kaf Adventures and the Editors.)

Images

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