



## AAC Publications

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### Fall Into Moat – Hypothermia

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Teewinot

**On July 25, a very experienced 71-year-old climber called for help from Teewinot, where he was climbing the standard east face route.** At around 10:30 a.m., while attempting to transition onto rock at 10,500 feet from the top of a large snow field, he broke through the snow surface and fell 20 to 40 feet into a moat. The climber spent the next hour digging himself out of the slot, as meltwater ran down and soaked him. He suffered injuries to his lower extremities, right shoulder (possible dislocation), several abrasions, and hypothermia with severe shivering. He called for help around noon.

A helicopter happened to be in the area, training with rangers, and was able to respond immediately. After flying by to view the accident site with three rangers on board, the helicopter was rigged for short-haul at the Lupine Meadows rescue cache, and two rangers were inserted at about 1 p.m. A medical evaluation determined the need for immediate evacuation via screamer suit due to worsening hypothermia. The patient arrived back in Lupine Meadows at about 1:30 p.m.

After rewarming and evaluation by medical personnel from the park ambulance, the patient declined further medical assistance and self-transported to St. John's Medical Center in Jackson, where he was treated. (Source: Grand Teton National Park Search and Rescue Report.)

### ANALYSIS

Moats are the crevasse-like slots that form between steep alpine snow elds and adjacent rock walls. They are serious hazards to climbers or skiers falling from above or, as in this case, trying to transition from snow to rock or vice-versa. Because rock walls frequently angle underneath a snowpack, a climber or skier may slide far underneath the snow and be trapped. Rescue can be more difficult than from a similar depth of crevasse. In this case, the climber was alone and thus had little chance of outside help. He was fortunate he was able to escape before dangerously weakening from hypothermia and his injuries. (Source: The Editors.)

**Images**

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