



AAC Publications

Preface

Last year was a strange one for climbers, to say the least. COVID-19 seems to have brought far more climbers to some areas—with an increase in accidents—while other areas had unusually low numbers, primarily because of long COVID-related closures. (We had no reports at all from Denali National Park, for example.) On balance, the number of incidents and fatalities was down in 2020 compared with recent years.

We've introduced three new items this year. First, with the support of adidas Outdoors, we have translated the 2020 edition of ANAC into Spanish. This project is intended to increase access to our work in North America (especially Mexico) and throughout the Spanish-speaking world. The effort was led by Mexican climber Omar Gaytán, with help from a crew of Mexican and U.S. volunteers. The PDF of *Accidentes de Escalada en Norteamérica* can be downloaded for free at the AAC website.

We've also updated our annual data tables with some new categories, tracking accidents by climbing style and "rope position" (leading, top-roping, rappelling, etc.).

We've updated some accident causes to better reflect modern climbing and archived others. (The archived tables are at publications.americanalpineclub.org.) Colorado climber Bill Kinter worked hard to make these revisions possible.

Our biggest addition is a new section on backcountry skiing and snowboarding avalanches. This publication has always covered avalanches, but not backcountry touring. Now we're reporting on a selection of incidents from the latest winter season, drawing on the incredible analyses published by various U.S. avalanche centers. Professional skier Hilaree Nelson, a member of the AAC board of directors, inspired this project, which was assisted by ANAC team members Michelle Leber and Gary O'Brien. Let us know what you think: accidents@americanalpineclub.org. Most avalanche centers use similar language in reports about fatalities, such as this paragraph from the Shasta Avalanche Center: "Fatal avalanche accidents are tragic events. We describe them to help people involved and the community as a whole to better understand them. We offer these comments in hope that they will help people avoid future avalanche accidents and offer our condolences to family, friends, and others affected by this unfortunate event." The same spirit of knowledge building and information sharing, tempered with sensitivity to the anguish suffered in our community after any accident, steers all of our work at this publication.

Images

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