



AAC Publications

Fall on Snow — Inadequate Equipment

New Hampshire, Mt. Washington, Tuckerman Ravine

Around noon on March 9, the AMC Hermit Lake caretaker reported seeing a person “tomahawking”—i.e., falling end over end—the length of the gully called Chute in Tuckerman Ravine. The caretaker and a snow ranger responded and were pleased to find the patient had no apparent injuries. The person walked to Hermit Lake and was assisted down to the road by snow machine.

It was reported that at the time of the fall the man was climbing near the top of Chute wearing leather boots with micro-spikes and no ice tool. He carried ski boots and skis on his back-pack. The snow was still firm, barely softened by the sun.

ANALYSIS

Safe climbing of steep snow—especially hard snow—requires stiff boots and the skilled use of crampons and an ice axe (or two) to prevent a fall. When climbing without the protection of a rope and belay, preventing a fall is a climber or skier’s primary means of safety, since arresting a fall on steep, hard snow is difficult with an ice axe and impossible without. (Source: Mount Washington Avalanche Center.)

Images



A ski mountaineer fell several hundred feet down Chute in Tuckerman Ravine while attempting to approach a ski descent using inadequate crampons and no ice axe.

Article Details

Author	Mount Washington Avalanche Center
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	74
Page	69
Copyright Date	2021
Article Type	Accident reports