



## AAC Publications

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### Fall Into Hidden Fumarole

Oregon, Mt. Hood, South Side

**On December 4, a climber, Caroline Sundbaum, 32, of Portland, fell 15 feet into a fumarole on Mt. Hood, injuring her shoulder.** Sundbaum, whose two climbing partners had continued up the mountain ahead of her, had sat on her pack to rest at the top of the White River Glacier canyon, downslope from Devil's Kitchen, at approximately 11,200 feet. Another climber saw her sit down. A few moments later, when he looked back, she had disappeared.

The climber realized there was a hole in the snow where Sundbaum had been sitting, called 911, and made his way over to the fumarole. He lowered a rope to Sundbaum, and she was able to secure herself with the rope and be hoisted out to safety.

A member of Portland Mountain Rescue (PMR) happened to be on Mt. Hood at the time and headed toward the scene to assist, as did Sundbaum's two climbing partners, who had learned about the accident. Sundbaum injured her shoulder, but with help she was able to make her way to the top of the Palmer lift, where a Sno-Cat picked her up for transport down the mountain.

### ANALYSIS

Very fortunately, another climber witnessed this incident—it would have been extremely difficult to locate Sundbaum otherwise, since her party had separated.

The air inside fumaroles can be toxic and potentially deadly. Mt. Hood is an active volcano and hot gases from fumaroles create large hidden cavities, ranging from a few feet to 20 feet high. These holes may be hidden by a blanket of snow, and a climber can easily break through the roof of these cavities, where gases may collect in deadly concentrations.

Fumarole cavities form in the same general areas every year—the most familiar are Hot Rocks and Devil's Kitchen—and are often revealed by depressions in the snow surface or open holes in the snow. If you do not know where the fumarole areas are, ask knowledgeable climbers. Know before you go. (Sources: Clackamas County Sheriff's Office and Portland Mountain Rescue.)

## Images



Site of climber's fall into a hidden fumarole.

## Article Details

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