

## Falling Ice – Running in Crampons to Escape Debris

Washington, North Cascades National Park, Mt. Goode

On September 5, two experienced climbers (female, 32, and male, 36) were attempting to climb the Northeast Buttress of Mt. Goode. A little after 10 a.m., as they were trying to cross from the Goode Glacier onto the start of the rock route, a large piece of ice broke free from the gully above. As chunks of ice began to fall toward the party, the female climber, who was more exposed to the falling ice, ran downhill. During this effort to escape the ice, she caught her crampons on the glacier, stumbled, and fell. She was able to quickly self-arrest and avoided being struck by any of the large chunks of ice. However, due to the fall, the climber injured both ankles (with the crampons likely contributing to the severity of the injury).

The party decided to descend quickly, as they were still exposed to icefall. They made a strong effort to self-evacuate and were able to descend from 5,800 feet to 4,100 feet using a variety of self-rescue techniques. At about 7:30 p.m., the party realized they would not able to descend any further and activated their inReach device to request help. The following morning, National Park Service rangers responded via helicopter, and both climbers were extracted via short-haul.

## ANALYSIS

In a post-rescue interview, the climbers stated that their packs weighed about 40 pounds each, which likely contributed to the injuries sustained when the climber fell. (The party was planning a five-day traverse over Goode, Storm King, and Booker Mountain). It was also noted that running in crampons led to the ankle injuries; however, not running could have led to more severe injury due to the falling ice.

The crux of this route is often crossing the Goode Glacier and getting onto the rock, due to the large moat. The party stated they had difficulty finding a reasonable crossing and spent a fair amount of time searching for a route. During this time, they were exposed to overhead hazards. Lastly, the party stated that getting an earlier start (before the temperature warmed) could have mitigated the icefall hazards. (Their departure time was not recorded, but they had camped just below the glacier.) On climbing routes involving snow and ice, the season, temperature, and time of day all may contribute to less safe conditions.

Overall, this party was prepared with the right gear, a communication device, and knowledge of self-rescue techniques, and they made a strong effort to self-evacuate. (Source: North Cascades National Park Mountaineering Rangers.)

## Images



On the Goode Glacier, approaching the north side of Mt. Goode.



The area where falling ice led to an accident on the Goode Glacier.



View of the north side of Mt. Goode, showing the approach to the northeast buttress and high camp and emergency bivouac after the accident.



The north side of Mt. Goode, above the Goode Glacier. (A) Site of the accident, where ice fell from the gully above as climbers tried to reach the rock buttress. (B) High camp at 5,700 feet. (C) Emergency bivouac and evacuation site at 4,100 feet.

## **Article Details**

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