



## AAC Publications

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### **Falling Ice — Poor Protection**

New Hampshire, Rumney

**In midafternoon on March 12, a female climber (21) was hit by falling ice at the right end of the Parking Lot Wall at Rumney Rocks.** She was standing at the base of the 75-foot-high Meadow Flows ice climb (WI3+) when a piece of ice naturally fell from an upper section of the climb. She was hit and reportedly knocked unconscious. Members of her climbing party assisted her and called 911. Other climbers were able to retrieve a Stokes litter stored about 100 yards away in the Parking Lot area.

Rumney Fire Department rescue personnel, with mutual aid of the Wentworth Fire Department, quickly responded to the 911 call. They contacted Dartmouth Hitchcock Advanced Response Team (DHART) for assistance, with an initial report of an unconscious person and possible head injury. Rescue personnel reached the injured within about 15 minutes, at which time she had been placed into the litter and regained consciousness. She was further stabilized, with preliminary assessment of broken ribs and back injuries. The litter was carried about 150 yards to an improvised helicopter landing zone in the campground meadow across the road from the incident site. She was flown to the DHART hospital facilities in Hanover, New Hampshire.

### **ANALYSIS**

In any ice climbing location, icefall is a constant hazard. At the time of the incident, the air temperature was in the mid-40s (F) and the ice was in the sun. In this incident, the climber was a novice and may not have been aware she was standing in a hazard zone. Always seek sheltered positions when traversing, standing, or belaying below ice formations. Be extra cautious below steep walls, discontinuous ice, and ice curtains. If you are responsible for novices, make sure they appreciate this hazard as well.

The climber was fortunate the incident occurred close to a road, with a litter nearby, and was quickly accessible to rescue personnel. It is not known if she was wearing a helmet. (Sources: Chief David Coursey, Rumney Fire Department, and the Editors.)

**Images**

## Article Details

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