



## AAC Publications

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### **Avalanche**

Canada, Alberta, Columbia Icefield, Mt. Andromeda

**In the morning of May 30, two Alberta climbers, Nathaniel Johnson (28) and Andrew Abel (30), were climbing the classic Skyladder on Mt. Andromeda.** They were experienced climbers: Abel was an apprentice guide, and Johnson was a Level 2 climbing gym instructor.

Around 7:45 a.m. the climbers were caught in an avalanche. Peter Tucker, executive director of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, said in a press release that it cannot be determined whether the climbers were caught in the path of an avalanche that started far above them or if they somehow triggered it. He added that the slide “wasn’t survivable” and that “they were carried down a slope a very long way.”

Parks Canada further reported on the Mountain Information Network that the avalanche was “directly observed and reported immediately. Initial speculation is that the pair triggered the slide and were climbing, short-rope together.” The report said the avalanche was a size 2.5, 60 meters (196 feet) wide, 75 centimeters (30 inches) deep, and ran for 900 meters (3,000 feet). Specific conditions data for the day were unavailable, but conditions were such that a number of other teams were climbing on Andromeda and neighboring Athabasca at the time of the avalanche.

### **ANALYSIS**

Skyladder is a popular alpine outing that presents an attractive profile from the Trans-Canada Highway. The relatively short approach and moderate difficulty (on paper at least) make it an appealing objective. Like any mountain in a serious range like the Canadian Rockies, Andromeda requires advanced knowledge and keen avalanche awareness to climb safely. It has claimed numerous lives over the years. The “Know the Ropes” article in the 2020 edition of Accidents (“Avalanches: Spring and Summer Hazards for Mountaineers”) is an excellent resource. (Sources: Edmonton Journal, Parks Canada, Grippped.com, and the Editors.)

## Images



Path of the avalanche that killed two climbers on May 30. The slide traveled 900 vertical meters (3,000 feet).

## Article Details

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