



AAC Publications

FALL ON ICY TERRAIN

California, Mt. Shasta, Avalanche Gulch

In the afternoon of May 21, a mother (62) and daughter were descending the Avalanche Gulch route. They were unfamiliar with the route and attempted to descend the climber's left side of the Red Banks, a steep, reddish band of cliffs. The narrow chutes through that part of the cliff are very steep and typically icy. They are climbed rarely but never descended, as this would require technical downclimbing in steep terrain. At some point, the two climbers fell together over the vertical cliff. The mother suffered major head trauma; she was in and out of consciousness, vomiting, had rales in the lungs, and experienced severe bleeding from the head.

A California Highway Patrol helicopter was dispatched and inserted ranger Forrest Coots to the location, to climber's left of the Heart area at 12,600 feet. Coots quickly packaged the patient in a Bauman Bag, and the climber was safely hoisted off the mountain. The patient was transferred to a medical helicopter in the Old Ski Bowl and transported to Mercy Redding trauma center. It was expected that she would make a full recovery. The daughter suffered minor injuries.

ANALYSIS

The descent can be the crux of any mountain route, especially if one loses track of their position. To avoid getting cliffed out, it's a good idea to take note of key features while ascending, so you can use these as landmarks by which to navigate during the descent. Carrying an image of the mountain for orientation also is helpful. (Source: Mt. Shasta Climbing Rangers.)

Images

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