



AAC Publications

STRANDED BY WEATHER

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Teewinot Mountain

On September 21 at 8:30 p.m., climbing rangers received a call from a climber reporting that his party of three were soaking wet and stuck on the south face of Teewinot (12,325'). The reporting party relayed that they had a single headlamp and no ability to descend, nor protect themselves from the weather. The forecast called for heavy rain and snow at that elevation. The climbing party was equipped with poor footwear, light clothing (that was already soaked), a single space blanket, and a single headlamp. A rescue was initiated. A night out in the forecasted conditions would have been severe or fatal.

Rangers were dispatched to the scene with equipment to survive the night and care for the stranded climbers. During the four hours it took rangers to arrive on foot, the party was able to find a small cave, which provided significant protection from the wind, rain and snow. The rescue party endured heavy rain, limited visibility, difficult route finding, and temperatures below freezing throughout the night. They arrived on scene at approximately 2:30 a.m., assessed the climbers, and provided warm dry clothing, and equipment. At 6:30 a.m., the precipitation had stopped and partly cloudy skies were present. The rangers and climbers hiked out to the parking lot at 10:30 a.m. No members of this party required any further care and they were released at their vehicle at the trailhead.

ANALYSIS

In a subsequent interview, the climbers said they had started their climb the day prior at 10:00 a.m. They had intended to climb Teewinot in two to three hours. They were aware of the approaching storm but thought they could beat it. They were using AllTrails on their phone, but had lost the trail. Other climbers on the route attempted to direct them. Upon reaching the notch near the summit, they were hit by the storm. They could not reverse the route and decided to descend the west and south side of Teewinot.

At 8:30 p.m., lost, soaked, and with no additional gear, they called for help. This party overestimated their abilities and did not seriously evaluate the forecast. They had inadequate equipment and relied heavily on poor online information. This group was fortunate that the rangers were able to locate them. Without this, the incident would have had a very different outcome. (Source: Grand Teton National Park Search and Rescue Report.)

Images

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