



## AAC Publications

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### Unroped Crevasse Fall

Alaska, Denali, West Buttress

**On May 17, a 43-year-old female climber fell into a crevasse while unroped on Motorcycle Hill, above 11,200-foot camp.** This climber was ascending without skis or snowshoes at the time of the fall. She was assisted out of the crevasse by one of her teammates and another private climber. The climber fell over 15 feet until stopping at the crevasse bottom and sustained a dislocated shoulder in the process. The dislocation was successfully reduced, and the patient was transported by helicopter to 7,200-foot base camp once the weather cleared.

### ANALYSIS

The year 2023 marks the third year in a row that NPS personnel have responded to an unroped crevasse fall in the Alaska Range. This year, the patient was fortunate. The crevasse falls in 2021 and 2022 proved fatal. The only sure way to mitigate crevasse fall hazard is by traveling as part of a rope team. While the use of a rope will not prevent a fall from occurring, it will reduce the fall distance and the likely severity of injury. Also, a means of floatation, such as skis or snowshoes, may reduce fall potential by distributing the weight of a climber over a greater surface area.

An unroped crevasse fall not only is risky for the individual, but also for other climbers. Most of these incidents are responded to and resolved by bystanders, not by professional rescuers. Climbers should consider this trend and assess their companion rescue plan prior to embarking on glaciated travel.

(Source: Denali Mountaineering Rangers.)

**Images**

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