



AAC Publications

Swept Into Lake by Wave

Michigan, Upper Peninsula, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

On February 7, James Bake (31) was ice climbing with a partner near Miners Castle Rock when he was struck by a heavy wave that swept him into Lake Superior.

After Bake's partner reported the incident at 5:15 p.m., a search and rescue effort followed. The lake's surface was choppy, with frigid, nine-foot waves crashing into the shoreline. The National Park Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Superior High Angle Rescue Professionals, and Alger County Rescue used boats, floodlights, and a helicopter to search for Bake until bad conditions prevented further efforts. Bake could not be located in the icy waters, and rescue efforts ended that evening. Susan Reece, the public outreach officer for Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, said, "Bake fell into Lake Superior once, then pulled himself partially back out onto the ice. He was then knocked back in and appeared unconscious to his climbing partner, and then disappeared into the lake."

Without cold water gear, Bake could not have survived for long. His body, located underwater approximately 30 yards offshore, was recovered on February 12.

ANALYSIS

It is not known if Bake was climbing at the time of his accident, but details point to him being unroped. While being washed into a body of water is a rare occurrence for climbers, it has been documented before, and in 2007 an elite free soloist was struck by a wave in Ireland with fatal results. When climbing near open water, use caution and factor in wave height, frequency, and intensity during your risk assessment. (Sources: National Park Service and ExplorersWeb.com.)

Images

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