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ALASKA FACE Facts

Department of Health and Social Services
Division of Public Health-Section of CHEMS
Occupational Injury Prevention Program

Volunteer Ranger Dies from Fall on Denali

On May 24, 1998, a 33-year-old National Park volunteer ranger died when he fell from a ridge on Denali (Mt. McKinley). The victim and another volunteer ranger were descending from a 17,200-foot camp along the West Buttress. During their descent, the volunteer rangers witnessed another climber fall while descending an exposed section of the ridge route. After reporting the fall to the mountaineering park ranger in charge of their patrol, the victim requested and was given permission to down climb the 45-55° slope to attempt to make visual contact with the fallen climber. The rangers began down the slope, however they decided to travel unroped and relied on their ability to perform a self-arrest if they lost footing. Approximately 800 feet down the slope, the rangers encountered an extensive sheet of ice. The victim lost his footing and began to slide. He was unable to arrest his fall and continued down the slope toward a glacier. His body was not recovered.



Based on the findings of the investigation, to prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- **Develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive written safety program.**
- **Ensure that all regular and volunteer mountaineering park rangers carry two-way radios and that communication is maintained during all phases of search and rescue (SAR) procedures.**
- **Ensure that volunteer mountaineering park rangers carry a predetermined amount and type of equipment in order to render aid.**
- **Ensure that volunteer mountaineering park rangers are trained in park service search and rescue (SAR) procedures.**

Additionally, employers should:

- **Consider hiring seasonal full-time mountaineering staff to increase the ratio of full-time mountaineering rangers to volunteer rangers.**

To view previous FACE reports please visit the Occupational Injury Prevention Program website:

http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chems/occupation_injury

or

Call or fax your request to:

907-269-5221 (phone) 907-269-5236 (fax)

To receive the latest FACE updates via the Internet please send an email to djilly@health.state.ak.us