



NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK

CLIMBING NOTES 2001 SEASON

2000 Search and Rescue Incidents

Rangers from North Cascades National Park responded to 13 incidents in 2000 involving injured or lost persons. Total un-programmed or emergency cost to the National Park Service was \$12,743. The Park also received significant response from voluntary and military search and rescue programs in 2000, whose costs are not included in this total. Five of the incidents involving climbers are summarized here:

Mount Shuksan, July 3

Two climbers were descending the White Salmon Glacier late in the day after a climb of Mount Shuksan when one suffered an unarrested fall from snow onto rock. The resulting head injury rendered the climber unconscious. The partner's cell phone call activated a rescue response that night, but the cloud

cover thwarted both NPS and military helicopter attempts to reach the scene. The partner descended to their camp and carried gear back to the accident site. Rangers and volunteers were planning an overland carryout, but weather cooperated at daybreak for helicopter evacuation from the site directly to a Bellingham hospital.

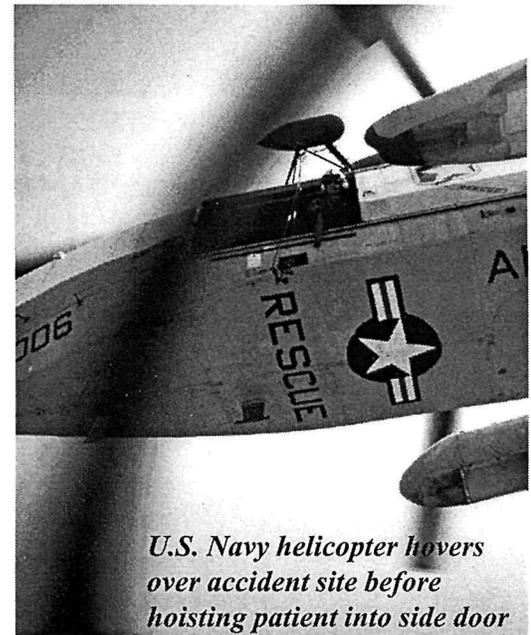
Depot Creek, July 15

A climber on approach to Mount Redoubt fractured both tibia and fibula bones while crossing a boulder field. The partner descended Depot Creek and out to Chilliwack B.C. to summon help by phone. The climber was evacuated by helicopter to a Mount Baker highway ambulance after one night's bivouac.

Mount Shuksan, August 7

Another party descending the Winnie's Slide to White Salmon Glacier summoned assistance via a ground-to-air radio when one member became immobile due to a patella injury. The party was able to move the climber to a landing site, where she was evacuated from the mountain that day.

Continued on back



U.S. Navy helicopter hovers over accident site before hoisting patient into side door

Low Snowpack to Affect Climbing Conditions

Northwest-based climbers are well aware that the pleasant, sunny weather of the past winter resulted in a record low snowpack in the Cascades. Snow surveys conducted in late April showed that sites ranged from 50 to 60% of normal April conditions. Records kept on road and trail conditions for previous years show a spring meltout approximately 4-6 weeks ahead of most years. The North Cascades Highway opened on March 22, which was the earliest ever opening.

For climbing this means an early season, with some routes getting "out of shape" possibly as early as mid-late

July. In an average snowpack season, climbers begin to have difficulty in August in notable areas such as Cache Col, the couloir access to Forbidden Peak's west ridge and Mount Shuksan's Hell's Highway due to bergshroud openings. These routes will be safer with an early season attempt.

The Wilderness Information Center in Marblemount keeps a log of climber and ranger comments on conditions. The voluntary climbing register is also available to obtain condition information. Please check these for updates and to leave information as you return.



Mt. Challenger

Search and Rescue *Continued*

Mount Shuksan, September 16

Approximately one hour prior to dark, NPS rangers received notice of a seriously injured solo climber at the base of the Fisher Chimneys. Unrelated hikers found the climber who instructed them to call for help with his cell phone. Rescuers from both an NPS helicopter and Whidbey Naval helicopter attempted to reach the area, but could not due to the combination of fading light and fog in a difficult landing zone. The climber's condition deteriorated that evening, and despite CPR efforts from bystanders, died at the scene. The investigation found that the climber had slipped while crossing a hard snow-filled gully, falling down a rocky section an additional 125 feet. He was well-equipped with standard mountaineering gear.

Forbidden Peak, October 7

A party of two was attempting the South Face Direct route when the leader took a fall early in the route. The fall pulled the one piece of protection, sending him 20 feet below his belayer, who arrested the fall, then lowered the leader to a ledge. He suffered a fractured elbow and wrist, lost teeth, and facial lacerations, but was able to hike out with the assistance of other climbers in Boston Basin. One of these hiked out ahead to summon assistance and the climbers were met by an ambulance. The injured climber thought that a damp condition of the rock led him to lose a handhold, which caused the fall.

Human Waste Issues on Eldorado and Inspiration Glaciers

Two popular areas for climbing in North Cascades National Park are Eldorado and Inspiration cross-country zones. In the 2000 season, the Eldorado and Inspiration zones saw a total of 1369 visitor nights (number of people times number of nights stayed). Unfortunately, notoriety often results in impact and damage, and one of the most striking impacts in these areas has been the accumulation of human waste on the glaciers.

The average adult produces 100 to 200 grams of human waste each day. Using the visitation figures times the potential waste per climber reveals that as much as 136 to 273 kilograms (approximately 300 to 600 lbs) of solid human waste could have been left in these two cross-country zones in the 2000 season alone!

North Cascades National Park has addressed the issue of human waste in the high country by maintaining compost toilets in certain high-use areas such as Boston Basin, Sahale Glacier and the Sulphide Glacier. In all, there are 18 of these unique toilets in the Park. Issues such as snow accumulation, access and dispersed camping have precluded the introduction of toilets in the Eldorado and Inspiration areas.

In popular high country areas where toilets are not available, the "blue bag" (or alternative WAG bag, see below) is the recommended method of waste management. Blue bags, as well as instructions for their use and disposal, can be obtained at ranger stations that issue wilderness permits for North Cascades National Park.

Climbers who do not carry blue bags – or choose not to use them – dispose of their waste by smearing it on rocks or simply burying it in the snow. These methods are not appropriate in heavily visited areas such as Eldorado, especially in the rock outcrops on the Inspiration and Eldorado glaciers, as these are the best camp/cooking areas.

To say the least, the presence of human waste smeared or buried on the rocks at these camps is visually offensive and unpleasant. It is possibly a serious health hazard. Please use the composting toilets whenever possible. And in areas without toilets such as Eldorado and Inspiration glaciers, use bags and dispose of them in a trash receptacle after leaving the wilderness.

What IS a WAG Bag?

The blue-colored bags for carrying out waste originated at Mount Rainier National Park and are available at no charge at North Cascades ranger stations. A deluxe bag for this purpose is also for sale. The WAG bag (Waste, Alleviation and Gelling) available for \$2.50 each, feature biodegradable plastic bags, hand towelettes, and a gelling powder to solidify the waste. Either bag can be disposed of in waste receptacles.