



National Park Service
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Grand Teton
National Park

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Grand Teton National Park News Release

Two Stranded Climbers Rescued from the Grand Teton

Grand Teton National Park rangers used a Teton interagency contract helicopter on Wednesday evening, August 29, to rescue two stranded climbers near the Third Ice Field of the Black Ice Couloir on the Grand Teton. Robert Campbell, age 65, from Manitou Springs, Colorado and his climbing partner Rhoda Ullmann, age 29, from Vestal, New York became stranded at the 12,200 foot-elevation sometime on Tuesday, August 28, when Campbell pulled off a large block of rock while leading a climb and severely injured his right hand, making it difficult to continue an ascent. The two climbers were forced to spend the night on a narrow ledge before rangers were alerted to their situation on Wednesday afternoon.

Teton Interagency Dispatch Center received notice at 12:55 p.m. on Wednesday, August 29, from dispatchers in Teton County Idaho that a 911 call had been received by them reporting “cries for help” from somewhere near the North Ridge of the Grand Teton. Rangers summoned a contract helicopter and conducted an aerial reconnaissance flight at 2 p.m. to determine the location from where the distress calls might be coming. Rangers spotted Campbell and Ullmann; however, they appeared to be descending and did not initially indicate that they were in need of assistance. Rangers made a second flight at 5 p.m. and used a “white board” placard to visually inquire about whether the couple needed help. At that time, the stranded climbers responded that they did require assistance.

Three park rangers were flown to a high-elevation landing zone in Valhalla Canyon, and one of the rangers was then inserted by the short-haul technique onto the narrow ledge where the climbers were located. The short-haul method allows rescue personnel to be inserted—by being suspended on a double rope system below a helicopter—into isolated or steep terrain where a helicopter cannot otherwise land. An injured person can then be extricated from that same inaccessible area and quickly flown to either a transfer point nearby where the helicopter can safely land, or to the valley floor for further emergency medical care and transport to a nearby hospital.

After being short-hauled to the stranded party, the park ranger was able to get Campbell and Ullmann into rescue evacuation suits and prepare them for a short-haul flight back to Valhalla Canyon. All three people—the park ranger and two climbers—were then short-hauled together, in one flight, to the landing zone at Valhalla Canyon where they could get inside the helicopter for a return flight to Lupine Meadows. Campbell was then transported at 8 p.m. by a park ambulance to St. John’s Medical Center in Jackson, where he spent the night for treatment of his injuries.

Had rangers remained unaware of the climbers’ location and need for assistance, they would have spent a second difficult night stranded on the Grand Teton without basic bivouac gear.

This marks the 21 major search and rescue operation in Grand Teton National Park this year. Not all of the 2007 major rescue operations involved the use of a contact helicopter.

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