



## 2001 Search and Rescue Incidents

North Cascades National Park's search and rescue personnel responded to 18 incidents in 2001, including assistance given to the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office with two incidents on Mount Baker.

The total unprogrammed emergency cost to the National Park Service was \$15,225, of which 47% was for contract helicopter services. These figures do not include costs assumed by military and volunteer programs that also work on Park incidents.

The 2001 accidents were consistent in the long-standing trend that the majority of climbers evacuated are injured in the non-technical approach or descent, not the actual climbing routes.

Also noted in 2001 was that more trail hikers were injured and evacuated than those with mountaineering objectives.

Five of the 2001 incidents are summarized below.

### Klawatti Glacier, May 22

A ski-mountaineering party reported a non-critical, but disabling knee injury to one member. The skier had taken a slow, tumbling fall near the base of Klawatti Peak after a descent of Klawatti's south face. He was evacuated by helicopter to Marblemount.

### Quien Sabe Glacier, July 14

A climbing party was descending the Quien Sabe Glacier when one climber punched through a snowbridge, falling onto rocks and injuring an ankle. He was unable to continue so party members carried him to flatter ground and alerted rangers via cell phone. The climber was evacuated to Marblemount by helicopter.

### Goode Mountain, August 1

Two climbers were below the Goode Glacier en route to ascend the NE Buttress when ice fell from above their location, slid across snow, hit rock, then showered the climbers with football sized chunks of ice. They had heard the icefall and were scrambling to take cover when they were struck. Both suffered minor injuries, including a crushed hand, but they were able to extricate themselves, provide self first-aid and hike out to the Stehekin ranger

*Search and Rescue continues on back*

*Whidbey Island  
Navy helicopter  
search and rescue  
team training with  
NPS Rangers.*

*In 2001 search  
and rescue  
personnel responded  
to 18 incidents  
including a fatality  
on Mt. Baker.*



*NPS photo*

## Addressing Wilderness Climbing Impacts

Rangers of the North Cascades National Park Wilderness District have measured and inventoried human impacts in "trailless" areas of the park since its establishment.

Methods have varied and progressed with recent efforts including the use of GPS mapping and measuring miles of access routes with digital cameras and measuring tape.

This documentation of climbing trails and camps is done in accordance with the Park's Wilderness Management Plan, which has a goal to limit and even rehabilitate the human impacts. The plan was approved in 1989 after much of North Cascades National Park

was designated by as Wilderness.

During the summer of 2001, patrols were conducted in areas such as the Picket Range, Inspiration Traverse, the Sulphide Glacier approach to Mount Shuksan, and Triumph Col in order to update previous years' inventories.

In addition to the anticipated bivy sites and climbers trails, a surprising number of firerings were noted, and subsequently removed. Fires in subalpine areas leave long-term scars and are only allowed in designated low elevation camps. The firerings were found in very remote areas, such as the headwaters

*Impacts continues on back*

### Interested in climbing condition reports?

So is the Wilderness Information Center in Marblemount! While rangers themselves send in reports from their daily patrols, all climbers are encouraged to report firsthand findings through one of several avenues:

- Leave information in the space provided on your Volunteer Climbing Register upon signing out.
- Write in the trail and climbing conditions log kept on the front counter at the Wilderness Information Center.
- Give the Wilderness Office a call ñ 360-873-4500 x39.

# Blue Bags – use them to reduce your impact

Climbing rangers continue to find piles of human waste when patrolling at snow, glacier and rock camps.

To say the least, the presence of human waste on snow or in the rocks around your camp is visually offensive, unpleasant and possibly a serious health hazard.

The NPS has addressed the issue with toilets in some areas, but this is ob-

viously not feasible for all climbing destinations.

At the Wilderness Information Center in Marblemount (and some other stations where permits are available) you can pick up blue bags or the more deluxe WAG bag free of charge.

The WAG bag contains biodegradable plastic bags, hand towelettes and a gelling powder to solidify the waste.

While North Cascades National Park has no specific collection facilities, these bags (with waste) have been approved for disposal in any proper waste receptacles in Skagit and Whatcom counties.

Use of the bags is especially encouraged for snow camps on the Sulphide Glacier prior to compost toilet melt out, (about mid-July) and on the approach to Eldorado (year-round).



*The Chopping Block* NPS photo



*Coleman Glacier* ©Gregory Mroz



*Mount Shuksan* NPS photo

## Fee demonstration program continues

The Recreation Fee Demonstration Program remains in effect for most land management agencies. North Cascades National Park participates through the Northwest Forest Pass.

Parking areas for all climbing destinations along the Cascade River Road and the Sulphide Glacier approach to Mount Shuksan (among others) require a pass.

The Northwest Forest Pass is available at most ranger stations.

Park officials are also exploring ideas to standardize the backcountry permit,

reservations and fee programs between North Cascades, Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks.

While backcountry permits for any overnight camping have been in effect for decades, no fee or reservation system for the general public currently exists at the North Cascades National Park.

Rangers are interested in your thoughts

about the possible addition of fees and/or reservations for permits. Climbers are encouraged to inquire at the Wilderness Information Center.

### Northwest Forest Pass

The Northwest Forest Pass is available at most Forest Service or Park offices, via phone (1-800-270-7504) and online at [www.naturemw.org](http://www.naturemw.org).

An annual pass costs \$30 and a day pass costs \$5.

## What to know when you take a cell phone climbing

Notification of backcountry emergencies by cell phone is no longer an unusual occurrence, although reception in mountain areas is far from dependable.

Rangers at the North Cascades National Park neither advocate nor discourage packing a phone on a climbing trip.

Cell phone distress calls have had positive and negative results. In a number of incidents, phones have successfully alerted rescuers to mountain accidents, allowing rescue to begin hours earlier than it would normally. Just as often, however, poor reception has resulted in confusing communication, and unnecessary responses.

- When calling the Park Communications Center 360-873-4500, x37 (best) or 911 regarding an emergency, state your location and phone number early in the call in case of a connection failure.

- Clearly communicate the purpose of your call and *if you are requesting assistance or not*. Failure to do this has resulted in unnecessary rescue responses.

- Be prepared to handle your emergency as you would without a phone.

## Wilderness impacts

*Continued from front*

of Access Creek, the margins of the Challenger Glacier and Triumph Col.

The North Cascades Wilderness Committee continually reviews and discusses options to address human impacts in off-trail areas. Topics of discussion in 2002 include:

- Further restrict use.** A permit system that limits the numbers of parties allowed in each cross-country zone has been in effect for many years. One consideration for preventing impacts is to lower the number of parties allowed in areas where statistics show a correlation between amount of use and impact.

- Restoration of cross-country impacts.** Parts of the seriously gutted climber's trails into Boston and Eldorado Basins have been rerouted and restoration attempts are in progress. If funding and policy challenges are met, this type of effort might be expanded to other cross-country areas.

- Expand efforts to promote Leave No Trace principles.** Not just the amount of use but also the type of use plays a dramatic role in wilderness impact. The key LNT considerations for climbers are camping on rock or snow, not trampling fragile vegetation, limiting party size, managing waste and using a stove.

## Search and rescue

*Continued from front*

station for further treatment.

### Bacon Peak, August 7

A climber on Bacon Peak's north side slipped on steep ice while travelling with a full pack. The fall was arrested in a rocky area and he absorbed most of the impact on his head.

The group continued travel for several hours, but when the injured climber's neurological functions deteriorated a ground-to-air radio transmission eventually alerted park rangers.

The climber was evacuated to a hospital and treated for a skull fracture.

### Mount Baker, September 2

Four climbers on one rope were ascending Coleman Glacier when one member slipped on steep ice at 8600'.

All four climbers were pulled off their feet, slid down the icy section, cleared a large open crevasse and landed on a narrow ice shelf.

The one uninjured member left to summon assistance, leaving at the scene one climber with minor injuries, one semiconscious climber with serious spinal and leg injuries, and one member who likely died upon impact in the fall.

NPS rangers and an ER physician (volunteer Mountain Rescue member) were flown to the scene.

The critically injured climber was helicopter short-hauled 2000 feet down, off the glacier. The remaining climber was assisted down to a bivouac for the night.

Impending darkness, high winds and an oncoming storm precluded flying the injured completely off the mountain.

Volunteer mountain rescuers carried in supplies through the night to sustain the ER doctor's efforts with the critical patient. The next day, several western Washington Mountain Rescue Association units and rangers conducted an overland carry-out to the trailhead due to the continuing storm.

The fatally injured climber was recovered several days later.