



The Alpine Club of Canada

Ottawa Section

Safety on Club Beginners' Days and Trips

May 2000

Following the accident that occurred last January, a "safety sub-committee" was formed to review and consider the recommendations submitted by various club members following the accident and to make any additional recommendations to ensure safety on club trips they felt appropriate. These recommendations were presented to the Section executive in early May and the following processes were agreed on. Many thanks to Bob Milko, Simon Mason and Steven Montgomery for taking the time to articulate these processes and to other club members who also contributed by submitting recommendations and reports following the accident.

ACC Ottawa Beginners' Days and and Beginners' Day Follow-Up

- always have a leader (or participant) in each teaching area with up to date first aid training
- ensure that each group has an adequate (trauma) first aid kit
- ensure leaders and participants sign waivers
- ratio of students to leaders/instructors should be a maximum of 3 to 1 (experience of leaders should be high)
- beginners should be watched at all times by leaders while climbing and belaying; i.e., leaders should not be climbing if beginners are climbing and cannot be observed by another leader on the ground
- beginners should bring their gear at the preliminary evening so that the leader can assess adequacy
- all belayers must be anchored to their harnesses even for top roping
- belayers should belay from their harnesses
- a single method of belaying should be taught (unless the climber can demonstrate that they are already competent with another acceptable method)
- belay technique should be constantly monitored by leaders - other beginners should be encouraged to observe and bring questionable technique to the attention of the leaders
- direct tie-in is mandatory
- each climber and belayer should check each other's harnesses prior to climbing
- before belaying on the cliff/ice each student should be required to hold a simulated fall ("climber" would run away from belayer with several feet of slack to simulate a hard top rope or low impact leader fall)
- helmets should be worn by everyone climbing and belaying

- anchors should be double redundant, i.e., two anchor points, two slings with rope passing through two locking carabiners with gates opposed
- only leaders should set up anchors and they should be reviewed for adequacy by a second leader
- once and climbing is underway, nobody should be above the climbers to reduce potential rock fall
- the group should have a cell phone

Beginners' Ice Climbing (same as above with several additional considerations)

- ice climbing participants should have had previous outdoor rock climbing experience
- consideration should be given to temperature and the wind chill factor for Beginners' Ice Climbing Day - it is suggested that the high of the day should be forecast as minus 10 degrees centigrade and higher
- a full length foam pad should be with each ice climbing group on instruction and club trips
- strongly recommend safety glasses be worn for ice climbing
- helmets should be worn by everyone climbing or belaying and by all participants in the vicinity of ice climbing due to the increased probability of falling ice

Regular Club Trips

Club trips present different conditions where there is less control possible, particularly when groups go to different areas/routes and you are climbing with unknown climbers. There should be no hesitancy for any member to discuss the experience of those on the same rope or to comment on techniques. Discussion is how we all learn. Many of the safety measures recommended for Beginners' Days should be adhered to on club trips, as follows:

- ensure that each group has an adequate (trauma) first aid kit
- ensure leaders and participants sign waivers
- all belayers must be anchored to their harnesses even for top roping
- belayers should belay from their harnesses
- belay technique should be constantly monitored by others - everyone should be encouraged to observe and bring questionable technique to the attention of the belayers
- direct tie-in is mandatory
- each climber and belayer should check each other's harnesses prior to climbing
- full length foam pad should be with each ice climbing group on club trips
- recommend safety glasses be worn for ice climbing
- helmets should be worn by everyone climbing or belaying and by all participants in the vicinity of ice climbing due to the increased probability of falling ice

The club will be buying more complete "trauma" kits shortly. Each one will include a fact sheet noting: (1) telephone numbers for local 911 (dialing 911 on a cell phone gets you to the cell's home jurisdiction), police and ambulance; (2) a map of the climbing areas with street names and the locations of backboards at the Cwm and LaFramboise Farm; and (3) a list of equipment contained within the first aid kit. The club will also be buying full length foam pads for ice climbing trips.

Trip leaders are asked to ensure the following before a trip:

- (1) that they have at least one participant with recent first aid training (and who would be comfortable giving first aid if necessary);
- (2) that they have a first aid kit or kits (ideally the club kit);
- (3) that they have a second experienced climber along for checking top rope anchors;

- (4) they have an appropriate mix of experience levels on the trip (i.e. sufficient experienced climbers);
- (5) that participants are made aware of the difficulty of the trip and ensures that participants have sufficient experience for the difficulty of the climbing area; and
- (6) that they have a waiver form.