

# 2010 The Mountaineers Annual Safety Report

## Sections:

- Introduction
- Summary statistics
- Summaries of accidents

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## **Introduction:**

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to promote a culture of safety among The Mountaineers. This is accomplished by:

- 1) The collection and reporting of accidents and near misses
- 2) Education & training of our leaders and instructors

The ongoing goal is to build structure around this culture of safety such that The Mountaineers continue to be recognized as industry leaders in safety for outdoor activities.

Functions of the committee (from the Charter):

- Collect, develop and distribute safety education and knowledge pertinent to each activity.
- Benchmark volunteer and professional organization safety programs and standards.
- Work to stimulate creation and maintenance of Safety committees within each Branch. Help to standardize and educate safety concepts and awareness at the branch and activity levels.
- Develop and perform standardized collection of data on at risk activities from all branches, via trip, accident, near miss, and other reports, and make this data available to all branches.
- Standardize trip reporting to collect information on routes, accidents, and near misses, and enhance systems to share this information.
- Ensure a thorough and professional accident investigation is performed for all fatalities and major accidents in a timely manner. This is coordinated through the Executive Director and may include outside and/or professional input.
- Assist in the development of standards for leader qualification and continuing education.

Safety committee goals for the year included:

- Collecting information on accidents in a systematic manner
- Writing up reports for major incidents in a systematic format
- Communicating summaries of facts from the accidents to club members
- Facilitating discussion of accidents and safety measures among club members
- Increasing reporting of all incidents, even those with less serious outcomes

The committee met on January 12, 2011 to review all submitted incidents for the year, develop recommendations, and discuss next steps.

## Summary Statistics:

### Major incidents involving Search and Rescue, 911 call, and/or hospitalization

There were five major incidents reported:

1. Overdue party (SAR) - Currie-Blackcomb Traverse, April 29, 2010
2. Broken Ankle & Leg (911) – Spire Rock, May 1, 2010
3. Broken Neck (911, hospitalization) – Baker Lodge, May 14, 2010
4. Broken Ankle (SAR) – Mt. Erie, May 16, 2010
5. Broken Ankle (SAR) – Royal Columns, Tieton area, June 20, 2010

### Significant incidents involving injury and Dr. visit, but no SAR or 911 call

There were eleven significant incidents reported which resulted in the following injuries:

- Torn bicep muscle in shoulder
- Deep gash in leg
- Broken finger
- Broken shoulder
- Broken wrist
- Crampon puncture of leg
- Tendon tear in knee
- Fractured fibula
- Sprained ankle
- Sliced finger
- Broken rib

These significant incidents were categorized as:

- Slip/Trip/Fall on non technical terrain – 10

Two of these significant incidents occurred on an organized field trip:

- Scrambles – 1
- Intermediate ice - 1

### Minor incidents reported where no Dr. visit occurred

There were seventy-three minor incident reports made, categorized as:

Fall - 28

- Fall during glissade – 1
- Fall on non technical terrain – 16
- Fall on rock (roped) – 1
- Fall on snow – 10

Hit/Cut - 4

- Cut by equipment – 3
- Hit by falling object – 1

Illness - 18

- Altitude sickness – 2
- Blisters - 4
- Cramping – 1
- Feeling weak – 2
- Heat exhaustion – 2
- Hypothermia - 1
- Knees / ankles– 3
- Previous injury - 3

#### Kayaking – 3

- Kayaking other – 1
- Kayaking weather – 2

#### Logistics – 6

- Party Separation – 5
- Routefinding – 1

#### Preparation - 2

- Conditioning – 2

#### Other - 12

- Informational – 10
- Route warning - 2

## Major Incident Report Summaries:

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### **April 19, 2010 - Blackcomb-Whistler Backcountry area, Canada**

**Injuries:** SAR evacuation by helicopter

**Cause of Accident:** Overdue, delayed by weather, off route

#### **Summary**

On April 16, a party of 4 set off on a 3 day ski trip in the Whistler-Blackcomb backcountry area. The trip is commonly known as the Currie-Blackcomb ski traverse. The party members were quite experienced backcountry glacier skiers and had all necessary equipment with them, including a satellite phone. The weather worsened the second day slowing down the progress of the party as they experienced some white-out conditions. They tried to exit their trip on the third day, as one of the members was due to work on Monday morning. The party kept moving until 1 or 2am when they found they were in difficult terrain, were exhausted, and they needed to stop and bivvy. Satellite phone calls were made to spouses of two party members at approximately 1:30 am. A voice mail message was left with one spouse and then a very brief phone call was conducted with the other spouse before the satellite phone connection was lost during the second call. The satellite phone batteries died during the conversation (the batteries were stored in the phone and the phone was in an outside pack) so the phone conversation was incomplete. During that second call (less than 1 minute in length) the calling party member indicated that the party had encountered challenging route-finding in very steep wooded terrain and they would need SAR assistance to get out. One spouse then called the other and they discussed the various information that they had collectively received

from the party on the voice mail and during the brief phone call. Based on that information the spouses made the determination to call authorities to initiate a SAR mission. The party was evacuated by helicopter without incident. Tests later showed that the batteries would have stayed charged if they were removed from the phone and stored next to a warm body when not using the phone.

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### **May 1, 2010 - Spire Rock, Sprinker Park**

**Injuries:** Broken Ankle and leg

**Cause of Accident:** Unroped fall while traversing rock formation a few feet off the ground, tried to turn around while falling and landed on gravel at poor angle

#### **Summary**

On May 1, 2010, at the Basic Climbing Field Trip Rock 1 held at Spire Rock in Sprinker Park, student RS was traversing the rock face on the south side of spire rock at about 10:10 AM. Her feet were about four feet off the ground. She began to slip and according to witnesses tried to turn around before hitting the ground which was hard at the base of the rock even though covered in pea gravel. She landed poorly on her right foot and was injured.

She was immediately aided by instructors, who very shortly decided it was serious and called 911. They carefully slid her to a more comfortable position while performing vital signs checks and asking questions. RS did not lose consciousness. The emergency people arrived about 10:20 and found she had a broken ankle and possibly a broken tibia. After stabilizing they transported to St. Clair hospital. Her husband was notified. Later we learned that she had suffered two broken bones in her right ankle and a broken tibia in her right leg. She was discharged home in the late afternoon. Surgery will be scheduled when the swelling goes down.

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### **May 14, 2010 - Baker Lodge**

**Injuries:** Broken neck

**Cause of Accident:** Fall from top bunk

#### **Summary:**

On May 14, 2010, FH, a 4 year old girl, was an overnight visitor with her parents at the Baker Lodge. FH was sleeping on the top bunk at 3am, when she rolled off the bunk and fell about 5 feet to the floor. The removable guard railing that was installed the night before was missing and had been removed sometime during the night. 911 was called and FH was taken to St. Joseph Hospital in Bellingham. An MRI revealed a fracture of her second cervical vertebra in her neck. FH was airlifted to Harborview where she received treatment and was fitted a "traction halo", which keeps the head in a fixed position, and which will be worn for 12 weeks.

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### **May 16, 2010 - Mt Erie**

**Injuries:** Broken ankle

**Cause of Accident:** Leader fall

**Summary:**

On May 16, 2010 a party of two set out on a mentored intermediate level rock climbing trip to the Mt. Erie area. JV had taken the Rock 2 field trip but did not pass so hooked up with a mentor for more instruction and practice. They chose the 5.6/5.7 route Zig Zag and intended to climb it a couple of times along with a couple of other routes during the day. On the 3rd pitch, JV was leading through the crux section near the top of the route which required an under-cling move of a flake to reach the belay station on the other side. JV set a piece about shoulder height and proceeded to climb. As JV moved above his last piece of protection, it appeared either the carabineer attached to the rope and/ or the runner attached to the pro had caught onto the rack sling around his neck; at this point, JV was approximately 6 to 8 feet above his last piece of protection. JV could not move past the crux without untying himself, which he attempted to do. It appeared he untangled the runner, then shook the carabineer loose of being entangled with his figure-eight tie in, about the time he was moving over the crux. Somewhere moving over the crux his feet slipped; he fell approximately 20 feet and landed on his left foot on the ledge he was previously standing on. His ankle looked like it was broken, and the leader decided they could not get JV out on his own from the second belay station, so called 911. JV was evacuated by helicopter about 4:45pm where he was flown to Island Hospital. Diagnosis was a broken ankle that will require surgery once the swelling subsides.

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**June 20, 2010 - Royal Columns, Tieton area**

**Injuries:** Calcaneus fracture (heel bone fracture)

**Cause of Accident:** Leader fall when protection pulled out while setting first piece

**Summary:**

On June 20, 2010, a small party was setting out to practice rock climbing at the Royal Columns climbing area near Tieton, WA. This was an organized activity described as the “Beyond Basic Rock” field trip. KA, an intermediate student, volunteered to set up a top rope on a route called “Good Timer”. KA later reported that she was reluctant to lead the route and had left her rack at home, but with some encouragement, borrowed a rack and decided to lead the route. KA set up a multidirectional belay anchor, clipped in and started climbing with partner HH belaying. KA reached a ledge, with feet placed about 4 feet above the anchor. KA reported the ledge was comfortable for standing, and was on the ledge for several minutes. KA set the first piece, a nut size 9, and attached a double runner, the first sling to come off KA’s shoulder. After attaching the sling to the rope, KA decided the sling needed shortening, and did so. KA had been at the placement for several minutes, and decided to give a good test before moving onward. During the act of testing the placement, KA pulled the piece out and fell backwards. Because the belay was on a side of the hill, KA fell past belayer HH, and fell about 8 feet. KA landed directly on a ledge with feet fully extended, then bounced on down the slope. The force of hitting the ledge directly with the feet caused a Calcaneus fracture (broken heel bone),

which required an overnight stay for surgery at Harborview on July 2 – 4. Expected recovery is about 12 months.

## **Summary of Significant Incidents**

**(No SAR or overnight hospital stay, but injury or Dr. visit)**

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**Location:** Ice Axe Arrest Practice Field Trip

**Date:** March 13, 2010

**Injuries:** Torn bicep muscle in shoulder

**Cause of Accident:** Fall while practicing self arrest

We were practicing arrests on slides off of the ridge at Alta Vista into Edyth Basin late in the afternoon when PP, a Scrambling student and new Mountaineer member this year heard what he described as a popping sound after an arrest at the bottom of the chute. He indicated that his arm "felt kind'a funny" but was more worried about a sore hip from a previous injury and fatigue. PP said later that he became concerned about his arm only when he noticed the Bicep muscle was knotted up on his shoulder as he changed into new clothes for the ride home at the Paradise parking lot. He later went to an Emergency Room after becoming concerned about the arm, and was told he had a torn Bicep tendon, would need surgery, and several months recovery.

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**Location:** Fuller Mtn

**Date:** March 24, 2010

**Injuries:** Deep gash in leg

**Cause of Accident:** Fall on trail

One Hiker slipped on a rock on a slippery/rocky part of the trail on the way up. He had a deep gash. The MOFA volunteers in the group did an excellent job of wrapping and bandaging. The injured hiker was given the option of returning to the trailhead, but he decided to continue with the hike. He did well. On the way down the bandages had slipped, requiring a re-wrapping. The injured hiker reported that he visited the emergency room in Puyallup after the hike and received 4 stitches. He reported that he was fine, no regrets about the hike, and was doing well.

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**Location:** Mt Washington

**Date:** May 30, 2010

**Injuries:** Broken finger

**Cause of Accident:** Fall on snow

I slipped & fell into a hole in the snow, maybe 1/3 of the way into the trip. Nothing major, just one of those slips where you get immediately back up. Jammed left middle

finger on a tree branch on the way down. didn't seem like a big deal at the time...the finger hurt, but I could still move it, had full use of the hand the rest of the trip with just a little soreness. Got it checked out Monday morning, x-ray showed avulsion fracture. Splint 4-6 weeks, follow-up x-ray early next week.

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**Location:** Humpback Mtn  
**Date:** June 2, 2010  
**Injuries:** Broken shoulder  
**Cause of Accident:** Fall on trail

A fall on the somewhat muddy trail on the descent resulted in a shoulder injury by AC. The party member said he was fine at the time, continued hiking after a couple minutes recovery, but informed me the following day that the pain had increased on the drive home. Turned out to be a break in the joint between the scapula and clavicle.

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**Location:** Mason Lake  
**Date:** July 7, 2010  
**Injuries:** Broken wrist  
**Cause of Accident:** Fall on trail

One of the members fell and injured her wrist. It turned out to be broken on x-ray. She was able to hike out with no difficulty.

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**Location:** Intermediate Alpine Ice 1 Field Trip (Mt. Baker)  
**Date:** July 18, 2010  
**Injuries:** Crampon puncture of leg  
**Cause of Accident:** Kicked back of leg

Student, JL cramponed the back of his leg (middle of calf) during a top roped exercise. Administered First Aid. JL was able to self-evacuate and drive to ER in Bellingham. Puncture wound required 3 stitches, but no permanent damage was done to the nerve or muscle. Student will need to take 2 weeks off.

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**Location:** McMillan Spire  
**Date:** July 30, 2010  
**Injuries:** Tendon tear in knee  
**Cause of Accident:** Fall on trail

Rain developed as soon as we were back to camp from the summit. Summit to cars was a 5 hour descent in the rain on the steep climbers path and a 4 mile road/trail walk out. The path drops from 6,200' to about 1,700' at the road end. We slipped numerous times on the wet roots. Around 700' from the bottom I slipped with my left foot. My right toe caught

in some roots. As I lunged forward down the steep slope, my right foot was caught in a root at the toe. I fell on my right side downhill, forcing my right leg to bend all the way at the knee and my left foot was at a 90 degree angle bent in. The outside tendon made a loud pop. Lots of pain and I went into mild shock, but was able to stand and put some weight on it as long as the outside tendon was not weighted at all. I managed to descend the rest of the 700' on the steep climbers path to the road end with the help of a one trekking pole and limped out the 4 miles of road. Two weeks later, it is still very sore, although the swelling is almost gone. Can't run at all, although I have been rock climbing with it with some pain. Will see the Doctor tomorrow.

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**Location:** Eldorado Peak

**Date:** August 21, 2010

**Injuries:** Fractured fibula

**Cause of Accident:** Fall off log

One of the participants YZ slipped off a down log 200 yards from the trail head on the descent. YZ was not running or jumping to get on the log, was just getting upon the log when she slipped off the log and landed wrong on her left foot and collapsed on her left side. YZ was in a lot of pain, but was conscious and alert the whole time, never lost conscious when the accident happen, or after the accident and was able to answer all questions. YZ went to hospital on Sunday and was diagnosed with a fractured Fibula. YZ was fitted with a soft cast for now and will be fitted with another cast in a week and will have to wear the cast for few weeks. The Doctor told YZ that her recovery time is about 6 to 8 weeks.

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**Location:** Wedge/NW Coulior

**Date:** August 14, 2010

**Injuries:** Sprained ankle

**Cause of Accident:** Fall on trail

SP mildly sprained/strained his ankle on the hike out Sunday night. He was able to very slowly make it to the cars under his own power. Follow up later that week found that he had seen a Dr back in town and the injury was not serious and he was riding a bike several days afterwards, only needing some RICE to help it heal on it's own.

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**Location:** Tamanos Mtn

**Date:** September 19, 2010

**Injuries:** Sliced finger

**Cause of Accident:** Cut on rock

One of our party members KM, who is a medical professional, sliced her index finger on a sharp blade of rock. She thought it would need a stitch when she got back but we had no trouble getting the bleeding stopped with a gauze pad and tape.

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**Location:** Three Fingers Lookout Fall Maintenance

**Date:** October 22, 2010

**Injuries:** Broken Rib

**Cause of Accident:** Fall on trail

Party member slipped on a slick rock while descending the trail below Goat Flats. He fell on his back, landing on his pack. The party walked out. His injury was diagnosed as a non-displaced broken rib.

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See the document **“2010 The Mountaineers Minor Incidents Report”** for the text of the minor incidents reported (those details are too lengthy to place in the main report).