

ACCIDENT REPORT

GAUSTATOPPEN. Rjukan

January 2. 2017



Head of safety commission NKf.

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On January 2. 2017, a 22-year old male British climber lost his life in an accident after ice climbing at Gaustatoppfossene in Rjukan.

The two climbers, both in their early twenties have chosen to walk in to the top of Gaustatoppfossene. They establish a belay station at the top, and switch between belaying and climbing after being lowered from the top. Due to the lack of snow, the transition line between ice and bare ground is very distinct and visible. The weather conditions are good.

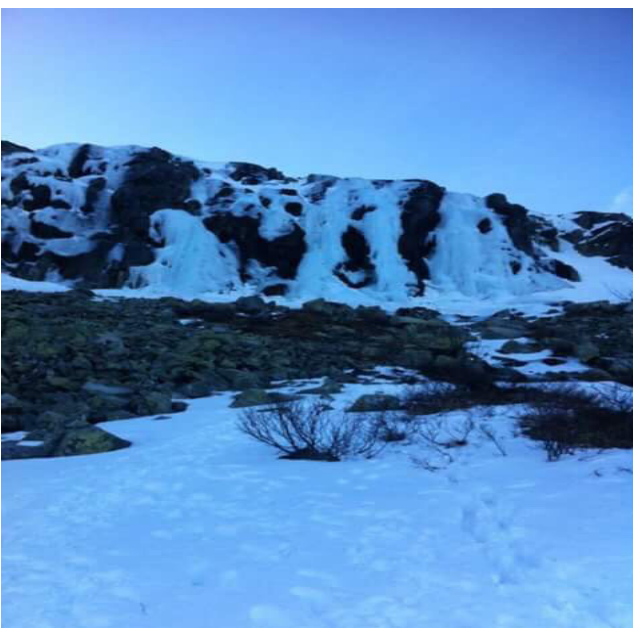
After a day of climbing, the daylight is fading away. The two climbers decide to call it a day, reminding each other to be careful, and start rigging down their equipment. Climber A walks over to the backpacks which are placed near the transition between ice and bare ground (approximately 5-6 meters from the edge, almost flat, but still a gentle slope towards the edge), removes his crampons and steps over onto bare ground. Climber B is still standing on the ice, rigging down the belay station. The rope has been coiled. Helmets are still on.

As climber A is putting the crampons into his back-

pack, a camera lying on the ground starts to slide down. Climber B (still wearing crampons) instinctively stretches out to grab the camera, losing his balance in the process. Due to the hard ice with no snow, he soon slides over the edge, ultimately landing 35-50 meters below on rocks and ice.

Climber A calls the owner of the hostel at which they are staying, reporting the accident. The owner of the hostel (which also is a member of the alpine rescue group) relays the message to AMK (113), and requests a helicopter. The rescue group arrives at the site of the accident approximately one hour later. At the same time the Air Ambulance arrives with a doctor. Climber A has in the meantime made it down to climber B and started CPR. Climber A is taken care of, and the doctor examines Climber B and declares him dead.

In this accident, the climbers seem to have been caught off guard as something unexpected happened (camera starts sliding). A natural instinct will often be to grab the camera to save it. Victimized by his own instinct, the climber stands no chance after losing his balance on the hard, gently sloping ice after rigging down the belay station.



*Left: Gaustatoppfossene
Photos: Hågen Skipper*



Right: The gently sloping ice near the belay station.