



Goûter Couloir accidentology 1990-2011

Resume for the attention of the mountain community

The mountain police force of the Haute-Savoie and Petzl Foundation's collaborative study aims to better understand the hazards of stone fall encountered during the normal route of Mont Blanc, from the refuge of Tête Rousse to the refuge du Goûter.

From 1990 to 2011, the police force registers show 291 persons rescued during 256 incidents, which resulted with 74 deaths and 180 injuries. Despite strong annual variations, the number of casualties seems to be stable in the long term (more than 3 dead and 8 injured on average per year). There is a slight increase during the last decade if we refer to the frequentation of the two refuges located on the route.

The exact location of the incidents is not very precise in one rescue out of five (18%). 38% of casualties were located within the first hundred metres of the first crossing of the couloir du Goûter and 28% in the 550 metre long ridge directly beneath the former refuge of the Goûter. We can estimate that about half of the accidents were located in the couloir.

The detailed study of the casualties' and witness statements can explain some circumstances more precisely. Falls appear as the first cause (49%) of the incidents, before stone fall (30%) but lots of falls are the clear consequence of, but not recorded as, stone falls.

Casualties are mostly male (81%), middle-aged (39 years old average), of varied origin (27 countries represented, and first of all, those neighbouring Mont Blanc), and the majority were unroped. Incidents happened mainly around midday and more regularly during descent. Amateurs were the most exposed; but we find clients (11%) and some professionals also amongst the statistics.

Although there are many variables to consider, the study of these incidents in the last two decades establishes particular objective danger within the couloir du Goûter, especially during the crossing. It's a true "black spot". It also highlights the need to consider the overall itinerary, including the ridge between the crossing of the couloir and the Aiguille du Goûter.