

Polar Cliffs and Falling Blocks

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There is an ice sheet at the North Pole of Mars that is a few miles thick at its center. At some places (like in this image) it ends in steep cliffs that can be about 800 meters (2600 feet) high. The slopes of these cliffs are almost vertical which causes slab-like blocks of ice to break off and crash down to the surrounding plains. Dense networks of cracks cover these icy cliff faces making it easier for these blocks to break free.

The HIRISE camera onboard the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter is the most powerful one of its kind ever sent to another planet. Its high resolution allows us to see Mars like never before, and helps other missions choose a safe spot to land for future exploration. Thousands of images are available online at: <u>uahirise.org</u>.