



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock, Rappel Error - Failed to Clip to Anchor

California, Yosemite Valley, Super Slide

On March 24 a man (27) and a woman (26) were rappelling to the base of Super Slide (5.9) at the Royal Arches area. Apparently they wound up between two of the regular rappel anchors. The man built a temporary anchor for the woman to clip into while he ascended to reach the correct anchor. During his absence the woman somehow became unclipped from the anchor (or was never clipped to it) and fell approximately 100 feet down a steep slab to the ground. She survived—in fact she called 911 herself—but her legs were seriously injured, and one was later amputated. Rescue required a basic litter evac to an air ambulance.

Analysis

These were experienced gym climbers, but only had done three years of outdoor climbing. The anchor itself was confirmed to be good when examined later by experienced climber-rangers, so it may have been a mistake in clipping to the anchor or in adjusting the tie-in later. Secondary factors might include descent- route planning and rope management during the rappel. This is a straightforward descent. Inexperience is probably behind all factors. (Source: John Dill, Ranger.)

(Editor's note: Rappel errors once again are found throughout this edition. Our "Know the Ropes" educational piece from last year needs to find a larger audience.)

Images

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