



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock--Rappel Error

Utah, Big Cottonwood Canyon, Challenge Buttress

On September 20, according to Unified Police Capt. Kris Ownby, two men (23 and 31) were rappelling down the Challenge Buttress, just across from Storm Mountain, about 8 p.m. One of them fell off the end of the rope, and both fell as a result because they were simul-rappelling. One fell 10 feet, and the other fell 40 feet. Ownby said the 23-year-old suffered a lower leg laceration and a possible sprained ankle, but his companion sustained more severe injuries to his legs and upper body.

About 20 rescuers, including four paramedics, responded to the scene. The 23-year-old climber was aided in completing his ascent by 9:30 p.m. and drove himself to a hospital to be checked out. The other climber was lowered by rescuers shortly thereafter and taken to University Hospital in serious but nonlife-threatening condition. (Source: Edited from an article by Bob Mims in The Salt Lake Tribune.)

Analysis

I was the 23-year-old involved in the accident. We are still not sure what happened. My friend and I were still hooked onto the rope after we fell because I had knotted the ends. All I remember is him falling really fast and hitting the ground, and then I fell as a result. I have simul-rappelled several times before. I still do not know what went wrong or what I should do differently in the future. I do think I need to start using prusiks for backup, especially when using single ropes.

My friend is doing OK. He has a fractured vertebrae, but the doctors say he will heal up 100 percent.

Images

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