



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock - Cam Pulled Out

Alberta, Banff National Park, Mt. Cory

On Saturday, July 21, two climbers set off to climb a route on Bumpers Butte west of Banff. They selected the route Short Jerky Movements, which was located above the Spasm Chasm (local name). The two climbers were quite experienced. While climbing the third pitch, the leader placed a small camming unit and had difficulty locating other sound gear placements. About five meters above this piece of protection, for an unknown reason, the leader fell. The force of the fall pulled out the small camming unit, which subsequently placed the entire force of the fall onto the belay station (factor two fall).

The climber fell a total of 35 meters and was hanging on the rope 20 meters below the belay station. The lead climber was initially unconscious, and the belayer noticed that the leader was bleeding significantly. The belayer, recognizing the severity of the situation, immediately tied off the lead climber and phoned Banff Dispatch. The dispatcher took initial information and transferred the caller to the Visitor Safety rescue leader who was on shift. The rescue leader and climber discussed the situation, and it seemed reasonable for the belayer to lower the injured climber down to the next station to wait for rescue.

After the rescue leader confirmed the location with the reporting belayer, a team of three specialists flew from Banff. Rescuers were on the scene in 40 minutes. One rescuer was long-lined into the accident location. The rescuer rigged the belay station and patient to be flown out. A second rescuer flew into the site and clipped onto the patient while the first rescuer released the patient with an Italian (Munter) hitch. The patient was flown directly to a waiting ambulance. The pilot returned for the injured climber's partner and the initial rescuer.

Analysis

The climbing team had an appropriate amount of experience to undertake such a climb. However, on occasion, experienced climbers fall off. Upon follow-up with the lead climber who fell and his belayer, it was learned that they had no recollection of why the leader fell in the first place. There are a number of possibilities: 1) rockfall, 2) breaking a hold, and 3) the climber slipped. Fortunately, the climbers had protected the anchor by redirecting the rope through the anchor. The belayer placed a quickdraw on a highpoint on the anchor to prevent the load from impacting the belayer's body directly. This maneuver likely prevented injury to the belayer. Also, the experience level of the climbers, specifically the belayer, allowed them to secure the situation to enable rescuers to efficiently extract them. This was a great example of people displaying preparedness when they have had an unlikely turn of events.

Images

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