



## AAC Publications

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### **Stranded - Exceeding Abilities, Failure to Follow Directions (Off Route), Darkness, Inadequate Equipment/Clothing**

Alberta, Banff National Park, Tunnel Mountain

On August 2 two climbers who were relatively inexperienced started late in the day on a route that they thought was Ballista. Ballista is a bolted sport climb on the southeast face of Tunnel Mountain. They were climbing very slowly, and at one point one of the climbers took a 10-meter lead fall but sustained no injuries. They continued to climb, but eventually it became too dark to continue. They called Banff Dispatch and were transferred to the rescue leader on shift. They tried to describe their position to the rescue leader, but some of the details did not immediately add up. However, they were certain they were only one pitch from the top.

Two Visitor Safety Specialists responded by hiking up the backside of Tunnel Mountain with climbing equipment. It took some time to locate the stranded climbers, but a combination of flashing cell phone screens and yelling brought the specialists in line with the climbers. At this point, the specialists, who are intimately familiar with climbing routes in Banff National Park, discovered they were in fact on a route called Tatonka, which is closer to Gooseberry. After making a plan, one specialist was lowered down to the two climbers. The specialist on top hauled the climbers separately up to the top, and subsequently the specialist who was lowered down jumared back up. The specialists then accompanied the two climbers to the trailhead.

### **Analysis**

The climbers were unprepared and chose an objective that was beyond their ability. Additionally, the climbers did not have helmets or headlamps for their ascent, both of which are crucial equipment, especially the headlamps if you are starting late in the day. Their inexperience was demonstrated by the fact that they did not do enough research on their objective. Climbers are advised to take a proper instructional course from a member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (the only group that is permitted to teach climbing in the national parks). The acquisition of climbing and mountaineering competency involves a slow apprenticeship. It takes time and patience to be able to climb harder and more obscure objectives. Therefore, raising the grade, length, and commitment factor in small increments is prudent.

**Images**

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