



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock – Off Route, Inadequate Protection**

California, Yosemite National Park, Tuolumne Meadows, Fairview Dome

On June 21, 2013, I (61 years old, experienced climber) set out to climb the Regular Route (III 5.9) up the north face of Fairview Dome. I had climbed the route at least a few times before, including rope-soloing the climb. Thus, while leading the fourth pitch, well beyond the crux moves, I was quite surprised to fall.

My flight and slide seemed pretty long (20-30'), though my belayer (56 years old) was able to reel in some rope before it softly caught me. Steep terrain allowed for a pretty clean fall, but I managed to fully rupture my left Achilles tendon. Once my partner lowered me to the belay ledge, I found that I had no strength or control in my foot, and that the normally thick, cord-like tendon now resembled mushy, soft tissue. I was concerned that my left calf muscle might spasm and contract, complicating my injury and eventual recovery.

Generously, a party of two climbing below offered to rappel with us, allowing for two-rope rappels. At the base of the route, I was able to scramble down to the trail and hike out to my vehicle using my left heel. While my partner broke down our camp, I visited with the Tuolumne SAR team to see if they could confirm my self-diagnosis of a ruptured Achilles tendon. We reached the hospital a few hours later, and I was examined, X-rayed, and casted. I had the separated Achilles tendon surgically reattached a week later. I resumed climbing after six months of recovery.

### **Analysis**

While I had done the route before, it's possible that I got off route. Even with the crux climbing behind me, the potential consequences of falling were not over. I could've paid closer attention to the terrain. (Source: Anonymous.)

**Images**

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