



AAC Publications

Stranded - Weather, Inexperience

Colorado, Boulder, First Flatiron

About 9:45 p.m. on June 28, the Boulder County Communications Center received a call from three climbers (two males, one female) stuck on the first pitch of Fandango (5.5) on the First Flatiron. Not long after that, an intense storm cell moved over the area, bringing hail, heavy rain, and widespread lightning. According to one of the climbers, the group took shelter under a huge flake to the right of the route, with lightning striking the cliff within 20 meters on all sides of the group.

Personnel from Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, American Medical Response, and the Boulder County Sheriff's Office responded to their call for help and reached the climbers at about 11 p.m. By 1:15 a.m. all three had been evacuated off the rock without injury.

Analysis

This incident was documented by the group on a smartphone and posted online. In the video one of the male climbers remarks that there is a thunderstorm in the area and the group has decided to climb anyway. At the top of the first pitch, one of the climbers notes, "The rain has stopped, there are clouds rolling in, and it is getting dark. This is going to be an adventure." Darkness and the thunderstorm eventually overtake the group. The video shows one of the climbers calling 911 and asking the operator "are we safe?", and then asking if they "should be taking off metal objects." Fortunately the group stayed dry in the cave where they sought refuge, and even more fortunately none of the climbers was injured by a lightning strike or ground currents. Given the time of day and thunderstorms in the area, the group should not have started the climb. Shallow caves or chimneys are no place to be in a thunderstorm. (Sources: Boulder County Sheriff's Office and Aram Attarian.)

Images

Article Details

Author	
Publication	ANAM
Volume	10
Issue	67
Page	61
Copyright Date	2014
Article Type	Accident reports