



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock - Rope Severed on Sharp Edge, Inadequate Protection**

Minnesota, Sandstone ice cliff

A party of approximately 15 volunteers was cleaning routes for the ice climbing season at the Sandstone ice cliff. Volunteers' levels of experience ranged from great to little.

The victim volunteered to go on rappel to clean the face of a new route and was handed an 11mm static rope. Having no other gear with her and assuming the risk would be small, she tied the rope to a tree, double-checked her systems, and rappelled down to clean the route. After one route was successfully cleaned, she climbed back up and tied off in a new spot to continue cleaning.

For efficiency, she was clearing an area on the wall with a width of approximately 30 feet, moving from side to side. About two feet below the top of the cliff, however, the rope was rubbing on a sharp edge of sandstone that was just barely visible to people who inspected the area after the accident. That edge ended up severing the rope, and she fell about 30 feet to the ground. A lucky landing left her only with two stable fractures, one in her vertebrae and one in her pelvis.

#### **Analysis**

This accident might have been prevented by the use of edge protectors, a better understanding of the type of rock and its susceptibility to erosion and sharpness, an anchor system that extended over the sharp edge, a more thorough inspection for sharp or rough edges, and less horizontal movement while on rappel. (Source: Kathleen Loughran, 22.)

## Images



Example of rope protection for an anchor or top-rope.

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