



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock - Handhold Came Off

Canada, Alberta, Banff National Park, Tunnel Mountain, Gooseberry

On July 21 a party of three was climbing Gooseberry, a seven-pitch, 5.7 rock route. The lead climber was on pitch three when he dislodged a loose handhold. He fell approximately 10 meters and landed on his back, sustaining injuries. One partner climbed up to the fallen climber while the second placed an emergency call to Banff Dispatch. The partner was able to lower the leader to a sloping ledge, where they waited for a rescue.

Two Visitor Safety Specialists were dispatched to the accident scene. By coincidence, the rescue helicopter was in Banff at the time and the two specialists were overhead within about 15 minutes. The first specialist slung into the station below the climbers and rigged an anchor for the second specialist. After the second specialist arrived, the first climbed up to the injured climber. The first specialist then established another anchor and belayed the second specialist up. Over the next 20 minutes, the two specialists packaged the victim with some difficulty into a vacuum mattress and Heli-Rescue Bauman Bag. He was also rigged with a releasable system so that the specialists could safely transfer the climber to the helicopter long-line.

Analysis

The rock on climbing routes in the Canadian Rockies is inherently loose. The climbing team was adequately experienced for the route and was prepared to deal with the emergency situation—for example, safely tying off the fallen climber and knowing the correct emergency telephone numbers.

Images

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