



## AAC Publications

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### **Rappel Error/Failure, Climbing Alone**

Canada, Ontario, Dryden, Banana Lake

On May 6, a lone climber with 22 years of experience headed out to the Banana Lake climbing area. The pull-off is four kilometers down a logging road, and the walk to the cliff is one kilometer. Between 9 and 10:30 a.m., the climber did some route cleaning and placed two bolts on a new route. He then engaged in some roped soloing. After performing several top-roped ascents, he endeavored to move over to the next set of anchors to climb two more routes before calling it a day. He set up the rope to rappel to the other anchors, about five meters to the left and five meters lower down. He weighted the rope and began to traverse over. About halfway across, he began free-falling for about 15 meters.

The climber did not lose consciousness upon impact. He immediately stood up, noting that he was covered in blood. He removed his harness and began walking down the trail, looking for cell reception to call for help. He was able to make the call as he reached his vehicle, and the ambulance and police were dispatched. The climber sustained a dislocated shoulder, a head laceration, a broken foot, a severely bruised tailbone, minor internal bleeding (which took care of itself within a couple of days), and some minor bumps and bruises.

#### **Analysis**

A friend went out to look over the site and retrieve the climber's gear. He concluded that a locking carabiner clipped to the ground-anchor bolt, connected to a figure-eight loop tied in the end of the rope, had become detached. There was no failure of bolts, rope, knots, or the carabiner.

According to the fallen climber's self-analysis: "I've replayed the scene in my head over and over since that day, and though I thought that I had locked the 'biner, I obviously hadn't. From now on I will check the setup on each lap, use an auto-locking carabiner, and make sure everything is backed up. Had I used a backup on the ground anchor, this would not have happened. Plus, I will always wear a helmet."

From the description provided, it is assumed the rappel setup was this: One end of the rope was attached to a ground bolt with a locking carabiner and a figure-eight loop (this attachment was the point of failure). The rope ran up through the top anchors, and the rappeller descended the other side of the line. Rappelling both strands of the rope might have prevented this accident. This would have isolated the lower anchor point from the rappel system.

## Images

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