



AAC Publications

Rappel Error – Possible Equipment Failure

Utah, Arches National Park, Tower of Babel

On September 23 a climber fell between 75 and 100 feet while rappelling Zenyatta Entrada (5.4 C3) on the Tower of Babel. NPS rangers responded to the scene and found the climber lying on the ground at the base of the route. His partner was still descending from the second pitch. The victim was evacuated by wheeled litter to the road and taken by helicopter to a trauma center in Grand Junction, Colorado.

The fallen climber and his partner had ascended the route and were rappelling when the accident occurred. The first climber, leading the rappels, was out of sight of his partner. The partner above said the ropes began to pull rapidly through the anchor. He tried to grab the rope, but it was moving too fast and burned his hands. Later, the fallen climber stated that he had fallen off the end of the rope. However, at the base of the climb rescuers found a broken carabiner that had connected the climber's ATC rappel device to his harness. The partner stated that the victim had been having problems with that carabiner throughout the day.

According to an online forum post by the partner, the climber had eight broken ribs, several broken fingers, and a collapsed lung, but was expected to make a full recovery. He was wearing a helmet. (Source: Arches National Park/NPS Emergency Services.)

ANALYSIS

The climbers were using two ropes to rappel, but it's unclear whether the ropes had reached the ground. Based on the broken carabiner discovered at the base, it would seem this accident could be attributed to equipment failure or misuse rather than rappelling off the end of the ropes (though that is still possible). An open-gate or nosehooked carabiner could have resulted in a break that caused the victim to become detached from the ropes. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

Article Details

Author	
Publication	ANAM
Volume	10
Issue	68
Page	0
Copyright Date	2015
Article Type	Accident reports