



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Protection Pulled Out, Rockfall

Utah, Glen Canyon Recreational Area, Lake Powell

On April 5, a 30-year-old male climber from Grand Junction, Colorado, began aid soloing up Gregory Butte, located near the mouth of Last Chance Bay, at 7 a.m. A little after 9 a.m., he was over 500 feet up the wall when a piece he had placed pulled out, causing him to fall approximately 30 feet. His fall was stopped by lower gear placements, but when the first piece failed it also caused a large slab of stone to break free. This fell and hit the climber in the head, severely injuring him. [Editor's note: A friend of the climber said after this report was published that the cause of the fall was a fist jam that "blew out an enormous section of rock," that no protection pulled out, and that the climber hit his head during the fall, rather than the rockfall hitting him.]

The climber had completed several shorter climbs on Gregory Butte during the two previous days, and several of his friends were watching him from a boat. They drove to an area where they could get cell phone coverage, and they notified rescue personnel, who responded by boat and helicopter to the scene. The helicopter transported three Kane County SAR personnel and gear from Kanab, Utah, to the top of Gregory Butte, where they joined with the Glen Canyon SAR team. Five rescuers drilled and set anchors on top of the Butte, and a medic was lowered to the injured climber. He was able to secure the climber, and both were raised back to the top by the other four rescuers.

The injured climber was flown to a hospital in Flagstaff, Arizona. His injuries were serious, but he was expected to recover. He was wearing a helmet at the time of the accident, and rescuers attribute it with saving his life. (Source: Kane County Emergency Services.)

Images

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