



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Inadequate Protection, No Helmet

West Virginia, New River Gorge National River, Junkyard Area

On November 9 a male climber (28) was leading New River Gunks, a popular 5.7 traditional route, when he fell approximately 12 to 15 feet. The climber, whose only protection was a single fixed cam (Wild Country Zero 5), suffered a groundfall and landed in a seated position, also hitting his head. The fixed gear, which local guides and climbers noted had been present since at least 2009, failed when the cable stem of the device separated from the cam head assembly during the fall.

Other climbers placed a call to the Fayette County 911 center, and NPS rangers, nearby climbers, and first responders carried the injured climber by litter to the parking area for transport to a local hospital. The climber suffered a spinal injury and fractured his ulna and radius. He was not wearing a helmet. (Source: Jeff West, Chief Ranger, NPS Morning Report; Frank Sellers, Ranger, NPS Incident Report.)

ANALYSIS

Although this cam was solidly placed within the crack, the integrity of fixed gear can never be assessed comprehensively. This accident easily could have been avoided by placing additional gear nearby, as there were multiple placements available. (Source: R. Bryan Simon.)

Images

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