



## AAC Publications

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### **Rappel Error - Off Route, Inadequate Equipment**

Canada, British Columbia, Penticton, Skaha Bluffs

**On August 30, a 31-year-old man was rappelling his third climb of the day (Fortuitous, 5.10d, on the Fortress) when he fell about 20 meters to the ground and sustained massive trauma.** Three local climbers, two of whom were nurses, immediately attended to the fallen climber. One of the responding climbers observed, "He had one strand of rope through his ATC rappel device and the other end was going up to the anchors." The attending climbers observed that the prone climber was breathing but unresponsive. They attempted CPR until EMT personnel arrived on the scene. He did not survive.

#### **ANALYSIS**

Those closest to the event expressed two theories to explain the fall. First, the climber may have failed to clip both strands of rope before rappelling. Second, both ends of the rope may not have extended to the ground, and he rappelled off the short end. This is the more likely of the two theories. If he had failed to clip both sides of the rope before weighting the rappel line, the line probably would have pulled through the rappel anchors completely, considering the lengths of the rappel and the rope.

A friend reported in an online forum that the deceased had used a 60-meter rope with no middle marker. The friend also observed that he did not knot the ends of the rope, and that the rappeller was not aware of the correct descent route and thus likely rappelled farther than anticipated.

Fortuitous is a 50-meter rock climb. A single rope will necessitate two rappels to reach the ground. The correct intermediate anchor is located on a route named Perpendicularous, just to the left of Fortuitous. The rappeller headed toward a different anchor, to the right of Fortuitous, that is about 10 meters lower than the correct one. This meant he was attempting a 30-meter rappel with a 60-meter rope, leaving no margin for error. A safer option would be to haul a second rope to the upper anchor to rappel this route. It is also possible to hike down from the top.

**Images**

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