



AAC Publications

Rockfall

Oregon, Mt. Washington

In the evening of October 11, a 20-year-old solo climber was hit in the head by rockfall while rappelling the summit block of this 7,795-foot volcano. This caused her to fall about 15 feet and badly injure a knee. The climber was able to descend to about 6,200 feet, but could not continue. She called for help at around 11:25 p.m., and her cell phone battery then died. Rescuers were able to locate her around 7 a.m. Because of the nature of her injuries and the rugged location, she was airlifted from the scene by Oregon Army National Guard helicopter. (Source: Corvallis Mountain Rescue Unit and news reports.)

ANALYSIS

A similar accident occurred on Mt. Washington in July, when a climber was hit by rockfall while rappelling the upper mountain. Both incidents suggest the importance of using a backup, such as a friction hitch, when rappelling in areas of loose rock. The friction hitch can prevent a climber from falling to the end of the ropes if incapacitated.

In August, another climber was hit by rockfall while hiking the descent trail from Mt. Washington. On mountains with known rockfall dangers, helmets are mandatory and climbing or descending underneath other parties is unwise. (Source: The Editors.)

Images



The rocky summit of 7,795-foot Mt. Washington in central Oregon. There were three separate rockfall injuries to climbers on this peak in 2015.

Article Details

Author	Corvallis Mountain Rescue Unit
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	69
Page	90
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Accident reports