



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Inadequate Protection

California, Yosemite Valley, El Capitan, The Nose

On May 9, at approximately 9:30 a.m., YOSAR dispatch received a call about an injured climber who had taken a 20-foot leader fall on the first pitch of the Nose. As YOSAR mobilized to El Cap Meadow, a ranger at the base of Pine Line (a 5.7 crack just below the start of the Nose) indicated that the injured climber's partners were belaying around the corner from the victim, anchored to the pine tree at the top of Pine Line. The ranger also said that another team, which had been waiting to start the Nose, was assisting the climbers and had fixed a line from the top of Pine Line to the ground.

One member of the assisting team was able to clip the injured climber into their system and rappel with the injured climber, who was ambulatory, down to the base. Shortly after the injured climber had reached the ground, YOSAR arrived on scene with a litter team. They loaded the injured climber into the litter and wheeled him out to El Cap Meadow, where the climber was transferred to a medical helicopter.

ANALYSIS

There were a couple of contributing factors in this incident. First, after completing Pine Line, most parties will move the belay around a corner to the ledge beneath the first pitch of the Nose before starting that route. This decreases the potential for rope drag on the leader, and better communication can be maintained between belayer and leader. The leader was leapfrogging two cams on the first pitch of the Nose (5.10d or C1) when both pieces, for whatever reason, came out of the crack; no other gear was in position to protect the climber, and he fell to the ledge at the start of the pitch. In this case, additional protection may not have prevented the ledge fall, due to rope stretch. However, if you're going to leapfrog gear, it's a good idea to leave sufficient protection in place to prevent a dangerous fall. (Source: NPS ranger Brandon Latham.)

Images



A climber on Pine Line at the foot of the Nose. The Pine Line belay is on the tree ledge above the climber. The normal belay for the first pitch of the Nose is higher and around the corner to the right.

Article Details

Author	NPS Ranger Brandon Latham
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	69
Page	45
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Accident reports