



AAC Publications

Rappel Error – Hair Caught in Rappel Device

Colorado, Vallecito, Lemon Reservoir

It was a beautiful morning on Memorial Day weekend. We had the best spot to camp for the Lemon Reservoir crag. One party already had passed our camp, heading into the canyon to the routes. Our group was just finishing scarfing down our bacon and eggs when we heard a female cry of sheer pain. We immediately took off in a dead sprint to the bottom of the routes.

Upon getting to the routes, we could see a girl (mid-20s) dangling from her hair in her ATC (she was rappelling a route). I sprinted back to camp to grab another rope and my harness. When I got to the top of the cliff, her partner had already rigged a rappel and lowered to assist. He put a prusik above her ATC and attached a sling. The woman was able to stand in the sling, releasing her hair from the ATC. Her helmet was dangling from her harness the whole time. When we returned to our camp, we could think of nothing more than the fact that if the helmet had been worn the hair could have been contained to the back of the head and out of the way. This may not be a brain buster, but helmets matter! (Source: Dillon Parker.)

ANALYSIS

While a helmet may have helped keep the hair away from the device in this case, it does not ensure the hair is contained, especially for climbers with long hair. Keeping hair secured in a braid or bun, at the back of the head, is the best way to reduce the risk of it being pulled into the device by the rope while belaying or rappelling. Fortunately for this woman, the top of the route was accessible by foot and several climbers at the crag were proficient in rescue techniques. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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