



## AAC Publications

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### Rockfall

Oregon, Mt. Hood, South Side

**Casey Ferguson, age 27, was struck by a boulder while descending a chute just below the summit on June 14. The microwave-size rock fractured her lower leg.** Three other companions managed to dodge the boulder, after a climber above them yelled, “Rock!” Ferguson’s teammates and nearby climbers applied a splint and raised her about 150 feet back to the summit, the nearest level ground. After a 911 call, American Medical Response (AMR) paramedics hiked to the summit to provide professional treatment and request an air evacuation. A Portland Mountain Rescue (PMR) team also arrived to support a ground evacuation if necessary. Eventually, a Blackhawk helicopter performed a litter hoist from an altitude of 11,300 feet and flew the patient to a Portland hospital.

### ANALYSIS

The rockfall occurred at 9:30 a.m. in a south-facing chute. Although this was before the peak heating caused by the summer sun, there was still enough warming to loosen the boulder. Prudent climbers often start their climb about 2 a.m., allowing for a safe descent before warming of the upper rim and subsequent rockfall hazard. Such a start also gets them off the upper route before the majority of climbers queue for the summit. The climber who shouted “Rock!” may have helped prevent other injuries. (Jeff Scheetz, Portland Mountain Rescue.)

Editor’s note: On June 4, a 66-year-old, experienced climber slipped at around 10,500 feet on the South Side Route, and the unroped climber fell about 400 feet to the Hot Rocks area. His party quickly reached him and attempted CPR, but were unable to revive him. The climber did not attempt self-arrest, suggesting the possibility that a medical incident triggered the fall.

**Images**

## Article Details

Author	Jeff Scheetz, Portland Mountain Rescue
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	69
Page	89
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Accident reports