



Fatal Fall on Mt. Olympus Slab – Climbing Unroped

Utah, Wasatch Range, Mt. Olympus

Celeste and her partner, both 36 and experienced climbers, were approaching the technical crux of Kamp's Ridge (5.6) on Mt. Olympus. It was a warm, sunny day around noon. They were in fourth-class terrain when Celeste fell approximately 100 feet. She impacted a low-angle slab and rolled a few times before striking her head on a rock. Her partner was able to call 911 and initiate a rescue, and then started to downclimb to reach her. A medical helicopter with a hoist was dispatched, but it had a mechanical issue and was unable to insert a nurse. A helicopter from the Utah Department of Public Safety was able to insert three members of the Salt Lake County SAR team, and they found Celeste deceased.

ANALYSIS

Celeste and her partner were amply experienced for this route. Her partner has done Kamp's Ridge many times and knew the route well. They were carrying a rope and rack for the crux pitches. However, the terrain they were in was low-angle and broken, which would make climbing with a rope difficult and create its own set of problems (snags, rockfall, etc.). I was a first responder at this accident, and I probably would have been climbing unroped in the area they were in.

Her partner didn't witness the start of the fall and is unsure if she pulled off a loose rock or slipped. She was not wearing a helmet when we arrived, but her partner had one and it's likely hers was removed before we got there. The blow she received was in the back and quite low, and many helmets wouldn't have offered much protection in this situation. This incident is a somber reminder of the risks we take while climbing. (Michael Finger, Salt Lake County Search and Rescue.)

Images

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