



AAC Publications

Broken Hold – Inadequate Protection

New Hampshire, North Conway, Humphrey's Ledge

On May 28, a party was climbing at Humphrey's Ledge, just outside of North Conway. The leader was attempting a climb called Sting Like a Butterfly, an obscure 5.10. A handhold broke as the climber was pulling through the crux of the route and the climber fell. As he did, a cam he'd placed in a loose flake pulled loose. The climber hit the slab below, breaking his femur. A team from the Mountain Rescue Service was mobilized, and they lowered the injured climber in a rescue litter after stabilizing him.

ANALYSIS

Humphrey's Ledge is notorious for sections of rotten rock. While breaking a handhold could happen at any crag, special care must be taken when attempting a climb at or close to one's limit on bad rock or on routes that do not see frequent traffic. Testing holds, taking care to place protection in the most solid rock available, and never climbing too far above marginal gear are all part of a larger contingency plan, but perhaps most important is staying in control to avoid a fall that might result in injury—including downclimbing when necessary. (Source Michael Wejchert, Mountain Rescue Service.)

Images

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