



AAC Publications

Leader Fall on Rock

Arizona, Paradise Forks

The Coconino County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Unit responded to a report of a climbing accident at Paradise Forks around 11 a.m. on June 10. The report indicated a climber had fallen 10 to 20 feet and was injured. Upon arrival, it was determined that the fall had occurred on Retard's Recess, a 5.10+ crack climb. Hannah Burson, 22, an experienced climber, was at the crux of the route when she fell. Burson had four to five pieces of protection in, with the last being a little below her foot. When she reached for the next handhold she slipped. All the protection held and her belayer caught the fall and lowered Burson to the floor of the canyon. A fracture in her lower right leg was suspected. Burson was tended by other climbers in the area prior to search and rescue's arrival.

Search and rescue established a high-angle rescue system and lowered a rescuer with a litter to the bottom of the canyon. Due to the seriousness of the injury, a helicopter short-haul rescue was determined to be the best method for extraction. The Arizona Department of Public Safety Northern Air Rescue Unit responded and performed a short-haul extraction of Burson and a sheriff's deputy to a suitable landing zone, where she was transferred to a waiting ambulance.

ANALYSIS

Both climbers were experienced, and Burson had climbed at Paradise Forks in the past but had not done this route. Protection opportunities exist above the last piece she placed, and a higher piece might have reduced the length of the fall and prevented the injury.

Burson also indicated the belay was not a "soft catch" and that this may have contributed to the injury by pulling her into the wall as the rope came tight. However, Burson said, it was basically just an unfortunate accident. She was wearing a helmet. (Source: Aaron Dick, Coconino County Sheriff's Office.)

Images



A climber nears the crux of the 5.10+ crack climb.

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