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Fatal Fall – Unroped Scrambling During Descent

Wyoming, Wind River Range, Steeple Peak

On Monday, August 28, Michael Sullivan, 54, fell to his death while descending from Steeple Peak. Sullivan and his climbing partner had done other ascents earlier that week in the Cirque of the Towers area. On August 28 they had reached the summit of Steeple Peak in the Deep Lake cirque and were on their way down the standard south ridge descent. While scrambling unroped between the first and second rappel stations, Sullivan lost his footing and fell hundreds of feet. His partner descended on her own and hiked until she met a party with a satellite phone and called for help. (Source: Sublette County Sheriff's Office.)

ANALYSIS

The victim was an experienced mountaineer, with numerous ascents of alpine climbs in the United States and elsewhere. The descent from Steeple involves a series of rappels with walking and scrambling between them. It's not known exactly where or why the victim stumbled, but scrambling is the normal way to move between rappel stations on this descent. (Source: The Editors.)

Images



Steeple Peak (left) in the Wind River Range. The descent route is near Steeple's right skyline.

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