



## AAC Publications

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### **Lowering Error – Miscommunication**

California, Bishop Area, Pine Creek Canyon, Gateway Slabs

**On October 20, at approximately 2 p.m., an experienced climber (male, 36) took a long, tumbling ground fall on Vanadium Miner's Daughter (5.9) at the Gateway Slabs, outside of Pratt's Crack Canyon.** This single-pitch climb on a low-angle slab was the party's third route of the day. Prior to reaching the anchor, the climber asked the belayer (male, 35) if he wanted to do the route. The belayer replied that he would clean it on top-rope. The climber continued to the anchor, clipped in, and yelled "take." At some point, the belayer thought he had heard the climber say "off belay" and took the climber off. When the climber leaned back after yelling "take," he fell to the ground.

The climber suffered numerous fractures and internal injuries. Inyo County SAR and local fire/EMS units transported the climber to the hospital. He was expected to fully recover from his injuries.

(Source: Inyo County SAR.)

### **ANALYSIS**

This incident reinforces the importance of clear communication between a climber and belayer. Communicating the plan for descending from the anchor **before** beginning the route is a must, especially in situations when the anchor is out of sight or when communication may be difficult (e.g. long pitches, crowded crags, wind or road noise). If the belayer hears "off belay" (or anytime the belayer hears an unexpected instruction), it is critical to confirm this with the climber. Finally, a climber should always confirm the belayer is ready to lower and then test-weight the lowering system **before** unclipping from the anchor. (Sources: Inyo County SAR and the Editors.)

**Images**

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