



AAC Publications

Fall While Scrambling – Loose Rock, Haste

Oregon, Smith Rock, Northern Point

On February 17, a male climber (30) fell while free soloing an “easy chimney” between the Lower Gorge and Northern Point. He was attempting a shortcut back to the parking lot after a day of climbing in the Marsupials, rather than taking the longer trail back. He had crossed the Crooked River and was attempting to find an old ladder made of rebar upstream of Northern Point while his party waited on the other side of the river to see if he was successful. Unable to find the ladder, the climber decided to attempt the chimney (which is not an established route). After approximately 20 feet, he encountered two chockstones and his backpack caught on one of these loose blocks. The block shifted onto his pack, pulling him off and causing him to fall. He first impacted a ledge at the base of the chimney and then fell another 20 feet before stopping on a sloping ledge. His friends immediately called 911, and Deschutes County SAR responded and performed a vertical raise to evacuate.

ANALYSIS

The subject stated that, in retrospect, he ignored his intuition, which was to back off and search for a better exit. The climber also stated that he was “a little too comfortable” in exposed terrain. It is important to take time to analyze potential hazards before committing to exposed terrain without a rope and to pay attention to time and social pressures that influence decision-making. Sometimes it is safer to take the long way out. (Source: Deschutes County SAR.)

Images

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