



AAC Publications

Stranded – Stuck Rappel Ropes

Oregon, Smith Rock, Monkey Face, West Face

On May 15, two male climbers (ages 37 and 21), after having climbed Super Slab (5.6) on the Red Wall, attempted a shortcut to the base of the West Face Variation (5.8) on the west side of the Monkey Face to avoid hiking down the Misery Ridge Trail and around to the west face. They rappelled from anchors at the Springboard, a prominent ledge facing the Monkey Face, using two 60-meter ropes. These anchors are traditionally used for a Tyrolean traverse or slackline over to the Monkey Face, not for rappelling. When the two climbers reached the top of the first pitch of the West Face Variation, they were unable to pull the ropes due to friction on the rock, and they did not know how to ascend the ropes. The party called 911 for help. Deschutes County SAR arrived on scene, and two members of the Mountain Rescue Team rappelled to the subjects and assisted them to the ground.

ANALYSIS

It is important for climbers to be able to recognize appropriate and inappropriate anchors for rappelling and to consider the effects of friction when pulling a rope. This party would have been better off walking to the base of their next route. Climbers attempting multi-pitch routes should have the skills and gear to ascend stuck rappel ropes if necessary. (Source: Deschutes County SAR.)

Images



The slackline traverse from Misery Ridge to Monkey Face. Slackline anchors may be mistaken for rappel anchors, but their location often makes them unsuitable for rappelling. Photo courtesy of Smithrock.com.

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