



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall On Rock – Loose Rock, Inadequate Protection**

West Virginia, Seneca Rocks, Church Rocks

**On October 7, Adam and Amber (both 26) were at a rock formation called Church Rocks, an infrequently climbed area near Seneca Rocks. After completing a route to the top of the formation, the climbers decided to rappel from a different location in order to scope out another wall they had noticed earlier.** During the rappel, Adam identified a finger-sized crack he wanted to climb, and after cleaning some loose rock and debris, he continued to a ledge that offered a nice stance and was 25 feet off the ground. Amber then rappelled to this ledge.

Adam racked up, clipped their belay anchor as his first piece, and started up the route. At approximately ten feet above the belay, Adam encountered a large rock at the base of the crack system. He had checked this block on his initial descent and it felt, looked, and sounded solid, so he placed his first piece, a number 1 Tricam (red), in a crack alongside the block. He climbed a body length higher and was reaching for a piece in a crack alongside the block. He climbed a body length higher and was reaching for a piece on his harness when his left handhold broke, causing him to fall. The Tricam held briefly, then snapped from the crack as the block pulled from the wall. Adam continued to fall past the anchor and into a small tree, which detached from the rock face and also fell. His fall came to a stop when he loaded the anchor, pulling Amber into it. The detached block hit the belayer, but she maintained her belay, catching him with her Black Diamond ATC.

Having sustained no serious injury, Adam returned to the ledge, where he clipped into the anchor and assessed Amber's wounds (bruising and puncture wounds to the right knee and a deep laceration to her right lower leg). The pair tied clean clothing around the wounds to protect them from dirt, and then, after wrestling their rope from the downed tree, Adam rigged a fixed line and they rappelled to the ground. With the help of non-climbing bystanders and members of Seneca Rocks Climbing School, they were assisted to local facilities for care. (Source: Adam Happensack.)

### **ANALYSIS**

When climbing in new or seldom-visited areas, be alert for loose rock, vegetation, and insecure holds. Consider placing additional protection in these circumstances. (Sources: Adam Happensack and the Editors.)

**Images**

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