



## AAC Publications

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

West Virginia, Seneca Rocks, Southern Pillar

**In the early afternoon of November 4, a male climber (age unknown) was leading the route Climbin' Punishment (5.8+).** The climber fell when he was approximately 75 feet up the route, while negotiating the second of two overhanging steps. His highest piece pulled when it was loaded, causing him to fall 25 to 30 feet before the belayer (male, age unknown) arrested the fall.

The climber was inverted during the fall and impacted a ledge with his upper back and head. He lost consciousness and was lowered to the ground, where he regained consciousness. The belayer called for assistance, and the injured climber was carried to the nearby road and then transferred by helicopter to a local medical facility. The climber suffered a fractured skull, concussion, and minor lacerations to his head and right shoulder. He was wearing a helmet, which may have saved his life.

#### **ANALYSIS**

Although the exact circumstances that caused this protection piece to pull out of the rock are not known, there are various possibilities. This climb has several hollow flakes and flaring cracks, and gear placed in hollow or loose rock can exert enough force to shift the rock and cause placements to fail. Protecting flaring cracks can be tricky as well. In such cases, doubling up on protection and/or placing pro more frequently than usual are wise precautions. In addition, protection that isn't extended adequately with a quickdraw or sling can be shifted out of its ideal placement by the movement of the rope. This is especially true when the rope changes direction, such as while negotiating roofs or traverses. (Source: Adam Happensack, Seneca Rocks Climbing School.)

**Images**

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