



AAC Publications

Rockfall In Descent Gully

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Disappointment Peak

At approximately 3:30 p.m. on June 28, an experienced climber (male, age 68) was struck by a rolling rock while scrambling down a descent gully after a climb of the Open Book (5.9+), a popular multi-pitch route above Garnet Canyon. The rock hit the climber's lower left leg, and the resulting laceration and contusion prevented him from walking. With his partner's help, he was able to "crab" his way down to the Garnet Canyon Trail.

Rangers reached the pair a little after 6 p.m., and after assessing the injured climber and discussing options for evacuation, a helicopter extraction was deemed prudent and appropriate. The injured climber was extracted via short-haul and flown to Lupine Meadows. His partner hiked out and drove him to the hospital for further evaluation and treatment. (Source: National Park Service Search and Rescue Report.)

ANALYSIS

Accidents involving rockfall or rolling rocks in descent gullies are not uncommon. General advice for minimizing the hazard in loose terrain includes: Stay close together while descending; descend one at a time through loose passages or "chokes" in gullies, while other members of the party wait in a safe zone; communicate with your partners when negotiating a loose section and yell "Rock!" if anything comes off; and wear your helmet. An alternative descent from this popular climb, with minimal scrambling, heads east to reach Amphitheater Lake and a hiking trail. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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