



## AAC Publications

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### Fatal Fall From Cliff Top – Loose Rock

Colorado, Boulder Canyon, Bell Butress

**In midmorning on August 24, a 50-year-old male climber fell approximately 120 feet from the top of Bell Butress, causing fatal injuries.** The man and his climbing partner had just completed the second pitch of Cosmosis (5.10a) and were searching for a bolted rappel station. The pair unroped and began scrambling climber's left toward the anchor. The climber stated to his partner that the terrain looked easy and that he felt comfortable traversing it, but as they were scrambling he fell. His partner didn't witness the fall, but other climbers in the area described a rock dislodging under the climber as he was scrambling.

Climbers at the crag reached the patient on a ledge and found him unresponsive. A Boulder ranger responded, and the climber was pronounced dead at the scene.

### ANALYSIS

Most parties do only the classic first pitch of Cosmosis, which can be descended via a single lower or rappel from a bolted anchor. Since the second pitch doesn't have a fixed anchor at its top, continuing up that pitch meant choosing among several descent options, including the scramble to reach a rappel station to the east or a walk-off to the southwest. Nearly every year, this publication records one or more fatal unroped falls from the tops of cliffs, often as climbers search for descent routes. It's not uncommon to encounter loose rock or slippery vegetation and dirt on cliff-top edges. If a secure path cannot be identified and followed, consider staying on belay until the anchor or descent trail is reached. (Sources: Boulder County Sheriff's Office, online post from the climber's partner, and the Editors.)

**Images**

## Article Details

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