



AAC Publications

Rappel Error – Rappelled off End of Rope

Idaho, City of Rocks National Reserve, Parking Lot Rock

In the late afternoon of June 22, ranger Stephen King received word that a climber had fallen at Parking Lot Rock. Witnesses and responders said that a 27-year-old female climber was descending from Delay of Game (5.8) when she rappelled off the end of her rope, falling approximately 40 feet and landing on a ledge near the base of the climb. Witnesses stated that her doubled rappel rope was uneven, and there were no knots tied in the ends. The climber suffered an open fracture of her left ankle and an apparent fracture of her left wrist, but was alert and oriented. She was wearing a helmet. The climber was stabilized by EMS personnel and transported from the scene by helicopter. (Source: Stephen King, ranger at City of Rocks National Reserve and Castle Rocks State Park.)

ANALYSIS

Researching this climb beforehand would have alerted the climber that rappelling this route requires two ropes or an extra-long single rope. The guidebook (Bingham, 2016) states that although the route is 120 feet (36.5 meters) tall, it is possible to lower or rappel with a single 70-meter rope with rope stretch, but they advise to knot the rope ends. (In 2010, a climber fell to the ground when one end of a 70-meter rope passed through his belayer's device as the climber was lowering down this route.) The length of rope this climber used is unknown. Placing the marked center of the rope at the anchor before descending helps to ensure the rope ends are of equal length. If a rope has no accurate center mark, both ends can be lowered simultaneously to keep them even. Whether the rope was too short or the ends were uneven (or both), knotting the rope ends could have been prevented the fall. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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