



AAC Publications

Rappel Error – Clipped Only One Strand into Device

Canada, Alberta, Jasper National Park, Lost Boys Area

In midafternoon on May 30, rescue personnel responded to a report that a 63-year-old man had fallen from the top of Lost Boys. He was located at the base of Super Brant Man (5.10b), in between large boulders. The climber's rope, harness, carabiners, and belay device were in good condition. He had a daisy chain on his harness with which he likely had secured himself at the top of the route. The patient was not wearing a climbing helmet and had suffered head trauma. He was declared deceased at the scene.

ANALYSIS

Due to the configuration of the rope and technical gear, it was determined that this was a rappel failure. Only one rappel strand of the climbing rope was clipped through the belay device and carabiner attached to the belay loop of the climber's harness. With this setup, the patient weighted one strand of the rope and pulled the other half all the way through the anchor, resulting in a 20-meter fall. His climbing partner was at the base of the climb and could not have checked his setup.

In addition to the faulty rappel setup, the climber did not use a third-hand backup or wear a helmet (though neither likely would have prevented the tragic results of this accident). Always perform a bounce test after setting up your rappel system and before detaching your connection from the anchor. (Sources: Jesse Milner, Parks Canada Rescue Technician and the Editors.)

Images

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