



AAC Publications

Off Route – Protection Pulled Out

West Virginia, Seneca Rocks, South Peak, West Face

On July 6, a climber was attempting to lead the first pitch of a popular 5.8 trad route called the Burn.

According to witnesses, the leader climbed toward the roof but veered significantly right and off route, intersecting the first pitch of Ecstasy (3 pitches, 5.7). The leader then corrected back left to regain the route, resulting in the formation of a large “Z” of rope running through his protection. After pulling through the roof, the leader fell and two pieces came out before a third stopped his descent. The leader suffered a fracture of the tibia and fibula. He refused assistance from other climbers, and he and his partner proceeded to self-rescue. (Source: Nick Ingalls.)

ANALYSIS

Staying on route likely would have minimized the seriousness of the fall and resulting injuries to the leader. Creating a “Z” of rope resulted in upward or sideways forces on the placed pieces and likely contributed to a much longer fall. Prior to any climb, study the associated topos and read the available beta to prevent getting off-route. When a climb zigzags, arrange your protection and use extensions to keep the rope running as straight as possible. (Sources: Nick Ingalls and the Editors.)

Images

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