



## AAC Publications

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### **Fatal Fall in Attempt to Assist Partner**

Wyoming, Wind River Range, Cirque of the Towers, Pingora Peak

**On August 10, Zijah Kurtovic (63) fell to his death during an attempt on 11,889-foot Pingora Peak.** While leading the final pitch (5.6) of a route on the east side of Pingora, his climbing partner (male, 67 ) fell 40 to 50 feet and suffered fractures to seven vertebrae, four ribs, and his right ankle, along with a hemothorax. Kurtovic secured his partner with a length of rope, as the man was unable to hold himself in place due to his injuries, and then apparently left the accident site to seek help. Neither he nor his partner had cell service or a SEND device to call for rescue. At some point, and likely while rappelling, Kurtovic fell.

Nearby climbers came to the aid of the injured partner, providing first aid and using their Garmin inReach to send an SOS and to communicate with search and rescue. Thanks to their efforts, the injured climber was successfully short-hauled from the peak that day by helicopter. His partner's body was recovered days later by Fremont County Search and Rescue. (Sources: Jameson Harper (climber on the scene), Tip Top Search and Rescue, and media reports.)

### **ANALYSIS**

Although we do not have an account of what happened after Kurtovic secured his injured partner high on Pingora, the actions of the climbers who assisted should be noted. Activating search and rescue soon after an accident can make the difference between life and death. Staying calm, as these climbers did, not only assists the injured climber but also is essential to communicating the needed details to a search and rescue team.

When communicating with 911 dispatch or search and rescue, focus on providing a precise geographic location, including GPS coordinates and any terrain elements that might impede or complicate a rescue. Additionally, a detailed assessment of the climber's injuries (head to toe, with a focus on life threatening factors) and any pertinent medical history will be helpful. Remember that communicating is a two-way street listen to their instructions. In many cases, a SAR team member can walk you through helpful steps in an emergency and how to signal to responding SAR units. (Source: The Editors.)

**Images**

## Article Details

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