



AAC Publications

Leader Fall — Inadequate Equipment, Experience

California, Eastern Sierra, Pine Creek Canyon

On May 7 around 1:30 p.m., the Inyo County Sheriff's Office received notification of a fall victim with critical injuries in Pine Creek Canyon. The patient was reported to be near the top of an unnamed scrambling route, approximately 500 feet off the ground, above the gully at the right margin of the Mustache Wall. The two had just decided to rope up, and the leader had not yet placed any gear before he fell approximately 20 feet. The party was climbing without a full rack or full-length rope. Neither climber was wearing a helmet, and the patient sustained a severe head injury.

Inyo County Search and Rescue responded, and a team of two ascended a multi-pitch route to reach the party from below. Four additional members ascended 5th-class terrain on the southeast side of the same buttress, where they were able to top out and descend to the injured party with additional equipment. The injured climber was stabilized and lowered in stages to the base of the canyon.

ANALYSIS

The patient was a relatively inexperienced climber. The fall could have been prevented had the party been placing adequate gear to protect the climb. The patient's head injury could have been avoided, or ameliorated, if he had been wearing a helmet. (Source: Inyo County Search and Rescue.)

Images

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