



## AAC Publications

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### Lowering Error — Inexperience

California, Big Bear Lake Area, Holcomb Valley Pinnacles, Coyote Crag

**On July 12, Ramiro Mosquera (24) was climbing with a group of friends on Bye Crackie (5.7), a 60-foot sport climb.** After cleaning the anchor, Ramiro was being lowered when his belayer lost control of the brake strand threaded through a tube-style belay device. The belayer was unable to regain control, and Ramiro fell approximately 40 feet to the base of the route. He landed feet-first before falling onto his buttocks and back, with his head hitting the ground.

A passing climber identified herself as a physician and began stabilizing Ramiro's injuries. Two San Bernardino County Sheriff Department helicopters were dispatched to GPS coordinates provided by bystanders. After briefly landing to offload equipment and personnel to lighten the load, due to high summer temperatures and elevation (7,200 feet), Air Rescue 308 lowered a medic and a Stokes litter approximately 140 feet to the patient's location. After a hoist rescue, Ramiro was flown to Loma Linda University Medical Center trauma unit, where he was treated for an open left ankle pilon fracture, a right knee tibial plateau fracture, scalp laceration, and contusions.

### ANALYSIS

As the most experienced member of a group enjoying a casual day at the crag, Ramiro felt that he had been a bit lax in reviewing and following safety protocols. Although they checked each other's harnesses and knots, Ramiro realizes that he did not adequately review his belayer's knowledge of techniques. With newer belayers, an additional climber can provide a backup by holding the brake strand behind the primary belayer. Properly used, assisted-braking devices also can offer an extra margin of safety when belaying and lowering.

No helmets were worn by anyone in the climbing party, and although Ramiro did not suffer any traumatic brain injury, his head wounds may have been lessened or prevented by a helmet. (Sources: Ramiro Mosquera and San Bernardino County Sheriff-Coroner Department.)

**Images**

## Article Details

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