



## AAC Publications

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### Belay Error

California, El Cajon Mountain, Mountaineers Wall

**On February 8, two seasoned climbers were planning to climb Sleeping Giant (5.10a), a ten-pitch mostly bolted climb. Finding the route already occupied with a party of five, with a single lead climber, AC (37) and his partner warmed up on nearby single-pitch routes.** Once the longer route was sufficiently cleared, they climbed the first nine pitches without incident. Leading the 5.10a crux of the final pitch, AC took a fall approximately three feet above his last piece of protection. His belayer lost control of the brake strand through her tube-style device and AC fell 30 feet into a gully. He was wearing a helmet.

AC sustained a closed right bimalleolar ankle fracture. The party of five, who were rappelling nearby, witnessed the fall and called 911. AC was able to complete two rappels to the ground adjacent to the formation, and from there a CAL FIRE helicopter extricated him to a nearby ambulance.

### ANALYSIS

It is unknown what caused the experienced belayer to lose control of the brake strand, although fatigue and distraction from the other climbers in the area may have been issues. AC also was out of sight of the belayer and fell unexpectedly. There were no burns on the belayer's hands. Any belayer can be affected by factors within and out of their control, and an assisted-braking device may reduce the chances of a significant fall and injury. (Source: Andrew Camp.)

**Images**

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