



## AAC Publications

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### **Rappel Error — Uneven Rope, Inadequate Backup**

Oregon, Smith Rocks State Park

**A group of three was climbing Wherever I May Roam (5.9), a popular multi-pitch sport route, on the afternoon of August 8, and they decided to rappel before completing the climb. The team reportedly did not find the middle of their rope and tied a stopper knot only in one end of the rope.**

One of the climbers (male, 22) began to rappel and then fell to the ground after the short, unknotted end of the rope passed through his device. He fell approximately 90 feet to the ground, then tumbled another 150 feet down a steep slope, coming to rest near the Misery Ridge Trail. He took the rope with him as he fell, stranding the two partners.

People nearby ran to help and called 911. The injured climber reportedly was awake and communicating. Two volunteers headed up the route to help the remaining two climbers in the party off the wall.

Redmond Fire & Rescue and Deschutes County SAR team members used a raft to cross the Crooked River and reach the climber. He was treated, prepped, then floated across the river to a waiting helicopter that flew him to the hospital. The injured climber had a broken hip and collapsed lung.

#### ANALYSIS

The same safety steps should be followed for every single rappel, whether a single rap or a long series of rappels down a big face: Make sure the two rope ends are even (if you can't see them, gather the ends at the stance so you can lower them simultaneously), knot both ends, use a friction-hitch backup, and weight-test the system before unclipping from the anchor and committing to the rappel. These steps would prevent a very large majority of serious rappel accidents. (Sources: Deschutes County Search and Rescue, news reports, and Mountain Project.)

**Images**

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