



AAC Publications

Fall While Attempting New Route — Loose Rock

Canada, Alberta, Banff National Park, Saddleback Wall

On July 28, two climbers were attempting a new route on the quartzite cliff known as the Saddleback Wall, near Lake Louise. They were one or two pitches up the four-pitch wall when the leader pulled off a loose block and took a fall. The gear held, but the falling leader swung hard into the wall and injured one ankle. The climbers were able to rappel to the ground and started to walk out, but then realized the walk would be very slow and painful, so they called for a rescue.

ANALYSIS

The Canadian Rockies have a wide range of rock types and quality. Although the quartzite cliffs of the Saddleback Wall have some high-quality rock, there is also plenty of loose material, especially on new routes where the holds are untested. Strategies to mitigate this elevated risk include putting in ample protection, thoroughly testing holds, and rappelling to inspect and clean a new route from the top before committing to leading it from the bottom. (Source: Banff, Yoho & Kootenay National Parks Visitor Safety Team.)

Images

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