



AAC Publications

Falling Rock

California, Mt. Shasta, Avalanche Gulch

In the afternoon of April 9, a solo climber took a glancing blow to the thigh by a quoted “500-pound rock” while climbing Avalanche Gulch. The climber was near the Heart, which is the steepest part of the route, with slopes reaching 35°.

Another solo climber nearby witnessed the incident and came to help. A 911 call was made, but after some reassessment, the injured was able to self-rescue with the aid of the other climber. The two scooted down the mountain to Helen Lake and then skied back to Bunny Flat. A large contusion was the reported extent of the injury.

ANALYSIS

Avalanche Gulch is technically the second-easiest route on Shasta, and the short approach makes it the most popular route to the summit (14,179 feet). Still, the 3rd-class difficulties and vertical gain of 7,300 feet add to the potential hazards one would expect from a big peak like this, including avalanches, altitude sickness, and rockfall. Getting a very early start is an essential strategy for minimizing some of these risks. (Source: Mt. Shasta Climbing Rangers.)

Images

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