



## AAC Publications

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### **Loose Rock Crushes Leader's Foot**

New York, Shawangunks, The Trapps

**On March 23, a male climber (43) was climbing pitch two of Middle Earth (3 pitches, 5.6) when he apparently dislodged a large block that narrowly missed his partner, who was belaying atop the first pitch. In the process, the leader's left foot was crushed by another loose block.**

The climber managed to continue to the top of pitch two and belayed from a tree. He brought his partner up and then rappelled to the base, keeping his weight on his good right foot. He later said, "I did not want to endanger any other climbers or rescuers trying to get to me." Once he was at the base, a rescue team ushered him down the trail and onto a ranger truck, after which an ambulance and then helicopter evacuated him to Westchester Medical Center. The climber lost all the toes of his left foot.

### **ANALYSIS**

Loose rock is always a hazard, even on an area classic like Middle Earth. Climbers should test any potentially loose blocks by rapping on them and listening and watching for signs of movement. This climber was fortunate to have a steadfast partner who calmly assisted in the self-rescue and evacuation. He later posted a note on Mountain Project to avoid the route until rangers had the opportunity to assess and manage the issue—a thoughtful warning to fellow climbers. Similarly, climbers can mark wiggling blocks with a chalk X to warn other climbers until the loose rock can be removed. (Sources: Mountain Project and the Editors.)

**Images**

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