



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock — Broken Hold, Protection Pulled

Canada, Alberta, Kananaskis Country, East End of Mt. Rundle

On July 10, a party of two was climbing Generosity (13 pitches, 5.9), a long, mixed-protection route near Canmore. On pitch seven, the leader pulled off a loose rock, which caused him to fall 30 to 40 feet. A piece of gear pulled out early in the fall. The climber fell down terrain that was less than vertical, hitting multiple ledges. He severely injured his hand, but fortunately nothing else. Both climbers were well equipped, wearing helmets, and they were climbing within their technical limit.

A nearby climbing party assisted the pair, and an evacuation was performed by helicopter, using several long-line operations to access the cliff face.

ANALYSIS

Testing holds and having more experience with loose rock would have helped but would not have eliminated the risk. On longer routes in the Rockies, the rock is notoriously loose and unpredictable. Even popular routes like Generosity are not climbed enough to be choss-free.

Managing loose rock requires a climbing technique involving balance with multiple contact points versus a more committed sport climbing style of movement. For example, having both hands pulling on the same hold can be problematic if the hold breaks. Also, the reliability of cams and nuts depends on rock integrity. In this case, a piece of gear failed, adding to the length of the fall. (Source: Kananaskis Public Safety.)

Images

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