



## AAC Publications

---

### **SCRAMBLING FALL – Off-Route Shortcut**

Oregon, Smith Rock State Park, Smith Rock Group

**On September 17, Oregon Mountain Rescue Council teams gathered at Smith Rock for the first annual joint training since the pandemic.** One hour into the two-day training, a critical search and rescue mission materialized: Members of the hosting Deschutes County SAR were notified by dispatch of a “fallen climber” in the park. Fortunately for the patient, 27 of the state’s most equipped and competent rope rescuers were present.

The “fallen climber” was a young man who was looking for a way to access the top of the Smith Rock Group formation, where there was a pre-rigged highline. Instead of hiking up the switchbacks, he ventured up a loose gully that steepened from 4th- class scrambling into continuous 5th-class climbing. From near the top, the subject fell roughly 70 feet and came to a rest on a low-angled bench within the gully.

Deschutes County SAR handled the initial coordination of the mission and responded on foot with a three-person hasty team, envisioning a relatively straightforward patient stabilization effort until the local fire department arrived. However, it quickly morphed into an all-hands, multi-agency rescue. The hasty team scrambled over Asterisk Pass (low 5th class), while subsequent teams utilized Redmond Fire’s raft to cross the Crooked River, thus avoiding climbing over Asterisk Pass with heavy gear and a bulky litter. The hasty team worked in the gully to secure, stabilize, and treat the patient as well as establish an anchor for a high-angle litter lower. Meanwhile, the supporting team below built anchors for two additional lowers beneath the gully to the river.

The un-helmeted patient sustained multiple vertebral fractures, lower limb injuries, a small pneumothorax, and some life-threatening organ punctures. Fortunately, the patient not only survived but was discharged from the hospital in less than 48 hours.

### **ANALYSIS**

As the saying goes, “Short cuts make long delays.” This is one of two accidents in the 2023 ANAC in which a person deliberately left an established trail and soon found themselves in 5th-class terrain (see report here). The lesson here is to stay on the established path or be prepared for technical climbing. This means having proper equipment and training. (Source: Caleb Bryce, Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue.)

## Images

## Article Details

Author	Caleb Bryce, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue
Publication	ANAM
Volume	13
Issue	76
Page	73
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Accident reports