



AAC Publications

STRANDED – Unable to Find Descent

Utah, Wasatch Range, Little Cottonwood Canyon

On Wednesday, June 1, a party of two started climbing the Thumb formation at approximately 9 a.m. Upon reaching the summit after dark, they spent hours searching for the descent route via Plumb Line Gully. At approximately 2 a.m. on June 2 they called 911, as they were unable to find the descent and temperatures were dropping. Salt Lake County Sheriff's Search and Rescue (SLCOSAR) dispatched two teams to ascend Plumb Line Gully to intercept the subjects. SAR teams brought food, warm clothes, ropes, and descent beta. The teams reached the climbers at 6 a.m. and descended with a series of rappels. All parties were off the mountain by 9:30 a.m.

ANALYSIS

This, and other complex descents, should not to be underestimated. "Rhett Burroughs" on Mountainproject.com wrote, "There have been many SAR call-outs for this descent." Burroughs goes on to detail specific descent beta. This underscores the following principle: It is advisable to thoroughly research not only the climb, but the descent. As Ed Viesturs so succinctly put it, "Getting to the top is optional. Getting down is mandatory." While he was referring to 8,000-meter peaks, the principle is relevant to any climb. Rappel anchors on multi-pitch climbs are often hard to locate. Get beta from others (whether in person or via social media) who have climbed the route to help avoid such situations. Bring extra layers, a headlamp, and extra food/water on any long climb. (Source: Salt Lake County Sheriff's Search and Rescue.)

Images

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