



AAC Publications

LONG FALL – Loose Rock, Simul-climbing

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Cascade Canyon

At 4 p.m. on July 23, NPS climbing rangers received a call from a climber near the summit of Symmetry Spire. She reported that her climbing partner had taken an estimated 60-foot tumbling leader fall and that he had briefly lost consciousness and had notable facial trauma. The patient had fallen after pulling off a large loose block while simul-climbing without protection on 4th-class terrain. The fall was ultimately arrested by his partner's terrain belay. A helicopter was requested to respond.

At 4:29 p.m., the helicopter arrived at the Lupine Meadows rescue cache, was rigged for short-haul, and two rangers were inserted to the scene. Rangers built an anchor to secure rescue personnel, the patient, and the climbing partner. Following a complete patient assessment, it was determined that an extraction via rescue seat was appropriate. The helicopter returned to the scene and extracted one ranger with the patient via short-haul. A second extraction was performed for the second ranger and climbing partner. The patient was transported by ambulance to the local hospital. (Source: Grand Teton National Park Search and Rescue Report.)

ANALYSIS

In this case, a combination of loose rock, scant protection, and lower-angle terrain led to a serious outcome. A do-not-fall mindset is highly recommended while simul-climbing—this applies to both physical movement and to one's choice of hand and footholds. Placing intermediate protection might have shortened the fall, even given the fact that this team was simul-climbing. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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