



AAC Publications

Fatal Fall During Descent

California, Yosemite National Park, Tenaya Peak

On July 21, Yosemite dispatch received an emergency alert from Tenaya Lake's East Beach. Initial reports indicated that a climber in his 50s had taken a tumbling fall on Tenaya Peak and was not breathing. The first ranger arrived at the Tenaya East Beach parking lot at 11:58 a.m. and made contact with the injured climber's partner. The injured climber was reported to be both apneic (not breathing) and pulseless.

The ranger and the injured climber's partner began hiking toward the accident location. When the ranger arrived on scene, they assessed the patient and pronounced the climber's death at 12:44 p.m.

The ranger also documented all details of the scene. Another Yosemite ranger conducted a field interview with the climbing partner, during which it was revealed that the fatal fall occurred while descending from Tenaya Peak. The terrain consisted of low brush, loose sand, gravel, and boulders. The area included sections of 3rd- and 4th-class terrain, as well as wet and slippery sections due to water and snow.

The climbing partner had witnessed an earlier fall, when the climber slid several feet after loose dirt dislodged beneath him. Despite the partner's effort to encourage the climber to move toward a more stable area, their descent path continued in this terrain. The deceased climber ultimately slid again and came to rest 200 to 250 feet below his climbing partner. After the fall, the climbing partner ran to Tenaya Lake to seek help, due to limited cell service on the mountain.

A ranger and a SAR technician remained with the deceased climber while the climbing partner and another ranger hiked back to Tenaya Lake. At 6:26 p.m., the park helicopter airlifted the climber's remains via long-line for transport to the Crane Flat Helibase.

ANALYSIS

- **Plan Your Descent:** Before ascending any route, climbers should also plan the descent. The preferred descent route, the location of rappel anchors, and the ideal path back to the trailhead should all be identified.
- **Stay Within Your Ability:** Choose descents that match the skill level and experience of each climber on a team. If uncertain about a particular descent, seek guidance and information from experienced climbers.
- **Weather Awareness:** Climbers should monitor changing weather conditions, which can impact a descent, especially on exposed routes. Plans should always include emergency shelter and retreat options.
- **Rescue and Communications:** Teams should carry some means of reliable communication in the event of an emergency, such as a charged cell phone or a satellite communication device. Be aware of limited cell service in certain areas. (Source: Yosemite National Park Climbing Rangers.)

Images

Article Details

Author	Yosemite National Park Climbing Rangers
Publication	ANAM
Volume	13
Issue	77
Page	
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Accident reports