



AAC Publications

Failure to Clip Into Auto-Belay

Illinois, Rockford, YMCA

In the early evening of November 29, Robert Moresco (38) fell to the ground from a climbing wall equipped with auto-belays.

Moresco wrote to ANAC:

"I was new to climbing. The climbing wall was 22 feet high, and I fell about 15 feet. My foot landed halfway on the mat and halfway on a thinly carpeted concrete or composite-like floor. The impact shattered my heel and talus. I had rock climbing shoes on, and I was trying to downclimb when I fell. I think I was climbing unclipped. I was transported by ambulance to the hospital, where I was diagnosed with a fracture of the calcaneus as well as a fracture of the lateral talar body."

ANALYSIS

This type of accident seems to occur at least once a year. It reminds us that forgetting to clip into auto-belays strikes climbing guides, medical professionals, and novices alike (see ANAC 2023). Moresco wrote to ANAC: "I'd run 3.5 miles before climbing and was fatigued. I feel that there were not enough staff for the number of climbers. Mats were not wide enough, and belay gates did not cover the holds. Maybe climbing walls should be left to dedicated gyms vs. a gym like the YMCA." (Source: Robert Moresco.)

Images

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