



AAC Publications

Stranded — Locking Carabiner Jammed

Oregon, Smith Rock State Park, Kiss of the Lepers Buttress

On December 22, at 4:51 p.m., I was dispatched to a stuck climber at Smith Rock State Park. A female climber was stuck about 40 feet above the ground on the final rappel from a route called First Kiss (5 pitches, 5.7). She was climbing with a male partner who was safely on the ground but unable to help. He had rappelled before her and she couldn't disconnect from the anchor.

The climber was anchored to a bolt with a PAS and she had no means of cutting the PAS. Mountain rescue was paged at 5:05 p.m. and 12 volunteers responded.

Our teams assisted the stranded climber by providing a pair of pliers to help release the stuck carabiner screwgate. She pulled it up to herself and was then able to continue safely to the ground and did not need further assistance.

ANALYSIS

It's silly that it took 12 SAR personnel to essentially unlock a stuck carabiner, but we wanted to be sure we had resources on hand in case the situation was worse than reported. (Source: Caleb Bryce, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue.)

***Editor's Note:** This is a relatively rare case of equipment "failure," as the carabiner became fully locked shut, preventing the climber from removing her tether and continuing the rappel. The team leader inspected the carabiner and it was completely functional after being opened. Perhaps sand was caught in the screw mechanism. Sometimes, if the screw sleeve is tightened while the carabiner is under body weight, the sleeve can jam. Often, putting the carabiner under load and then turning the screw sleeve can release the gate.

Images

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