



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock — Unanchored Belayer

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Grand Teton

On the afternoon of July 16, a 72-year-old male fell while leading on the Upper Exum Ridge of the Grand Teton. Luckily, he landed on the ledge from which he was being belayed. This climber sustained significant injuries and was having difficulty breathing. Due to the severity of his condition, rescuers were short-hauled directly to the scene for patient extraction. Climbing rangers secured the climber in a litter and short-hauled him to Lupine Meadows. The patient was transferred to an ambulance and on to the local hospital. The partner and a second rescuer also were short-hauled to the valley.

ANALYSIS

This group was moving very slowly. They began the technical climbing section of the route well after all guided and private parties were back in camp or descending to the trailhead. The injured climber had not placed any protection, nor was his belayer anchored to the wall. If the belay ledge had not arrested his fall, both climbers likely would have fallen to their deaths.

There are several basic yet important lessons here. First, teams should consistently assess their progress and turn around when significantly behind schedule or when conditions dramatically take a turn for the worst. Second, if you are the leader, protect yourself and your partner by placing gear. Finally, if you are the belayer, protect your team by placing an anchor. (Source: Grand Teton National Park Search and Rescue Report.)

Images

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