



AAC Publications

Leader Fall — Back Injury

California, Castle Crags Wilderness, the Ogre, Cosmic Wall

Castle Crags' granite spires rise within sight of Mt. Shasta. The classic Cosmic Wall, first climbed by Chris Bonington's party in 1979, roughly follows the sun-shade line on the twin-summited Ogre, right of center. Photo: Thomas Shahan

On September 13 at noon, a party of four was climbing the popular Cosmic Wall (6 pitches, 5.6 R) on the Ogre formation in Castle Crags Wilderness when one climber fell while leading the fifth pitch.

During the fall, the climber inverted and struck the wall, sustaining a back injury. The party lowered the climber to the belay ledge and called for help.

CAL FIRE, Dunsmuir Fire, CHP Northern Air Operations, and USFS Mt. Shasta Climbing Rangers responded. A CAL FIRE technical rope team began the approach to the wall on foot. Meanwhile, CHP helicopter H-14 located the patient from the air. The patient was hoisted directly from the belay ledge and transferred to a waiting ambulance. The rescue was complete by 1 p.m.

ANALYSIS

Lead falls are an inherent risk of rock climbing, and this party responded well—lowering the climber to the belay ledge and calling for help promptly. The speed of the rescue was enabled first by the rapid call for help by the climbers and then by effective interagency coordination. The CHP crew directed the climbers remotely, reducing the need for ground personnel to reach a technical-access-only location on the wall. The cause of the inversion during the fall—and whether position of protection, rope drag, or body position contributed—is not known. (Source: Mt. Shasta Climbing Rangers.)

Images



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