Rockfall — Rappel-Dislodged Rock, Head Laceration

Canada, Alberta, Jasper National Park, Morro Peak

Site of the stranding on Morro Peak. Photo: Parks Canada

On August 5, a group of four climbers was ascending Limestone Highway, a 12-pitch 5.7 sport route on Morro Peak (1,679m) in Jasper National Park. Five pitches up, the party realized they would not finish at their current pace—it was a hot day, and they had run out of water. They began rappelling. On one rappel, a climber dislodged a rock that struck a party member below, cracking their helmet and lacerating their head. Parks Canada extricated the injured climber and the rest of the party by long-line helicopter.

ANALYSIS

Bring more water. Anticipate if you'll be in the sun or in the shade on your route, and plan accordingly. A party of four on a single route significantly increases rockfall hazard for anyone, including team members below. Climbing in pairs, or in a group of three with two followers on parallel strands, reduces that risk—and speeds things up. A faster party would likely finish the route and walk off rather than rappelling. Limestone Highway has numerous ledges with substantial rockfall potential; most parties hike down rather than rappel for exactly this reason. (Source: Parks Canada.)

Images



In August 2025, a party of four climbers began retreating and became stranded after dislodging a rock that struck one of their team

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