



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock – Failure To Retie Knot Before Lowering**

Virginia, Hidden Valley

**On December 20, Jennifer Kendall “Kayah” Gaydish (36) fell from the anchors atop a sport route in the Ginseng area. An on-scene climber/paramedic and local EMS were unsuccessful in reviving her.**

The route has a set of hangers with rings at the top. From what is known, the climber initially intended to rappel. She experienced some difficulty with the setup and decided to lower instead. While transitioning she hung from two daisy chains, pulled up a few feet of rope, tied a bight, and clipped it to her harness to prevent dropping the rope. (The bight was found attached to her harness when rescuers arrived.) She then untied the rope from her harness to thread it through the anchors in preparation for being lowered. It's at this point in the transition where no one really knows what happened. She called down to her belayer, asking to be put back on belay. She leaned back, her belayer felt some tension (which may have been the rope passing through the anchors), and then fell to the ground 50 to 60 feet below. She was still on belay when she fell, and no miscommunication was reported. (Sources: Rock and Ice magazine, news reports, and local climbers.)

#### **ANALYSIS**

It appears the climber did not close the system by tying the rope back into her harness after threading it through the anchor. Her decision to switch her descent plan from rappelling to lowering may have caused some confusion.

Whenever possible, climbers should leave their anchor tether(s) clipped while weighting the rope after retying through anchors, in order to test the system. If this is not possible, a careful visual check should be made before unclipping one's tethers. Going through a verbal checklist with the belayer may also be helpful. (Source: The Editors.)

Editor's note: A tutorial demonstrating a good method for threading and cleaning a rappel anchor without going off belay can be found at [americanalpineclub.org/best-practices](http://americanalpineclub.org/best-practices).

## Images



Before removing your anchor tether to lower, always check that the rope is threaded completely through the anchor and retied or clipped properly to your harness.

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