



## Top-Rope Solo System Failure

Wyoming, Vedauwoo, to the Moon Alice area

**On August 20, I (male, 26) drove up to the Voo for some after-work top-rope soloing. I set up a fixed line on To the Moon (5.10b/V0), a 35-foot crack with a bolted anchor that is often bouldered. I had not climbed the route before.**

For soloing, I use a Kong Duck mini-ascender with a paracord sling around my neck to keep the device high on the fixed rope, prevent it from weighting the rope dynamically, and to keep it separate from my Petzl Microtraxion, which I use below the Duck as a backup. I placed both devices on the rope and tested that they were engaging properly. I was about to start climbing when I realized I had forgotten my crack gloves. I unclipped both devices from my harness and removed the paracord sling from my neck, leaving both devices attached to the rope, and walked over to my pack to get my gloves. Then I clipped back into the devices and put the sling around my neck. I did not recheck my system.

The route has a classic Vedauwoo start the base of rock is overhung for the first ten feet or so. I struggled with the climbing, and I was ghting to keep the rope out of the crack where I was trying to jam. I probably weighted my system three or four times. At some point, I noticed the Kong Duck had slipped down the rope and was right on top of the Microtraxion, instead of higher on the rope as it should be.

I tried to correct this by holding onto the rope above the devices, so I could unweight them and try to get the system working properly. I pulled the Duck up the rope, then disengaged the cam on the Microtraxion and slid it back down the rope. When I reweighted the system, I fell about ten feet. My hand was on the rope, so I slid fairly slowly and received a minor rope burn, but was otherwise uninjured.

At the base of the route, I saw that the paracord had gotten tangled in the Duck, disabling its cam. It took me a few weeks to figure out why the Microtraxion had not held my weight (the Microtraxion was properly rigged). I am fairly certain that after I disengaged the cam on the Microtraxion, the disabled Duck slid back down the rope and held the Microtraxion open, so that neither device engaged.

### ANALYSIS

Complacency and haste were the major factors in this accident. I had probably top-rope soloed around 50 to 60 pitches in Vedauwoo that summer and felt comfortable with the system, but was in a hurry to get some climbing in after work and failed to recheck my system when I clipped back into it.

I should have realized that my Duck was disabled and certainly not messed with both devices at the same time. Sometimes I tie backup knots in my rope, but in this situation I was so close to the ground that I didn't really have a chance to tie backups yet. Some people fix two separate lines and place one device on each line this would have prevented my accident, but I find that with crack climbing, keeping one rope out of the crack is hard enough.

This accident was very minor, and I only share it because it could have been very serious under different circumstances. When climbing alone, it is important to always double-check your systems. (Source: Anonymous and the Editors.)

## Images

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