

It took approximately 30 minutes for paramedics to arrive and approximately another hour to get the patient packaged and moved off the mountain to a waiting ambulance.

Analysis

In this case Ms. Nagem's fall could have been prevented if a top rope protected her. She could have attempted the climb with this safeguard in place, allowing her to focus on technique, clipping protection, and building her confidence. (Source: Edited from reports by D. R. Tenney, CMSP Ranger, and Aram Attarian)

(Editor's Note: Another incident of note in North Carolina occurred at Crowder's Mountain. A climber was being lowered when his partner couldn't hold onto the rope while lowering him. Evidently, the climber was 40 pounds heavier than the belayer. This has become a common-place incident. The remedy is well known. A belay device designed to provide higher friction for catching heavier climbers and/or attaching the belayer to an anchor to provide better control of the climber, especially when weight is a concern, is the accepted protocol.)

FALL ON ROCK, LOWERING FAILURE—NO BELAY OR BACKUP

North Carolina, Little Pinnacle, Pilot Mountain State Park

On May 23, a group of 35 Boy Scouts of America leaders were participating in high-angle rescue training at Pilot Mountain State Park.

Their activity took place in the vicinity of *Kiss My Ass* (5.8) when S. Richter (23), one of the participants, fell approximately 35 feet. His injuries included a compound fracture of the left arm, fracture to both ankles, left wrist and two broken ribs.

According to A. Whitaker, Park Superintendent, Richter was participating as a "victim" in the training. J. Shelton, Surry County Director of Emergency Services, noted that Richter was being lowered when a "rigging system failed." Evidently, his fall was a result of another participant's inability to maintain control of the safety equipment.

Richter was carried out in a Stokes Basket and transported to Baptist Hospital In Winston Salem, NC via helicopter.

Analysis

When new skills and techniques are being taught in a training environment, extra measures should be taken to safeguard participants. For example, make sure that "victims" and primary systems are backed up. In this case, Mr. Richter should have been belayed.

One statement that was made by an EMS official was that, "When you do a scenario like this there are chances that something will happen." We would suggest that this need not be the case.

This accident is similar to one that occurred at Pilot Mountain a couple of years ago during an organized training session by a group practicing

rappelling techniques. In that case a novice rappeller (not on belay) lost control, fell, and was seriously injured. (Source: Edited from reports by Barry A. Whitaker, Superintendent, Pilot Mountain State Park; *journalnow.com*; Thursday, May 24, 2007, “Fire & Police Briefs—Scout Instructor Hurt During Training;” and Aram Attarian)

FALL ON ROCK, RAPPEL ERROR—RAPPELLED OFF END OF ROPE, NO KNOT IN END OF ROPES, DARKNESS, COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

Nevada, Red Rocks, Oak Creek Canyon

On February 10, Sheila Matz (50+), RH (Bob), JU (Joanne), MG (Marilyn), PB (Phil), MG (Mike) and JS (Jim) met to climb at Red Rocks. The day was clear and sunny with a light breeze and temperatures in the mid-60's. The Climbing experience of the group ranged from several years (Marilyn and Jim) to several decades (Bob and Joanne). Sheila, although having climbed for 10+ years, did not lead. Jim was a new leader. The group decided to go into the Solar Slab area of Oak Creek Canyon where multiple climbs of similar grades could be found.

Three teams were formed: Phil and Mike, Bob and Jim, and JU, SM, and MG. Hence, three different, three-pitch routes varying from 5.7 to 5.9 could be climbed. All of the routes ended on a large, football-field sized, low angle ledge below the Solar Slab itself, where options existed to either continue climbing higher on the slab or to descend down the gulley back to the base. The party of Bob and Jim finished their climb and arrived on the ledge first. From there, Jim chose to lead a single 5.5 pitch on the Solar Slab proper. Following that pitch, they rappelled back to the ledge area, where they started the seven single-rope rappels of the descent route—the Solar Slab Gulley. After the first short rappel, they made visual and vocal contact with Sheila, whose team had by then arrived on the ledge, and who tried to persuade Bob and Jim to climb back up to join the group for lunch and possibly more climbing. Bob chose to wait at the base of the gulley, since it was already 2:15 p.m. (complete darkness comes about 5:30 p.m.), and the descent would take about an hour to an hour and a quarter followed by a 45-minute hike back to the car. (Sheila & Bob had a dinner commitment at 6:30 p.m.) He was assuming that only one more pitch would be climbed by the teams now on the ledge.

Bob and Jim completed their rappels and reached the base of the gulley uneventfully. However, up on the slab area the team of JU, SM, and MG decided to climb two pitches of “Sundog,” a climb on the Solar Slab, which Mike and Phil would follow. Sheila then joined Mike and Phil and rapped off of Sun Dog while JU and MG chose to continue to the top of the climb, two additional pitches. Sheila, Mike and Phil then waited for JU and MG in the gathering twilight. The group of five finally started down the Solar