

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, NO HARD HAT

California, Joshua Tree National Monument

On August 20, 1988, Gert Hirst (48), Jim D'Allura (32), and Kevin Springer (28) were climbing on "The Blob" rock formation. They were attempting a new climbing route just right of the climb "Disco Sucks."

D'Allura was leading the climb first. He got about six meters off the ground when he could not climb any higher. He placed a #2 Friend in a crack and was lowered to the ground by his belayer, Springer. Hirst then decided that he would attempt the lead. He started the climb with Springer belaying him. On a small ledge about three meters off the ground, Hirst was given about a meter of slack so he could step over his rope. He had the rope on the wrong side of him, and while stepping over it, he lost his footing and fell. The #2 Friend that he was being belayed through was pulled out. Hirst fell to the ground, striking the back of his head on a rock. Hirst did not lose consciousness, but did not remember the fall. (Source: Kip Knapp, Ranger, Joshua Tree National Monument)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

California, Yosemite Valley

On August 16, 1988, Mark Peebles (23) fell while leading the seventh pitch on the regular route of the Northwest face of Half Dome. After leading from the belay, he entered a thin crack and was doing a lay back up this section. He had placed several pieces of protection and moved up about three meters above his last piece. He felt he could do the move with ease but as he was climbing he started to "burn" his arms. He continued to climb the section without further protection attempting to move through it faster. At that point his foot slipped and he fell. He landed on a small ledge about three meters below and took the weight of his fall on his left foot. He continued another three meters when he was caught by his belay. He was lowered to the start of the pitch and remained there until rescued, because his ankle hurt too much to rappel or be lowered. (Source: Mike Mayer, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

A basic rule of protecting half to two thirds the distance from a stance may have prevented this accident. Although Mark had only moved out a short distance from the ledge, it was wide enough to land on with sufficient force to fracture his lower leg. A fine line exists based on the skill level of the climber and when to place the first piece of protection. This accident provides evidence that when in doubt, THE SOONER THE BETTER is the best safeguard. (Source: Mike Mayer, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, RAPPEL DEVICE DETACHED

California, Yosemite Valley

At 2209 on September 19, 1988, Alksander Lekic, of Celje, Yugoslavia, reported that Dragan Rogic (28) of Zagreb, Yugoslavia, had been killed in a fall to the ground from the Aquarian Wall on El Capitan. Rogic was rappelling at the time of the accident. He fell approximately 130 meters to the ground when he somehow became detached