

It is interesting to note that the victim's legs were numb after 15 minutes of hang time in her harness. Recent studies on the effect of hang time in sit harnesses—done by caving instructors—indicate that one will go unconscious after not too much more time than this. (Source: Jed Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED, NO HARD HAT, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Arizona, Bell Rock, North Face

According to witnesses, the young man (23) was in a hurry to get to the top of this rock and was seen almost “running” up the side toward the Class Five section 100 feet below the top. He fell as he neared the top, the most difficult section, and fell over 75 feet down a sheer cliff. He died of massive head injuries before our team could get to him. All efforts to resuscitate the victim failed. His body was removed by helicopter, using a short haul. (Source: Reed Thorne, Special Operations Captain, Sedonia Fire Department)

Analysis

We do not know whether this person was a climber, but he clearly got himself into a climbing situation rapidly. (Source: Jed Williamson)

STRANDED—OUT OF FOOD, WEATHER

California, Yosemite Valley, Magic Mushroom

On April 24, 1994, Ken Bokelund's (28) wife reported to the NPS that he and Kevin Andrews (30) were one day overdue from climbing the Magic Mushroom route (VI 5.10 A4) on El Capitan and were probably out of food. Although the weather was stormy, the party was experienced and well equipped with storm gear.

Rangers monitored the party by telescope for the next couple of days. They remained in a portaledge at the top of pitch 22, nine pitches from the summit, not calling for help, and apparently in no trouble. However, their ropes, fixed on the next two pitches, appeared to be frozen.

By noon on April 26, the weather was still unstable, so the rangers contacted the party with a loudspeaker. Bokelund and Andrews signalled that they were dry but needed food and that their ropes were indeed frozen.

The cheapest and quickest solution was to deliver a haul bag of food by helicopter, so a rescue aircraft was requested from Naval Air Station Lemoore. As a backup, a ground team would fly or hike (8-10 miles) to the summit and reach the Bokelund party with ropes. Since the trail was still snowed in, and the team might have to hike in poor visibility, two members began hiking immediately, to flag the route. In addition, a front-end loader and fire crew headed to Tamarack Flat to begin clearing the road to the trailhead. The ground team stood by at El Cap Meadow in case they could fly. (In stormy weather it may be possible to fly next to the wall but not to the summit, or vice versa.)

When the helicopter, Rescue 6, arrived at El Cap Meadow at 1415, the cliff face was covered with cloud. Forty-five minutes later a window opened at the party's location and Rescue 6 was able to lower a haul bag of food to the climbers. (The wall is so steep there that the helicopter can not simply lower gear to the climbers. Instead, it hovers next to them and the crew throws them a small sandbag with a fine line attached. The climbers use this line to pull over an 11 mm rope, and then the crew lowers the gear across, as if following a pendulum. While there is always some risk, the