

RAPPEL FAILURE—CARABINER “UNCLIPPED,” INADEQUATE BELAY**Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, Supremacy**

On July 11, 1994, a climber was teaching a person (37) how to rappel. Several successful rappels were completed before the carabiner/sling system failed and the victim fell 20 feet to the ground. She sustained a dislocated and compound fracture of the right ankle. (Source: Steve Muelhauser, Park Ranger)

Analysis

Somehow, the carabiner linking the rappel rope to the sling system at the anchor point came unclipped. Though it was a locking carabiner, it was not locked—or was inadvertently unlocked, according to the report.

It is common practice to belay beginning rappellers, and many guides prefer to use two carabiners at the anchor point, especially when multiple rappels are to be done. Another unfortunate factor at climbing areas that are easily accessible is that anchor systems have “mysteriously” come undone and falling objects—such as rocks and beer bottles—come from nowhere. (Source: Jed Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, BOULDERING ALONE, NO SPOTTER**Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Hallett Creek**

On July 22, 1994, Debbie Gruneberg (19) was bouldering near the July campsite by Hallett Creek on the North Inlet Trail. She slipped and fell 20 feet, fractured her nose, a sinus, C-1 and C-2 vertebrae, and also sustained internal injuries. She was carried out by the Rocky Mountain National Park SAR Team by litter with scree evac techniques, and then was flown out by helicopter.

Analysis

Gruneberg was a YMCA camp counselor chaperoning a large group of youths. Her group must be complimented for initiating the proper response for these injuries. Instead of moving her and causing possible quadriplegia, according to the flight nurse, they sent runners eleven miles to the trailhead and had the professional rescue apply full spinal precautions (backboard, cervical collar, etc.).

The standard practice in bouldering, except for the most experienced, is to have at least one spotter, and to climb no more than six or seven feet off the ground. (Source: Jim Detterline, Long's Peak Supervisory Climbing Ranger, and Jed Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, PLACED NO PROTECTION, HURRYING, WEATHER**Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Bookend**

On August 12, 1994, about noon, Bob Koppe (51) slipped on wet rock while leading the third pitch (5.8) of Melvin's Wheel III 5.8+ on the Bookend during a rainstorm. Koppe was hurrying due to the rain, and his foot slipped in the flaring, poorly-protected, but easy portion of this chimney pitch above the crux. Koppe inverted and fell head first about 30 feet down the chimney, eventually wedging by his buttocks. He sustained trauma to his pelvis. With the assistance of partner Roger Wiegand, Koppe was able to return to the belay ledge atop pitch one. However, the swelling caused by the trauma to the pelvis made it impossible to continue. Wiegand continued the descent and started the response by Rocky Mountain National Park SAR Team and Larimer County SAR Team.