

(Editor's Note: It is certainly possible to belay someone who is larger than you by using the anchoring system to take the force rather than yourself. "Buddy checks" aren't always possible, so learning good systems and checking oneself are important.

Thanks to the victim for her candid report.)

STRANDED, ROPE ENTANGLED ON RAPPEL

Pennsylvania, Delaware Water Gap NRA, Mount Tammany

On May 22, 1994, about 1230, Angelo Schembari (23) and Kristen Rawl (20) parked at the State Lot off I-80 and hiked to the "Head Wall" of Mount Tammany where they began rock scrambling activities without any equipment support at 1300. At 1600 they began rappelling activities with Schembari becoming stranded on the cliff wall at 1700. At 1730, Rawl left Schembari to locate help. At 1745, she notified WSF Seasonal Ranger Chris Woods of the emergency. NPS Dispatch was contacted shortly thereafter with NPS personnel beginning their response at 1802. Fourteen NPS personnel, two WSF and five members of Northeast Search and Rescue participated in the search and rescue operation which resulted in the one-on-one rescue of the stranded climber off the cliff and return to the incident staging area at the State Lot by 2306.

The victim was removed safely without further incident from the cliff face. No injuries were incurred. All members of the operation cleared from State Lot at 0014.

Analysis

It was determined that following a rappel by both climbers off a fixed anchor rope, Schembari attempted to ascend to the anchor point with the intent of re-anchoring the rope around an anchor and then rappelling down a double-rope which he would pull down once off rope at the bottom with Rawl. After climbing about 90 feet, he reached a location with loose rock overhead. His rope below became entangled, preventing a rappel down. Realizing he was trapped, Schembari sent Rawl for help. Both Schembari and Rawl were well equipped with harnesses, carabiners, slings, protection devices and other climbing equipment for the activities they were engaged in. Schembari had climbed for approximately 12 years intermittently. Rawl only had experience for rock scrambling without the use of any climbing equipment. (Source: Delaware Water Gap NRA report)

STRANDED, UNABLE TO RETRIEVE RAPPEL ROPE

Pennsylvania, Delaware Water Gap NRA, Mount Minisi

On August 27, 1994, at 2020, park dispatch received a phone call stating that there was a stranded climber on Mount Minisi. Douglas C. Meyer and Mark C. Hoverkamp (26) were rappelling when they got to a ledge (approximately 120 feet above the ground) and unsuccessfully tried to pull the ropes down. Meyer tied the ropes off, went down the rope's end, tied his slings together and lowered himself to a ledge. Meyer went around to the top of the cliffs and was unable to locate his ropes. Meyer then went to his car and used a cellular phone to call dispatch.

Ranger Encke arrived at Cold Air Cave at 2045 and Ranger Williams arrived at 2055. Rangers Matthews and Shreffler arrived at 2154. Rangers Matthews and Shreffler and Meyer went up to the cliffs and got a headlight, helmet, clothes and the end of a rope to Hoverkamp. Hoverkamp rappelled to a ledge and was lowered the rest of the way to the ground.