

**FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT****Utah, Wasatch Mountains, Big Cottonwood Canyon**

On April 26, Brandon Keller (22) fell while leading "Skyscraper," a one pitch climb, in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Keller suffered injuries to his head, neck, and back as a result of the fall. Witnesses indicated that Keller was leading, and was up approximately 25 feet when he tried to place some protection, which he missed, and fell to the base of the climb. The victim was lowered to the highway by litter, and transported to the hospital by Life Flight Helicopter.

**Analysis**

No other protection was found, and it appears that the subject climber was trying to place his first piece of protection (25 feet) when he fell. Upon interviewing the witness, it appears that no one was even on active belay. (Source: G. Banks, Salt Lake County Sheriff SAR)

**FALL ON ROCK, RAPPEL ERROR—ANCHOR KNOT FAILED****Utah, Wasatch Mountains, Big Cottonwood Canyon**

On June 17, Harmer Kirt fell while rappelling at Storm Mountain in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Kirt fell 15 to 20 feet and injured his ankle and wrist. Mr. Kirt was removed by the Sheriff's SAR team and transported by ambulance to the hospital.

**Analysis**

Investigation revealed that the subject's anchor knot had failed. (Source: G. Banks, Salt Lake County Sheriff SAR)

**FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT****Utah, Wasatch Mountains, Big Cottonwood Canyon**

On June 23, Bryce Perkins fell while leading a climbing route in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Mr. Perkins' fall of approximately 60 feet, resulted in injuries to his head, back and one ankle. His belayer indicated that Perkins slipped while making a move, and as he fell, all of his protection pulled, slowing his descent, but landing him in a precarious position on a ledge. The Sheriff's SAR team responded to the scene, approximately 1500 feet above the canyon highway, stabilized the victim, and lowered him to the highway, where he was transported to the hospital.

**Analysis**

This particular area of the canyon is not often frequented by the climbing community, as a long, steep approach through loose scree fields is required to reach this buttress. We are seeing a higher incidence of accidents involving protection placement problems. (Source: G. Banks, Salt Lake County Sheriff SAR)

**OVERDUE CLIMBERS—OFF ROUTE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT,  
PARTY SEPARATED, INEXPERIENCE, EXHAUSTION, DEHYDRATION**  
**Utah, Wasatch Mountains, Lisa Falls Couloir**

On June 26, the Salt Lake County Sheriff's SAR team was notified that two members, from an original group of five mountaineers, were overdue and presumed lost or in-

jured. The trip had begun the previous day, with a group of five climbers, which started an ascent up Tanners Gulch to the Big Cottonwood Ridge, west to Twin Peak, and then a planned descent down the Lisa Falls couloir, back to the canyon highway. This climb is known as "Cathedral Traverse," and in the spring or early summer, ice axes and ropes are strongly recommended.

Two of the members were moving somewhat slower than the rest of the group, and a decision was made to split up, with the faster three moving ahead, and ultimately, completing the route in the dark, on June 25. One rope and one ice ax were left with the slower two members. Just before dark one of the climbers in the lead group thought that he saw two people rappelling down a steep snow field above and behind them.

The following day, after the SAR team arrived, a lengthy interview was conducted with the complainants and it was learned that the two missing parties consisted of Bill Foster, most experienced and the team leader, and Susan Ryan, least experienced and a first timer for this kind of trip. Since a possible sighting had been made the night before, a search team was started up the Lisa Falls couloir, and the Sheriff's helicopter was dispatched to conduct an air search of the entire route.

After several hours of searching the Sheriff's helicopter spotted the two missing climbers, still high and near the top of the Lisa Falls couloir. The ground search team that had been dispatched earlier reached the two parties about an hour later. Both individuals were totally exhausted and dehydrated, but otherwise okay. Nearly six hours were required to assist the exhausted climbers back to the trail head.

### **Analysis**

An interview was conducted with the two individuals and it was learned that shortly after separating from the main group, Susan became very intimidated by the exposure and was very tired as well. They spent a cold night just below the summit of the East Twin Peak (11,300 feet). They began moving down the next morning, but found the snow very firm and difficult with just one ice ax. Their progress was slow, and as they descended, they said that they saw the rescue helicopter several times, but were not successful in signaling it. (They were not the same party seen rappelling the night before.) The rescue team noted that both parties moved very slowly and had a difficult time with the Class 4 terrain. At times, simple commands had to be repeated, apparently due to their exhaustion and dehydration. (Source: G. Banks, Salt Lake County Sheriff SAR)

## **FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING UNROPE, INEXPERIENCE**

### **Utah, Wasatch Mountains, Mount Olympus**

On June 29, Michael Fox and two companions were hiking in the North Fork, below Mount Olympus. Along the way, they encountered a rock buttress that Michael decided to free climb. After attaining about 40 feet in height, he lost his footing and fell to the bottom of the buttress. His companions determined that Michael was unconscious and appeared to be seriously injured. One of his companions returned to the trail head and notified the Sheriff's office.

The Sheriff's SAR team and paramedics from the Fire Department responded to the scene and found the victim in extremely critical condition. The victim had obvious head injuries and suspected internal injuries. He was quickly carried to the trail head (1/2 mile) and transported by air ambulance to the hospital. The victim died enroute to the hospital.