

Analysis

The victim was fortunate enough to realize his mistake before rappelling off the end of his rope, on which he had not tied a knot. He also had the presence of mind to tie himself off and then use a carabiner brake system. However, luck was on his side in trusting to a line dropped by strangers, the line tied only to an anchor of unknown origin, and without communicating to the people tending it. (Source: James Roberts. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department SAR)

FALLING ROCK**Nevada, Red Rocks Canyon NCA**

On May 2, on the fifth pitch of the Original Route (5.9,A2) on the Rainbow Wall in Red Rock Canyon, a climber (35) accidentally dislodged a four foot by two foot by six inch sandstone block that fell 100 feet before striking his partner (34) on the back of his head and back. The two then rappelled to the base of the route, where the victim was placed in his sleeping bag and his partner left to find help. The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department SAR unit responded, and the victim was successfully evacuated by litter and helicopter. In addition to the injuries to his head, he had a tension pneumothorax.

Analysis

Loose rock is common on many of the routes here, even the ones that experience a lot of traffic. The victim's helmet was deeply scored, and given the laceration on his scalp under the helmet and the size and force of the falling block, he almost certainly would have been killed had he not been wearing a helmet.

Being able to self-rescue to the bottom of the route, even though the victim was not able to walk out, made a reasonably timely rescue possible. It may have prevented the victim from becoming hypothermic or developing a life threatening tension pneumothorax during the course of what would have been a complex night time big wall rescue. (Source: James Roberts, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department SAR)

(Editor's Note: Two other accidents were reported from this area. One involved a hiker [65] who found himself in a climbing situation, desperately stranded as a result of separating from his partners without telling them. He was located and flown to safety. The other victim was a novice ice climber who was "bouldering" on ice while his partner prepared to climb. The victim fell ten feet, fracturing his leg. A cell phone contact with the rescue team probably prevented hypothermia, but, as they noted, cellular phones cannot take the place of good judgment.)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, INADEQUATE BELAY**New Hampshire, Whitehorse Ledge, Standard Route**

In July, a father of unknown age and his 14-year-old son were climbing Standard Route on Whitehorse Ledge. The father was leading the crux layback corner, and the son was belaying at Lunch Ledge. It is reported that the son was not belaying properly and other climbers reminded the boy to "hold the rope." It was also witnessed that the father looked like he was having difficulty climbing the 5.7 crux, and his protection may have suffered as a result. The father fell while on the crux and hit the slab below suffering an angulated open fracture of the right ankle and fracture of the left ankle. Whether his belay failed or protection failed is unknown.