

had little aid experience and had complained of being inefficient with his big wall ascenders. Third, he had been struggling with his rappel ropes for an hour or two, clearly annoyed by the situation. Each problem, by itself, may have been frustrating but was not necessarily dangerous per se; however, one irritation on top of another may have ultimately led to hasty decisions and shortcuts with safety. Of course we cannot know Andy's state of mind; the possibility of contributing mental factors is offered here for other climbers to watch for in themselves.

In summary, the most likely scenario places Andy at or near the bottom of the first rappel from Dinner Ledge, trying to free his jammed rappel ropes by pulling hard on one rope. When the rope suddenly came loose, he lost his balance and fell, pulling the other rope through the anchor above and taking both ropes with him.

While we do not know exactly what Andy was doing at the time, or what caused his fall, we can be fairly certain that for whatever reason, either he had no anchor to the cliff at that moment or he had fashioned an inadequate one.

Several observations have been left out of this analysis for lack of space. Note that none of the key skills involved in this accident are unique to big-wall climbs. Ascending and freeing jammed rappel ropes and maintaining a secure tie-in are concepts important to free climbing as well. (Source: John Dill, NPS Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

VARIOUS FALLS ON ROCK, VARIOUS CAUSES

California, Joshua Tree National Park

There were five incident reports from this park that qualified for the data. They all were falls, three of them resulting in injuries because either protection pulled or there was inadequate protection. One fall resulted on a lowering—when the belay rope whistled through the stitch-plate belay device. Another occurred when a husband was rappelling from the same (doubled) rope his wife was climbing on. She had no belay when she fell.

There were, as usual, hikers getting into technical terrain and falling. Two of these fell 50 feet. (Source: Incident Reports submitted by Joshua Tree National Park)

WEATHER—HIGH WINDS, FALL ON TO ROCKS

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Longs Peak

On February 7, Craig Dreher (30) and Gene Williamson (30) decided to abort their winter attempt of the Keyhole Route due to high winds. As they were retreating from the Boulder Field, a gust of westerly wind estimated at 150 mph knocked over Williamson and picked up Dreher (who weighs 170 pounds) free of the ground. Dreher was tossed into a pile of rocks, impacting on his right ankle, resulting in a fracture of the fibula.

Analysis

Although this accident occurred on non-technical terrain, Dreher and Williamson requested that this be brought to the readers' attention as an example of the high wind hazard prevalent on winter climbs of Longs Peak. Winds