

parties have used it without incident, even if recently. (Source: John Dill, NPS Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

STRANDED—OFF ROUTE, WEATHER, INADEQUATE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

California, Tuolumne Meadows, Fairview Dome

On July 27, Randy Popkin (46) and his son, Cameron (16), climbed the Regular Route on Fairview Dome. They got to the base at 7:00 a.m. to allow plenty of time for the route, but a party of four was already there. Waiting for the larger party to clear the second pitch cost the Popkins 45 minutes, and then another hour on the third. The party of four ultimately pulled ahead, but the Popkins then lost more time allowing a faster party to pass. Randy and Cameron were having no problems with the technical difficulty of the climb, but they were getting a lesson in the realities of a long and popular route.

Finally, high on the face, where the route traverses to the right to the final fourth-class pitches, they missed the turn and continued straight up. By the time they realized their error and had rappelled back to their previous belay, another 45 minutes had gone by. By now it was nearing dusk, and Randy knew they would not get off. They reached the fourth-class section and ran up it as fast as they could, but they had no lights, and darkness stopped them 100 feet from the top.

The forecast had been good—no storms in sight—and the day had been excellent, but clouds began to build up in the late afternoon. At dusk it began to rain and hail, with lightning in the distance. Randy was somewhat protected with light nylon pants and a fleece-lined Goretex jacket, but Cameron had only shorts and a cotton long-sleeve sweatshirt. Luckily the precipitation never became heavy, and they found a decent ledge with an overhang that allowed partial shelter.

Their water and food had lasted all day, but now it was gone. They did, however, have a Family Band radio, and Randy's wife—who had already notified the NPS that they were overdue—was able to contact them from the road at about midnight. Randy initially figured they would sit it out, but he changed his mind when he realized that Cameron was getting cold.

The Park Service was also concerned that a second thunderstorm was forming, so they sent two members of the rescue team to the top of Fairview. They were able to rappel to the Popkins and belay them to the summit. Everyone walked out to the road a little before 6:00 a.m., just as the sun was coming up.

Analysis

Both had been climbing indoors and outdoors for the last two years and consistently followed 5.10. Cameron was not yet leading, but Randy had led a dozen or so single-pitch climbs at the 5.9 level. Neither had done a multi-pitch route without a guide, but a guide familiar with Randy's progress had suggested that he was ready to lead Fairview. The guide felt Randy was

ready to lead the route, and he was right, as the climbing was never an issue. But a new leader and a non-leader make a pretty weak team if anything serious happens, and the guide probably assumed that Randy would include an experienced climber in the party.

Here's a short list of common practices: Don't trust the weather forecast, especially in the high country. Depending on the route, your skill level, and your style, take headlamps, warm clothes (including hats), and lightweight rain gear. Also consider a spare, lightweight rope so that you can make full-pitch rappels without leaving your entire rack behind. A cell phone or FRS radio (and someone on the other end) is also a good idea. But it's no substitute for preparation and ability. Expect delays—almost everyone we rescue because of darkness or storm blames heavy traffic or the lack of street signs. Check your progress and be realistic. Adverse conditions are no big deal if you're equipped to sit the situation out. Otherwise you should retreat while you're able. (Source: John Dill, NPS Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, WEATHER

California, Tuolumne Meadows, Daff Dome

On July 29, Hope Wolf (28), an instructor for the Yosemite Mountaineering School, was leading a group of six clients back from a day's climbing at Daff Dome when they were caught by a mid-afternoon downpour. In similar weather a week earlier, the trail to the road down the dirt gully had become so full of running water that it was unsafe to hike. Furthermore, the group would have done significant damage to the wet soil, so Hope had taken her clients down the alternate route on low-angle granite slabs. Faced with the same conditions, she chose the slabs again.

The rock was slick and two or three of the group had slipped and fallen. Mark Bayless slipped once, but Hope stopped him. A few feet further, just before a two-foot drop-off, Mark slipped again and went down. Hope turned to stop him, but they were so close together that he caught her off balance and carried her off the drop. The slide would ordinarily have been harmless, but her right foot stopped in a twisted position and stayed there as she kept going. The momentum of her own body, her 50-pound pack, and Mark's 200 pounds on top of that, gave her ankle no chance. When she came to a stop she looked down to see the sole of her right shoe staring up at her and an ankle bone trying to poke through the skin.

Hope called back to the class that she was hurt and told everyone to stop, then she had them descend one at a time. Co-instructor Grant Hiskes verified that the nerve function and circulation in her foot was intact. While someone went for help, Grant tried to splint the leg as he found it, but the deformity got in the way and pressure of the bone under the skin caused too much pain.

The NPS rescue team began arriving about 30 minutes after the accident. With the help of a little morphine, Duane Grego, an NPS paramedic, was able to realign the dislocated bones and splint the ankle. The team carried