

and three of his friends he knew to be climbing at Rumbling Bald, 2.5 hours west of Shortoff Mountain, and asked for their assistance. As late afternoon turned into evening, Marla began to experience back spasms and started to shiver. David started a fire, then huddled with Marla to keep her warm and waited for help to arrive.

Burke County EMS arrived cliff top shortly thereafter, followed by the three climber friends around 8:30 p.m. The climbers met rescue personnel at the top of the descent gully. Due to the limited technical expertise of rescue personnel, the climbers made an attempt to get them to the base of the cliff. However, because of wet and icy conditions in the descent gully, the rescuers felt uncomfortable with this maneuver. Instead, two of the three climbers rappelled to the ground with a sleeping bag and other essential gear and made contact with the McNeely's.

When it was decided that due to the nature of the terrain and Ms. McNeely's condition that it wouldn't be possible to get her out on foot, a Blackhawk helicopter was requested. It arrived around 3:00 a.m., using the couple's fire to guide them to their location. Medical personnel stabilized Marla, placed her on a backboard, then carried her to a site where she could be evacuated by helicopter.

Analysis

Climbing in Linville Gorge is one of the few wilderness areas on the East Coast that offers high quality climbing experiences. Access is limited and demanding. For this reason climbers should be self-reliant and have the appropriate skills to initiate a self-rescue. In addition, climbers need to have suitable first aid and bivy gear with them and be prepared for the unexpected. Rescue teams should be familiar with the areas in which they are expected to respond to emergencies and have trained and experienced personnel. (Source: Les Duncan, Buddy Brasington, and Aram Attarian)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

North Carolina, Crowders Mountain State Park, Red Wall

Late in the afternoon of May 13, D. Frank and his partner M. Nagem (45) were attempting a rock climb (route unknown) on the Red Wall. Frank was an experienced climber who frequently climbed in the park. According to park personnel, Frank had led the route and upon descent, had left his quick-draws in place. Ms. Nagem then attempted the climb clipping into the preset gear as she climbed. During a point in the climb, Nagem was just out of reach of the next protection point when she asked Frank for slack so she could clip into the next quick-draw. Frank complied, and it was at this point in the climb when Nagem slipped and fell approximately 20 feet, sustaining injuries to both her left leg and arm, and experienced tingling and numbness in those extremities.

It took approximately 30 minutes for paramedics to arrive and approximately another hour to get the patient packaged and moved off the mountain to a waiting ambulance.

Analysis

In this case Ms. Nagem's fall could have been prevented if a top rope protected her. She could have attempted the climb with this safeguard in place, allowing her to focus on technique, clipping protection, and building her confidence. (Source: Edited from reports by D. R. Tenney, CMSP Ranger, and Aram Attarian)

(Editor's Note: Another incident of note in North Carolina occurred at Crowder's Mountain. A climber was being lowered when his partner couldn't hold onto the rope while lowering him. Evidently, the climber was 40 pounds heavier than the belayer. This has become a common-place incident. The remedy is well known. A belay device designed to provide higher friction for catching heavier climbers and/or attaching the belayer to an anchor to provide better control of the climber, especially when weight is a concern, is the accepted protocol.)

FALL ON ROCK, LOWERING FAILURE—NO BELAY OR BACKUP

North Carolina, Little Pinnacle, Pilot Mountain State Park

On May 23, a group of 35 Boy Scouts of America leaders were participating in high-angle rescue training at Pilot Mountain State Park.

Their activity took place in the vicinity of *Kiss My Ass* (5.8) when S. Richter (23), one of the participants, fell approximately 35 feet. His injuries included a compound fracture of the left arm, fracture to both ankles, left wrist and two broken ribs.

According to A. Whitaker, Park Superintendent, Richter was participating as a "victim" in the training. J. Shelton, Surry County Director of Emergency Services, noted that Richter was being lowered when a "rigging system failed." Evidently, his fall was a result of another participant's inability to maintain control of the safety equipment.

Richter was carried out in a Stokes Basket and transported to Baptist Hospital In Winston Salem, NC via helicopter.

Analysis

When new skills and techniques are being taught in a training environment, extra measures should be taken to safeguard participants. For example, make sure that "victims" and primary systems are backed up. In this case, Mr. Richter should have been belayed.

One statement that was made by an EMS official was that, "When you do a scenario like this there are chances that something will happen." We would suggest that this need not be the case.

This accident is similar to one that occurred at Pilot Mountain a couple of years ago during an organized training session by a group practicing