

became disengaged from the sling, as this seems to be a rare occurrence.

Although it would not have caught his fall even if it had held, his first piece of protection, a hex, was not a good choice. The first piece of protection should always be multi-directional. Had he placed a cam instead of a hex, which was possible, the first piece may have never popped out of the rock.

It is interesting to note that out of eleven people total at the cliff that day, no one had a cellphone! It took more than ten minutes running back to the cars to call for help. If possible, climbers should always bring a cellphone to this crag. It is also important for climbers to know exactly where they are and how to get there, as rescue personnel may not be wholly familiar with the area.

Additional Comment: CU was fortunate that he was young and in excellent physical condition. His back was unusually muscular and may have safeguarded him from more serious injury. CU has since recovered from his injuries and has returned to climbing. (Source: Edited from a report by Rick Evans)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

West Virginia, New River Gorge, Endless Wall

On November 12, rangers and Fayette County Emergency Services personnel rescued a climber (age unknown) who had fallen at the Endless Wall climbing area. Rangers Randy Fisher and Karl Keach, working with only a general description of the location of the accident, received through a 911 call, searched for and found the caller, who led them to the scene. Keach coordinated the rescue from the top of the cliff while Fisher employed a series of ladders and ropes to reach the injured climber, who had suffered numerous fractures and lacerations. An 80-foot litter raise was conducted to bring him to the top of the cliff. He was then wheeled out on a litter and flown to the Charleston area trauma center.

Analysis

An investigation revealed that the climber had removed his gear from the second bolt and was attempting to down-climb when he fell about 20 feet as he tried to traverse from the route he was on to another route called "Nasty Groove."

This was the fourth time a climber has fallen this year—a significant increase in climbing-related incidents. The causes included bad belays, traditional gear pulling from the rock, and poor climbing decisions. New River Gorge is a world-class climbing destination, with 1600 traditional and sport routes. It has miles of high-quality sandstone cliffs with an extraordinary diversity of climbing routes. (Source: From reports submitted by Gary Hartley, Chief Ranger, and Aram Attarian)

(Editor's Note: While Ranger Hartley indicates that the number of incidents represents a "significant increase," it would seem to be a low number given the

popularity of this climbing area. Estimates of climbers visiting here each year run from several hundred to over a thousand.)

FALL ON SNOW/ICE FROM ANCHOR POINT—APPARENT ANCHOR FAILURE DUE TO EXTERNAL FORCES

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Grand Teton

On April 29, Alan Rooney (38) and Jonathan Morrow (28) fell to their deaths while attempting an alpine climb on the northwest side of the Grand Teton. They fell about 1,500 feet down a very steep couloir containing several prominent ledges. Rooney and Morrow had accessed that side of the Grand Teton from the Lower Saddle via the Valhalla Traverse prior to attempting to climb either the Enclosure Couloir or the Black Ice Couloir.

A significant Search and Rescue (SAR) operation ensued, involving National Park rangers, US Forest Service heli-tack crewmembers, and a helicopter. A team of three rangers climbed to an area close to the Enclosure Couloir from which they were able to observe the two men 1,500 feet below.

Analysis

After rangers in the helicopter were able to confirm that both climbers had apparently fallen to their deaths, the ground team shifted their focus to getting back to the Lower Saddle and switching to the recovery phase of the operation. Consequently, we did not go to what we surmise was the accident scene located about 100 meters and out of sight to our east. A more thorough investigation of the accident scene was therefore not conducted. We can only make suppositions based upon evidence found much lower with the fallen climbers, conditions as we observed them, past weather, and institutional knowledge concerning events of the past that have occurred in the same area. Additionally, knowledge gained by the conduct of mountain climbing patrols in this area was particularly useful.

- Alan Rooney and Jonathan Morrow were avid climbers, mountaineers, and skiers. The area they had decided to climb was well within their ability level. They were both highly competent, driven mountaineers and well within their comfort level while climbing across the Valhalla Traverse.
- It is known from eyewitness accounts that they got started nearly two-and-a-half hours later than they wanted from their bivouac site. The Lower Saddle would have been a more desirable starting location. Additionally, from the times registered on the photographs, they were moving slowly as they made their way from the Meadows to the Saddle, and then across the Valhalla Traverse. The Valhalla Traverse contained large sections of unconsolidated powder snow on breakable crust. Conditions like these would likely have led to exhausting and time-consuming post holing.
- The temperatures at the 10,450-foot level for the period of April 28th to the 29th were above freezing. Their plan to climb on the north side of the