

James has had some medical training in the past and checked my pupils, palpated my upper and lower body to ensure I didn't do any damage to other parts of my body that weren't my chief complaints and reluctantly let me drive myself home. James' help was invaluable.

I arrived at the hospital around 9:00 p.m. and had beat Allison there, so I limped across the parking lot into the ER. It was a short wait and I was visiting with doctor Chadwick in short order. Dr. Chadwick told me a story of breaking his ankle on a volcano hike somewhere where they did not have very good medical care and how it was quite the ordeal. This made me feel better for sure knowing that there is life after an ankle break/sprain. The nurse cleaned out the scrape on my arm and I had x-rays done on my left elbow and left foot. Dr. Chadwick came back with the good news that my ankle was not broken, but that it had likely torn the ligaments, and that obviously I had sprained it big time.

Analysis

I have taught new climbers how to climb/rappel and stress the importance of tying a simple knot in the end of the rope so something like this doesn't happen, yet I failed to practice what I preach but thankfully got off very lucky. This accident was a result of rushing to get out coupled with being distracted by external forces (and not tying a knot in the end of the rope). If anything, it should serve as an example to others to slow down and pay attention to details even when circumstances are pressing and distracting. (Source From a posting by Jason Halladay on Mountain Project)

(Editor's Note: The best reports—and analyses—come in the first-person. Web sites like Mountain Project are full of these.)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT New Mexico, Sandia Mountains, Gemstone Area

Three friends went out climbing at the Gemstone Area on the climb Seamingly Hard, a run-out 5.10, mixed bolted and natural gear seem that is to the climber's left of Gemstone—one of the Sandia Mountains most popular 5.8 routes. They set out later in the afternoon, but specifically to this area since the slab is north facing and located in the shade. The approach follows a narrow, rocky and vegetated trail with cactus, oaks, and yucca for a total of two miles. The trail breaks out of the bottom of Lower La Cueva Canyon where a major landslide occurred in 1999 and meanders up steeper slopes for 600 feet to gain the Gemstone Slabs climbing area.

The leader (45) climbed up and clipped the first bolt about 15 feet off the sloping belay ledge then continued on. The second bolt is notoriously far from the first, and as the climber gets closer to it, the risk of a ground fall becomes very high. The difficulty of climbing is sustained and the clipping stance a bit precarious. The leader slipped before getting to the second

bolt. He fell about 35 feet and hit the deck. He landed on his right leg and suffered a fracture of the foot and ankle dislocation, rendering him unable to hike out. Also, he was not wearing a helmet, resulting in a mild head laceration. His friends were able to call for help via cellphone.

Three Mountain Rescue teams, two fire departments, and the State Police were activated. A Strike Team made its way to the patient and secured him on the ledge and treated his injuries. He was placed into a titanium litter and transported across an exposed traverse to another staging area where a 600-foot guiding line was rigged. The guiding line was instrumental, as it took hours before teams were actually fielded to help out as there were three other Search and Rescue missions happening in the Sandia Mountains and one more in the Jemez Mountains, all at the same time.

Analysis

The climber had 19 years of climbing experience. Although he had not been climbing recently, he was confident but perhaps under-prepared mentally and/or physically and did not have small gear appropriate for protection. No guide book gives credence to the fact that this route is run-out or that ground falls have resulted with similar and worse injuries have happened in the past. This did not help his decision to do this climb. There is no danger rating for this climb (i.e., “R”—meaning run-out, or “X”—meaning that if you fall you can be seriously injured or killed). Most modern bolted routes are protected so that the bolts keep climbers from hitting ledges, the ground, or other objective hazards. This route was put up in 1979 when the ethic was a bit different than it is today in terms of sport climbing crags that mimic indoor climbing.

Doing some research on your climb is an important part of assessing the risk. Risk can be mitigated in part by assessing probability and multiplying it by consequence. (Source: Marc Beverly, President of Strike Rescue and volunteer with the Albuquerque Mountain Rescue Team)

FALLS ON ROCK (12), PROTECTION PULLED OUT (4), DISLOCATIONS (4), INADEQUATE PROTECTION (3), INADEQUATE BELAY, RAPPEL ERROR, FALLING OBJECT, OFF ROUTE, EXCEEDING ABILITY, STRAINED GROIN

New York, Mohonk Preserve, Shawangunks

Eighteen reports were submitted for 2009, of which ten occurred in September and October.

The length of the incidents involving falls was from 15-30 feet, though there was one 60-footer that happened as a result of a belay failure. In that case, the climber was caught on a slinged horn and there was no injury.

The average age of the climbers was 40 and the level of route difficulty averaged 5.6. The injuries included five fractures, five sprains/strains, four