

Icicle Buttress Fatality

March 7th, 2024

Incident Summary

On March 7th, a solo climber ascended Icicle Buttress, believed to be climbing the R&D route, which is a classic, 5.6 route up Icicle Buttress. The climber began the ascent at approximately 4:15 PM, and the fall occurred before 5:30 PM. The climber was reported overdue by his wife, and a friend found the deceased climber around 7:30 PM, notified the wife, and called 911 at 8:54 PM. The Chelan County Sheriff's Office was notified, and members of the CCSO SAR team were able to recover the body of the deceased climber.

On March 8th, at about 4:30 PM, two members of CCMR went to climb the route, investigate, and remove the deceased climber's gear from lower on the route. Another member of CCMR returned on Saturday, March 9th, to rappel the upper route to examine fall lines and develop a hypothesis of events for this report.

Occurrence Time and Date: 4:15-5:30

Time Reported to 911: 8:54

Recovery time: 10:00PM (need to confirm)

Location: 47.547708, -120.752328

Number in party: 1

Weather: Clear and calm

Knowns & Unknowns

The climber was solo climbing up Icicle Buttress. The exact route is unknown, but it is presumed to be the R&D route, which is a classic solo climb up the buttress. The specific cause and time of the fall are not determined; however, based on the evidence, it is believed to have occurred near the top of the route. Another climber, who free-soloed the route the same afternoon and arrived at 5:30 PM, noticed a jacket on the lower ledge (see Appendix A) but did not consider it significant and successfully completed the route.

Hypothesis

On Friday, the CCMR team found evidence of the climber's impact approximately halfway up the wall on a ledge. A fall from the "Chimney Crux" of P2 would not have resulted in the climber impacting at this location (see Appendix A). An examination of the fall line from above led to the hypothesis that any fall must have occurred at or near the top of the route.

Near the end of the route, there is a short horizontal crack that transitions into a slabby mossy section, ending with a slight "mantle" or traverse to the finish (see Appendices B & C).

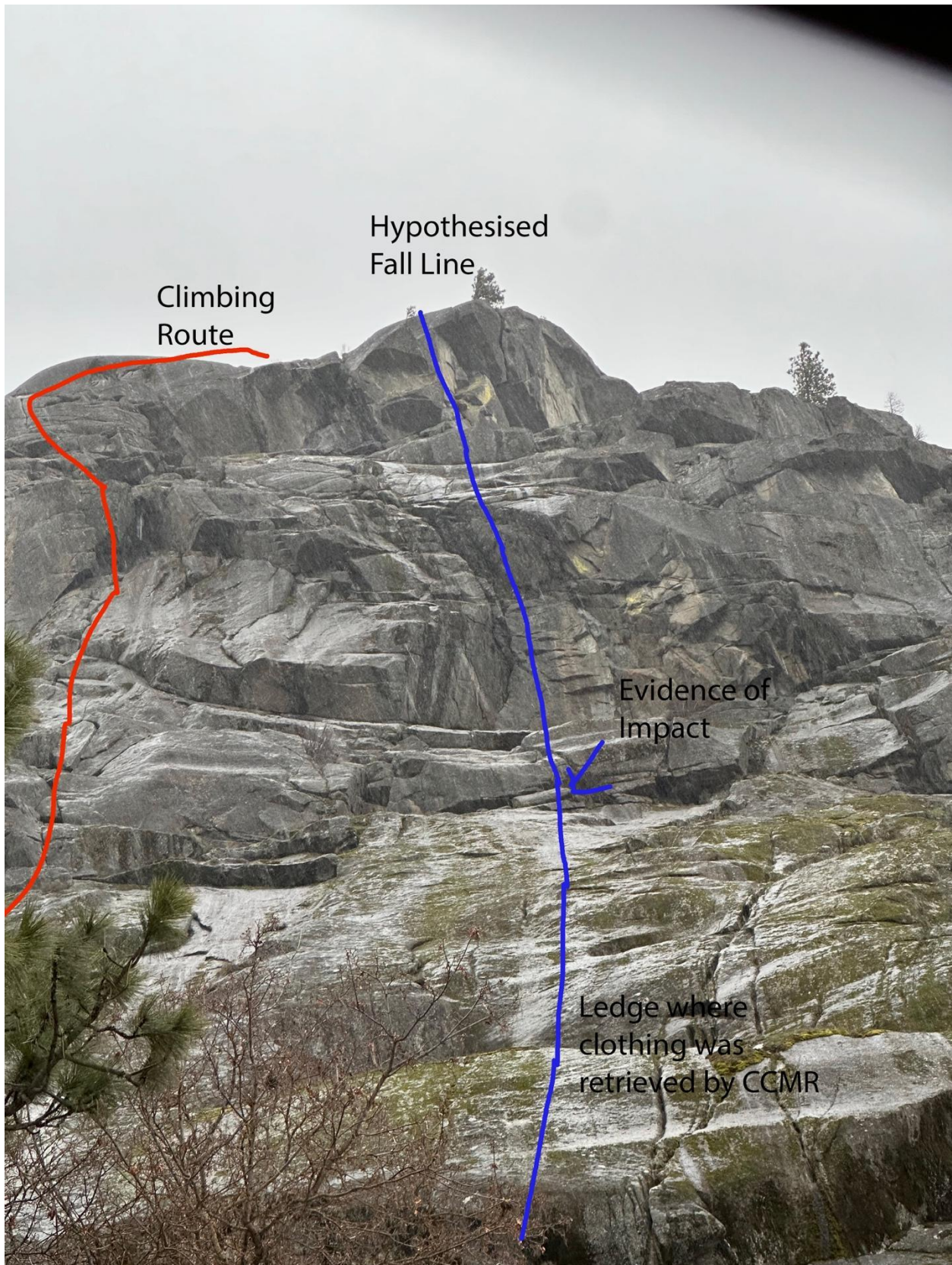
This is low angle terrain but still considered climbing terrain. In this section, climbers have two options to finish: to the left, a slightly longer blank slab, or to the right, on easier but mossy terrain. The fall line at this location bisects the wall in this section. A fall from the left exit would result in a climber landing on a ledge about 30 feet below and very far to the left of where the impact evidence was found (from the perspective of a viewer or climber).

Conversely, a fall from the right exit, starting anywhere from the onset of the moss, would likely cause the climber to quickly slide into a smooth water channel, making it impossible to stop the slide and positioning the climber precisely along the hypothesized fall line based on the scene evidence (see Appendix D). The handholds in this slabby finish are virtually nonexistent, and any minor slip on the moss would likely lead to sliding into the smooth water channel and then over a series of cliffs down the steepest part of the wall.

Analysis

Free solo climbing is inherently dangerous and entails a unique set of risks. In this case, a fall that might occur while roped climbing would result in a minor fall onto gear placed in a crack near the climber. However, the risks are significantly magnified when solo climbing. It is believed that the climber likely made a misstep or slipped, and that small slip led to fatal consequences. Solo climbing demands perfection at all times. Free soloing has always been an integral part of climbing and will continue to be, along with the inherent consequences.

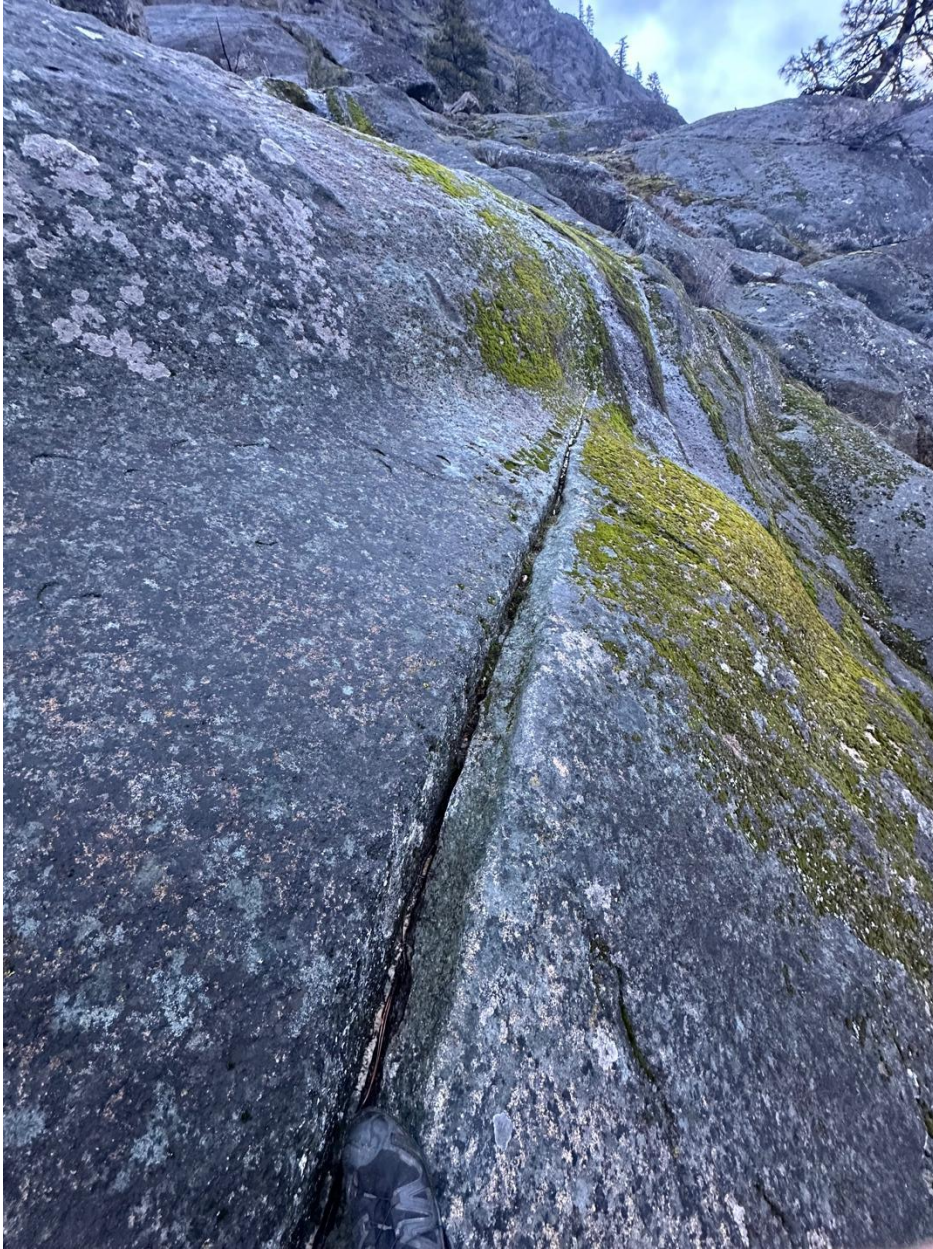
Appendix A



Appendix B



Appendix C



Appendix D

