

UPDATE: Man Dies After Fall from Avery County Falls

Written by Steve Frank
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The Avery County Sheriff's Office identified the 24-year-old man who fell from near the top of Hunt Fish Falls Saturday and died at the Johnson City Medical Center on Sunday morning. Rhett Chamberlain, of Shelby, NC, was taking photographs from an embankment, according to those with him. His camera fell from the embankment and when he reached for it, he fell some 80 to 90 feet, according to authorities. As he fell, he hit a large rock, striking his head and back, landing in a small pool of water.

The four friends he was with witnessed Chamberlain fall, landing near the bottom of the waterfall.

Avery County dispatchers received the call and sent rescue crews just after 3 Saturday afternoon; witnesses first saying the man fell only 20 feet. Rescue crews gathered four wheelers and equipment, but found that the trail was too rugged for any machinery, and estimated it would take over two hours to reach and retrieve the man on foot. First arriving rescuers found grave injuries were suffered by Chamberlain, with reports at the scene upping the estimate of the fall to 80 to 90 feet, and heard reports of him striking rocks with his head and back before reaching the bottom. Chamberlain was said to be unconscious—but at least breathing when the effort to transport him got underway. Additional crews from Watauga and Caldwell were called to the scene to help with manpower for the long trek back, while WINGS Air Rescue circled overhead, hoping to find a closer landing zone, but ultimately, the long hike out could not be avoided, and it was around 6 Saturday evening before Chamberlain lifted off at the landing zone.

Photo: blog Wayfaring Wanderer