# Emergency doctor survives 40-foot cliff fall in Gwynedd



An emergency doctor experienced a life-threatening situation when she fell 40 feet from a sea cliff while climbing in Gwynedd. Vicki Hau, aged 37, was scaling the headland on the Llŷn Peninsula when the rock face gave way beneath her, causing her to plunge onto the rocks below.

Vicki sustained severe injuries, including fractures in her neck, spine, and leg. Her companion, a fellow climber named Neil, was quick to respond and raised the alarm, acknowledging the gravity of the situation. “Something – if not everything – broke,” Vicki recounted. She described the fall, stating, “I went flying. I remember flipping upside down, then boom! I must have blacked-out for a few seconds because the next thing I can remember was my friend, Neil, in front of me. My arms, the ropes, the boulders around me, were covered in blood.”

Vicki, who divides her time between Canada and the UK, works as a specialist in emergency medicine with a focus on climbing. She has previously served as a medic on various expeditions globally. Prior to the incident, she had successfully navigated several climbs on the peninsula’s Trwyn Llech-y-Doll headland and was familiar with the area. However, she encountered a section of crumbly rock that posed an unexpected danger.

In an attempt to avert a fall, and finding herself unable to anchor or descend, Vicki made a critical move that resulted in her fall. Neil acted swiftly, covering Vicki with his jacket and climbing to seek help. He managed to contact rescue services, including the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) and Coastguard teams.

While awaiting rescue, Vicki’s medical training came into play as she began to evaluate her condition. “I was trying to sit up and move my limbs,” she stated. “But I could feel my left lower leg was broken; any attempted movement resulted in nothing but intense pain. I looked at my leg, the blood, my surroundings and accepted my reality. At least I was alive."

Due to the perilous nature of her location, a clifftop or helicopter rescue was deemed too risky. Consequently, the RNLI’s inshore lifeboat from Abersoch took the lead in the operation. Helm Phill Wood manoeuvred the Atlantic 85 craft close to the shore, allowing his crew and a paramedic to reach Vicki. He later described Vicki's composure during the ordeal: “Vicki was surprisingly calm – she told me that she was an emergency room doctor. She had a dent in her helmet, a cut above her right eye, and her leg was clearly broken. We needed to carry her on a stretcher, through the water, to the lifeboat. We were lucky that the sea wasn’t rough – but it was deep in places!”

Once aboard the lifeboat, Coastguard paramedics continued Vicki's assessment as they made their way to a nearby beach where she could be airlifted to Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor for further treatment. Recently, eight months post-incident, Vicki returned to the Abersoch lifeboat station to express her gratitude to the volunteer crew who played a vital role in her rescue. Ahead of St David's Day, she referred to them as her heroes.

Reflecting on her recovery, Vicki shared, “It transpired I had sustained a neck fracture, multiple thoracic spinal fractures needing surgery, plus a multi-fragmented left tibial fracture which needed a nail – from my knee down to my ankle.” She expressed appreciation for the team's efforts, stating that she had been told on many occasions how fortunate she was to have survived without significant brain or spinal injuries.

Phill Wood remarked on the pride the crew felt in having contributed to her rescue and wished her well as she continues her recovery.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://rnli.org/news-and-media/2025/february/27/st-davids-day-thank-you-for-welsh-crew-who-rescued-climber-after-cliff-fall> - This article corroborates Vicki Hau's accident and her gratitude towards the RNLI crew for saving her life after a cliff fall in Wales. It details her injuries and the rescue operation.
* <https://www.rnli.org/about-us/our-history> - This page provides background information on the RNLI, including its history and role in providing rescue services around the UK and Ireland.
* <https://www.visitsnowdonia.info/places-to-visit/lln-peninsula/> - This website offers information about the Llŷn Peninsula, where Vicki Hau was climbing when she fell. It highlights the area's scenic beauty and outdoor activities.
* <https://www.bangor.ac.uk/en/aboutbangor/ysbytygwynedd> - This page provides information about Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor, where Vicki was airlifted for further treatment after her rescue.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency> - This government website explains the role of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, which was involved in Vicki's rescue operation.