



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2003 - 31st December 2003

	Cave Rescue Organisation ⁽⁴⁾	Cornwall Mines Rescue	Cumbria Ore Mines RU	Derbyshire CRO	Devon CRO	Gloucestershire CRG	Gwent Cave Rescue Team	Irish CRO	Mendip RO	Midlands CRO	North Wales CRO	Scottish CRO	South East CRO	Swaledale FRO	Upper Wharfedale FRA	West Brecon Cave Rescue Team	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	9	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	3	21
Assisting Authorities ⁽³⁾	-	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	6
Persons Assisted	20	-	-	3	0	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	8	7	41
Fatalities	0	-	-	0	0 ⁽⁵⁾	0	-	-	-	-	0	0	-	-	0	0	0
Persons Injured ⁽¹⁾	2	-	-	4	0	1	-	-	-	-	1	0	-	-	1	0	9
Helicopter assistance ⁽²⁾	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1(1)	-	2(1)
Animal Incidents	4	4	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	2	18
Assistance to other teams	1	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	4
Totals Underground Incidents	13	4	2	10	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	-	4	5	45
Surface Incidents	38	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	4	16	-	64
Persons Assisted	41	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	4	12	-	61
Fatalities	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	-	5
Persons Injured	27	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8	-	37
Surface Animal Incidents	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Totals Surface Incidents	41	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	4	16	-	67

Notes:

1. Injuries include those assisted for a medical condition, but exclude cavers assisted through exhaustion.
2. Row records use of helicopter to evacuate casualty, figure in brackets is the number of calls to the RAF included in the total.
3. This row records incidents where assistance is requested by the authorities for non-caver incidents. These are identified on page 2 of this report.
4. The Cave Rescue Organisation is based in Clapham, North Yorkshire.
5. The Devon CRO incident involved a fatality found on the surface – incident 24.

Copies of this report are available from the BCRC Website – www.caverescue.org.uk

Further details relating to this incident report or about the BCRC and its membership can be obtained from the Hon Secretary, Pete Allwright, Pearl Hill, Dent, Sedbergh, Cumbria LA10 5TG; telephone 015396 25412 EMail PeteAllwright@compuserve.com



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Summary of Incident Report, 2003

1. There were no underground caving fatalities in 2003.
2. Rescue teams undertook 6 incidents assisting the authorities (police, ambulance) in the execution of their duty – 1, 6, 9, 14, 22, and 24.
3. The main causes and injuries sustained over recent years are recorded here. The *Injuries Incurred* table includes fatalities and exposure/hypothermia incidents.

Table 1: Incident Causes

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
assist authorities		7	2	3	8	6	26
cave diving	1						1
equipment failure							0
exposure/exhausted	6	2	4	1	1	2	16
fall	5	4	4	3	6	6	28
flooding	4	2	3	2	1	1	13
hung up	2						2
light failure			1				1
lost or overdue	15	11	8	2	5	6	47
medical emergency	4	2	2	2	1		11
missing person	1	1	2			2	6
other	1	1		2	2		6
physically stuck		1	5	1			7
rock fall	1	3	2	1		1	8
self marooning	1	1		1			3
unable to climb		1	1		3	1	6
	41	36	34	18	27	27	183

Table 2: Injuries Incurred

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
arm lower/wrist	1		2				3
arm/humerous shoulder		1		1	2	1	5
Chest injuries	2		2	2	2		8
Drowned	1		1	2	1		5
Exhaustion/hypothermia	9	3	5	3	1	2	23
femur - pelvic injuries		1		1		3	5
Head Injuries	1		1				2
Knee Injuries	2		1				3
leg - lower/ankle	2		3	1		1	7
Medical condition	2	1	1	1	2	1	8
Multiple Serious							0
Spine/back injuries	1		2		3	1	7
Grand Total	21	6	18	11	11	9	76

The Injuries Incurred table excludes incident 26, where the injuries were not caused through caving.

4. Caving activity during 2001 was greatly disrupted throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland by an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. This caused the closure of most caving areas for over six months of the year.
5. The underground animal incidents included 4 lambs, 1 goat and 14 dogs.
6. 'Surface Incidents' include fell/moorland rescues and searches. Teams, chiefly although not exclusively in the north, carry out these duties as part of their normal workload. These incidents are usually also recorded in the Mountain Rescue Council Incident Report for 2003.
7. Attendance of rescue personnel at incidents has been recorded as follows:

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Number of Incidents	32	30	33	17	25	25
Average number of people on incident	21	12	15	16	15	19
Average effort in "man" hours	170	48.5	88.25	168	82	180

In 2003, there were two incidents where the approximate total effort exceeded 1000 hours – incident 12 and incident 21.

These figures are approximate and do not include equipment maintenance and re-equipping of rescue vehicles. In this report, incidents are recorded normally where personnel have been deployed to the site or other operational actions are taken; other problems or alerts are not included.



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Summary of Incidents for 2003

- 1. Friday 3 January by DerbyCRO at 11:55 (for 5.05 hours)**
caves in Pindale area, assist police
Search caves in Pindale area for missing girl (12) - nothing found. She was found later in Stockport safe and well. Other Peak District MRTs searched surface locations.
- 2. Saturday 18 January by WBCRT at 20:00 (for 2 hours)**
OFD II - Cwm Dwr, exposure/exhausted
Caver (m) became exhausted and cold after immersion in water. Was moving slowly. Assisted in cave then hauled up shaft at Cwm Dwr entrance.
- 3. Saturday 8 February by CRO at 19:23 (for 3½ hours)**
Large Pot, unable to climb
Caver (m20) unable to climb the top tight section of the second pitch and get into the bedding plane. Hauled up through the tight section and through to larger passage then escorted to surface.
- 4. Saturday 5 April by UWFR at 19:00 (for ¼ hour)**
Dow Cave, Kettlewell, lost or overdue
Party of 7 cavers reported overdue on trip to Dow Cave. On arrival at cave entrance the party was located where they were changing after successfully completing their trip.
- 5. Saturday 19 April by CRO at 18:15 (for 8 hours)**
Pippikin Pot, physically stuck
After becoming stuck in Stemple Rift, caver (f31) became physically wedged and could not be freed by her companions. Eventually and with some difficulty was freed by CRO after being trapped for about 7 1/2 hours. Escorted to surface via Mistral.
- 6. Monday 21 April by DerbyCRO at 23:25 (for ¾ hour)**
Good Luck Mine, via Gellia, assist police
Police requested search of the mine after observing a car parked for 2 days. Two were found sleeping in the cave entrance.
- 7. Sunday 11 May by CRO at 10:55 (for 1¼ hours)**
Upper Long Churn, Ribblesdale, fall
Caver (m54) slid down the chute at Dr Bannisters Handbasin and hit rock in the pool below suffering a fractured right leg. The location is close to the surface so he was assisted out by members of his caving party. CRO arrived to render further casualty care and analgesia then carry the casualty down to the ambulance at the road head.
- 8. Wednesday 21 May by DerbyCRO at 12:30 (for 4.55 hours)**
Knotlow Caverns, Monyash, fall
Caver (f37) fell some 4 metres onto rocks whilst caving in Bung Hole Chamber suffering suspected pelvic injuries. Evacuated up the pitches and to awaiting ambulance.
- 9. Monday 2 June by DerbyCRO at 17:10 (for 1½ hours)**
Walsall, West Midlands, assist police
Requested by West Midlands Constabulary to assist at a shaft where a suspected explosive device had been found. Team stood down on route to location.
- 10. Sunday 15 June by CRO at 18:30 (for 5 hours)**
Penyghent Pot, exposure/exhausted
After a trip to the bottom of this strenuous pothole, caver (m56) became exhausted and was unable to climb the 4th pitch. CRO provided hauling assistance up the pitch and escorted the caver to the surface.
- 11. Monday 14 July by CRO at 15:25 (for 1½ hours)**
Calf Holes, Ribblesdale, lost or overdue
Solo caver (m42) abseiled into cave but was unable to find route through to Browgill Cave and was unable to prusik up rope on return to Calf Holes. Hauled up entrance on ladder and lifeline.
- 12. Tuesday 22 July by GCRG at 15:50 (for 24 hours)**
Otter Hole, Chepstow, fall
Member of a filming party (f22) fell and injured pelvis and back. Members of WBCRT and GCRG worked through the night to bring casualty out of cave. Second Rescue party had to wait for tide to turn and for sump to open before taking over from party. Problems encountered throughout entrance series and casualty got out of stretcher through tighter parts of the cave. Assisted by WBCRT, Midland CRO, SARA. Fire Brigade in attendance early in incident.
- 13. Wednesday 6 August by DerbyCRO at 00:20 (for 4 hours)**
Giants Hole, Castleton, missing person
Searched main routes for possible missing caver. Home made ladder found on Garlands Pot but nothing else found.
- 14. Monday 25 August by DerbyCRO at 14:40 (for 1¼ hours)**
Blue John Mines, Castleton, assist authorities
Tourist (m80) on a guided trip in show cave fell ill. Attended by paramedics. DCRO called to evacuate the casualty in stretcher.
- 15. Saturday 30 August by CRO at 15:20 (for 11½ hours)**
Pippikin Pot, physically stuck
After becoming stuck in the Stemple Rift, caver (f20) became physically wedged and could not be freed by her companions. Eventually and with some difficulty was freed by CRO after some rock was removed and a vertical hauling rope was rigged. Escorted to surface via Mistral. Assisted by UWFR.
- 16. Saturday 30 August by CRO at 22:10**
Cave at Ribblesdale, lost or overdue
Family party of cavers reported overdue by the wife. Search of Ribblesdale for car by CRO Controller and Police proved negative. The wife then reported the party had returned home.
- 17. Thursday 4 September by DerbyCRO at 19:00 (for 4 hours)**
Caves on Stanley Moor, Buxton, missing person
Searched the caves for possible missing person - no one found.
- 18. Tuesday 9 September by NWCRO at 15:00 (for 1½ hours)**
Mine near Llyn Geirionedd, fall
Asked to assist Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue to extract man who had fallen down a mineshaft a short way into a tunnel. On arrival it was found that OVMRT had the incident in control.
- 19. Sunday 12 October by CRO at 18:12 (for 1¼ hours)**
Calf Holes, lost or overdue
Cavers (m, f) abseiled into cave but were unable to find route through to Browgill Cave and were unable to prusik up rope on return to Calf Holes. Another member of the party succeeded in prusiking out and raised alarm. The others were hauled up entrance on ladder and lifeline.



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20. Saturday 25 October by WBCRT at 21:00 (for 1½ hours)

OFD II, lost or overdue

Party (2m, f) on through trip from Cwm Dwr to OFD II Top Entrance became lost. WBCRT began search of Top Entrance and found missing cavers in Gnome Passage. They had got lost in Cwm Dwr and again in Top Entrance.

21. Saturday 1 November by UWFRA at 18:00 (for 14 hours)

Dowbergill Passage, Kettlewell, rock fall

A caver (m40) was struck and trapped by boulder in Bridge Cavern, suffering serious femur and internal injuries. Members of party were able to remove rock from casualties leg. Doctor attended throughout and analgesia administered. A very difficult stretcher carry with the casualty having to be removed on several occasions. He surfaced some 14 hours after sustaining the injury and was evacuated by RAF helicopter. Assisted by CRO.

22. Thursday 6 November by ScotCRO at 22:30 (for 2 hours)

Carlops, Midlothian, assist police

Called to assist Tweed Valley MRT and Lothian and Borders Constabulary in search for missing vulnerable person (m20). SCRO were called to search Jeannie Barries cave. Missing person reappeared before search was undertaken.

23. Saturday 15 November by WBCRT at 22:30 (for 2 hours)

Pant Mawr Pot, lost or overdue

Party of 3 (2m, f) completed trip in pot and leaving cave in the dark had got lost on Pant Mawr Moor, so decided to bivvy down. Found by rescue team on way to initiate search of Pot.

24. Sunday 16 November by DevonCRO at 09:00 (for 7 hours)

Denham Bridge, Buckland, assist police

DevonCRO was called to search mineworkings at Lopwell Dam for a missing person (f18). Whilst on way to that location, the body of the casualty was discovered in steep sided gully / river bank close to Denham Bridge. The DCRO team were diverted to provide technical assistance and safety cover at the scene for the Police and Scene of Crime Officers.

25. Saturday 29 November by CRO at 14:45 (for 2.25 hours)

Lower Long Churn, Ribblesdale, flooding

Party of 7 (f48, f46, m40, m38, m34, m30, m) trapped by flood waters. Were located when flooding receded and escorted to surface. One member located in Upper Long Churn.

26. Sunday 30 November by DerbyCRO at 09:40 (for 3 hours)

Thirst House, Deepdale, fall

Family party were camping in the entrance of the cave. Father (m34) slipped suffering back injuries and spent uncomfortable night, but on leaving cave in the morning he slipped again. He raised the alarm by mobile phone and was evacuated in a stretcher.

27. Sunday 28 December by DerbyCRO at 13:15 (for 2¾ hours)

Giants Hole, Castleton, fall

Caver (f21) suffered spinal injuries when she fell whilst abseiling the Garlands Pitch. Attended by paramedics and analgesia administered. Casualty evacuated to awaiting ambulance.

Team Abbreviation	Full Name
COMRU	Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit
CornwalMRU	Cornwall Mines Rescue Unit
CRO	Cave Rescue Organisation
DerbyCRO	Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation
DevonCRO	Devon Cave Rescue Organisation
GCRG	Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group
GwentCRT	Gwent Cave Rescue Team
ICRO	Irish Cave Rescue Organisation
MCRO	Midland Cave Rescue Organisation

Team Abbreviation	Full Name
MRO	Mendip Rescue Organization
NWCRO	North Wales Cave Rescue Organisation
ScotCRO	Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation
SECRO	South East Cave Rescue Organisation
SwaleFRO	Swaledale Fell Rescue Organisation
UWFRA	Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Organisation
WBCRT	West Brecon Cave Rescue Team