



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2009 - 31st December 2009

	Cave Rescue Organisation ⁽⁴⁾	Cumbria Ore Mines RU	Derbyshire CRO	Devon CRO	Gloucestershire CRG	Irish CRO	Mendip Cave Rescue	Midlands CRO	North Wales CRO	Scottish CRO	South East CRO	Swaledale Mountain Rescue	Upper Wharfedale FRA	West Brecon Cave Rescue Team	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	14	-	2	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	27
Assisting Authorities⁽³⁾	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	5
Persons Assisted	31	-	7	-	-	4	2	-	-	3	-	-	2	22	71
Fatalities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Persons Injured⁽¹⁾	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	6
Helicopter assistance⁽²⁾	1 ⁽¹⁾	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 ⁽¹⁾	-	-
Animal Incidents	5	-	2	-	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	11
Assistance to other teams	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Totals Underground Incidents	20	-	5	1	-	6	1	1	1	3	-	-	2	5	43
<p>'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. The figures are those returned by the teams using their own criteria, which differ from team to team. These incidents are usually recorded in the Mountain Rescue (England & Wales) Incident Report for 2009.</p>															
Surface Incidents	67	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	30	43	1	143
Persons Assisted	86	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	55	23	1	167
Fatalities	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	1	-	5
Persons Injured	34	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	19	1	68
Surface Animal Incidents	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5
Totals Surface Incidents	68	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	30	43	1	144

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. The figure in brackets (if any) 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. The surface totals exclude stand-bys, alerts, and occasions where the team's SARDA dogs and handlers were called to assist teams operating in other areas.
5. In this period, the Gwent Cave Rescue Team stood down. Their area is now covered mainly by the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team, and by Gloucestershire Cave Rescue in some parts.

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 secretary@caverescue.org.uk



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Summary of Incident Report, 2009

- There were no underground caving fatalities in 2009.
- There were 5 incidents where teams assisted the authorities in the execution of their duty – incident 1, 8, 17, 31 and 32.
Incidents 1, 8, 17 and 32 resulted in the discovery of a **body** on the surface during search operations.
- 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

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
assist authorities	7	3	1	4	5	20
cave diving	1	1				2
exposure/exhausted	1	1	4	2		8
fall	3	4	4	3	2	16
flooding		4	1	8	4	17
hung up		1	3	1	1	6
lost or overdue	9	11	9	14	11	54
marooned				1	1	2
medical emergency		1		4	2	7
missing person		2			1	3
other	3	2	4	1	1	11
physically stuck	2	3	2	1	3	11
rock fall	1	1			1	3
self marooning		1				1
unable to climb				1		1
Total	27	35	28	40	32	162

Table 2: Injuries Incurred

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
arm/humerus shoulder				1	2	3
Chest Injuries				1		1
Drowned	2	1	2			5
Exhaustion/hypothermia	2	3	5	2	4	16
femur - pelvic injuries		3		1		4
Head Injuries			1		1	2
Knee Injuries	1		2	3		6
leg - lower/ankle	2		2	1		5
Medical condition		1		1	2	4
Multiple Serious		1				1
Other			1			1
Spine/back injuries	1	1			1	3
Total	8	10	13	10	10	51

Note that the free diving incident was recorded in 2007 involved cavers free diving a sump without sub-aqua equipment. This has been included in the 'other' category.

- The underground animal incidents included 2 cows, 3 sheep, 1 lamb and 7 dogs.
- Attendance of rescue personnel at incidents has been recorded below; not all incidents are fully reported.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of Incidents	33	17	25	25	29	27	31	28	39	32
Average number of people on incident	15	16	15	19	19	22	18	18	10	18
Average effort in "man" hours	88.25	168	82	180	112	214	89	83	107	178

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.

Team Abbreviation	Full Name
COMRU	Cumbria Ore Mines Rescue Unit
CRO	Cave Rescue Organisation
DerbyCRO	Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation
DevonCRO	Devon Cave Rescue Organisation
GCRG	Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group
ICRO	Irish Cave Rescue Organisation
MCRO	Midland Cave Rescue Organisation
MCR	Mendip Cave Rescue (formerly Mendip Rescue Organization)
NWCRO	North Wales Cave Rescue

Team Abbreviation	Full Name
	Organisation
ScotCRO	Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation
SECRO	South East Cave Rescue Organisation
SwaledaleMRT	Swaledale Mountain Rescue Team
UWFRA	Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association
WBCRT	West Brecon Cave Rescue Team
CDG	Cave Diving Group



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Summary of Incidents for 2009

- 1. Tuesday 20 January by ScotCRO at 16:25**
(for 5 hours)(3 rescue team members)
Fauldhouse, West Lothian, assist police
Assist in missing person search. Male (43) was last seen in Fauldhouse on Friday 16th at 15:45. SCRO asked to check three culverts under railway lines and one derelict shed. Search of sites and routes to and from the sites completed by 20:00 Body found on surface next day 1.5 km from last position seen just as one member arrived at search HQ to assist with search management.
- 2. Friday 23 January by CRO at 17:50**
(for 2 hours)(10 rescue team members)
Simpson's Pot, lost or overdue
A party of cavers who aborted a trip down Swinsto Hole due to wet conditions became concerned for two other cavers they had seen heading for Simpson's Pot. They eventually called the Police and reported them overdue. CRO located the two cavers (m54, m53), fit and well, at the (top) entrance, having just completed a conventional SRT trip down to the Great Aven and back.
- 3. Saturday 24 January by CRO at 15:39**
(for 4¾ hours)(32 rescue team members)
Wretched Rabbit Entrance, Ease Gill Caverns, medical emergency
A caver (f28) was reported collapsed in Lower Wretched Rabbit Passage after suffering several epileptic fits. When CRO and team doctors arrived she was being assisted slowly along by other cavers. Further fits were still occurring. After examination the casualty was hauled up the entrance climbs and out to the surface. Following a short stretcher carry she was airlifted to hospital by RAF helicopter.
- 4. Friday 13 February by CRO at 17:15**
(for 1½ hours)(3 rescue team members)
Roaring Hole, Ingleborough, other
Two walkers found a rucksack and a dog unattended for some time at the cave entrance. Concerned, they reported it to the Police. A small CRO team and Police officers investigated and found a caver who had just surfaced; all OK.
- 5. Saturday 14 February by CRO at 21:35**
(for 2 hours)(6 rescue team members)
Stream Passage Pot, lost or overdue
Three cavers (m23, m21, f19) were reported to be several hours overdue on a trip from Flood Entrance Pot through to Stream Passage Pot. One member of party (m21) known to be tired when they were last seen at the bottom of Flood Entrance by other members of the same club. Located on the surface above Trow Gill making their way slowly down. One caver totally exhausted; assisted to CRO vehicle and transported to Clapham for food and showers.
- 6. Sunday 22 February by WBCRT at 18:30**
(for 1½ hours)(15 rescue team members)
OFD II, lost or overdue
Three parties from one club enter cave to visit different areas. Two became overdue and an alert was raised. A callout was initiated, at which point a second party surfaced. A fast search of the route planned by the party was made and they were located at the Corkscrew; all were well but slow. Escorted to the surface.
- 7. Saturday 7 March by CRO at 17:35**
(for 2 hours 10 mins)(27 rescue team members)
Simpson's Pot, marooned
A party of five cavers on a through trip down Simpson's Pot abseiled into The Pit by mistake and then had difficulty prusiking back up the rope due to high water and cold. One member of the party reached the surface and raised the alarm, reporting two cavers (m19, f20) stuck at the bottom of the pitch with hypothermia, and two cavers (m23, m24) at the top. First CRO team found one caver hung up in a waterfall following an attempted improvised haul by the two at the top, with the fourth caver trapped at the bottom. All were variously hauled/assisted/escorted out. Three were hypothermic and one of these was stretchered down to the road and a waiting ambulance.
- 8. Friday 20 March by ScotCRO at 22:30**
(for 3 hours)(3 rescue team members)
Linn Caves, nr Milngavie, Strathclyde, assist police
Missing person (m48) last seen 28 Feb. SCRO called by police on 18th March to search Linn Caves a small stoop and room limestone mine known to the missing person. Team of three spend 45 minutes searching it evening of 20th March finding nothing. Body was discovered several miles from there the next day.
- 9. Saturday 21 March by DerbyCRO at 20:50**
(for 1 hour)(15 rescue team members)
Peak Cavern / Titan, lost or overdue
Party of 5 (m65, m61, m51, m40, f62) on trip delayed by rigging and route finding problems. Search initiated and party met underground in Peak cavern on their way out. Escorted to surface.
- 10. Saturday 28 March by CRO at 21:03**
(for 3½ hours)(20 rescue team members)
Turbary Pot, lost or overdue
A party of four cavers (m25, m24, m19, f23) were reported overdue on a pull through trip down Simpson's Pot. A search of the pot and Kingsdale Master Cave failed to find any trace of them. The search was extended and they were located marooned at the bottom of Turbary Pot. The pot was rigged by CRO and the four were able to prusik back to the surface, cold but otherwise ok.
- 11. Sunday 29 March by CRO at 22:44**
(for 36 minutes)(10 rescue team members)
Gaping Gill, lost or overdue
A party of three cavers (2m, f) were reported overdue on a Dihedral Route to Stream Passage Pot via Hensler's exchange trip. Located at vehicle near Cold Cotes by CRO during preliminary investigation, having just come off the hill.
- 12. Sunday 10 May by CRO at 14:39**
(for 3 hours)(20 rescue team members)
Lower Long Churn Cave, medical emergency
A caver (m) dislocated his shoulder climbing up The Slot above St Paul's. After pain relief had been administered by team doctors and his arm / shoulder immobilised he was assisted, then stretchered, to the surface and transported down to a waiting road ambulance in Selside.
- 13. Sunday 10 May by ICRO at 17:00**
(for 14 hours)(40 rescue team members)
Pollnatagha, East Cuilcagh, County Fermanagh, NI, physically stuck
Caver (m36) reported physically stuck. Team attended and first aider in attendance and kept track of vitals, reporting to Doctor on surface. Some 8hrs of engineering the constriction followed in order to remove the casualty. Casualty assisted through the cave system and hauled up 18m, 31m and 4m pitches to surface.
- 14. Monday 11 May by DerbyCRO at 20:30**
(for 15 hours)(59 rescue team members)
Old Mill Close Mine, Wensley, Derbyshire, fall
Caver (f) fell about 4m whilst traversing a rift, suffering a dislocated left shoulder and broken upper left arm. Old Mill Close is a very extensive and complicated mine system well



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known to only a few cavers. It is accessed by a 40m. Entrance shaft. It took the casualty's two companions nearly 3 hours to exit and raise the alarm. Route finding also gave rescue team problems. Evacuation was slow due to the many short pitches, climbs, constrictions, copious mud and the injuries of the casualty.

**15. Saturday 6 June by WBCRT at 23:15
(for 5 hours)(25 rescue team members)**

OFD II, flooding

Two parties (3m, 2f in total) were reported overdue. They met in the Main Streamway but when they got to the Maypole Inlet found the pitch was impassable due to high water. Sat out the flood pulse, having to move to higher ground at one point, suffering a boulder fall in the process. Located by rescue team and roped back to safety then escorted to the surface.

**16. Sunday 7 June by CRO at 21:25
(for 0.45 hours)(7 rescue team members)**

Tatham Wife Hole, lost or overdue

Two cavers (m22, m22) were reported overdue on a trip into Tatham Wife Hole, having walked across to the cave from their car near the Hill Inn. Found by CRO making their way back over the moor and accompanied to the road.

**17. Sunday 12 July by DerbyCRO at 08:07
(for 5 hours 51 mins)(39 rescue team members)**

Middleton Limestone Mine, Wirksworth, Derbyshire, assist police

Information led police to conclude that a missing man (m40) was in Middleton Limestone Mine which is 33 miles long on three levels. A search was commenced in some areas whilst planning commenced for a full search. Before this was started the police received information which led them to go to the foot of a particular electricity pylon and there they found the body of the missing man.

During this incident DCRO's vehicle was driven half a mile through the mine from one main entrance to the other.

**18. Saturday 25 July by ICRO at 14:00
(for 2 hours)(8 rescue team members)**

Poulelva, Lisdoonvarna County Clare, Ireland, physically stuck

Caver (f) reported physically stuck in flooding passage. Was found to have been freed by colleagues when team arrived. First aider checked vitals. Warm clothing and food provided.

ICRO hauled casualty up 33m pot hole to surface.

**19. Saturday 25 July by UWFR A at 14:00
(for 12 hours)(50 rescue team members)**

Langstroth Pot, fall

Caver (m63) suffered spinal injuries following a 4m fall when ladder broke after entering cave through a new, constricted entrance. Evacuated in various modes of stretcher and/or hauling harness (with and without spinal splint) dependent on passage size. The sumps were drained by the fire service to facilitate the rescue via the lower entrance, but in the end the casualty extracted to surface after passage enlarged by engineering works. He was airlifted to hospital by RAF helicopter on reaching the surface.

Informant suffered suspected heart attack after raising alarm and was airlifted to different hospital by air ambulance.

Assisted by CRO, RAF helicopter and Air Ambulance.

**20. Sunday 26 July by ICRO at 15:00
(for 1 hour)(2 rescue team members)**

Aghinrawn Cave, Marlbank, County Fermanagh, NI, rock fall

Caver (m33) suffered rock fall causing head injuries. Casualty was 'walking wounded' and was met on surface by team on arrival. Was driven to Enniskillen hospital where X-ray showed fractured skull.

**21. Monday 31 August by CRO at 00:40
(for 13½ hours)(20 rescue team members)**

Simpson's Pot / Kingsdale Master Cave, flooding

Seven cavers were reported overdue in flood conditions during pull through trips to Valley Entrance; three descending Swinsto Hole, and four descending Simpson's Pot. First CRO search team met the Swinsto party making their way slowly along the high level traverse in KMC, having been seriously delayed by the high water. Further searching to the base of the Great Aven located lights shining from the top of Slit Pot. A second CRO team descended Simpson's Pot and found the missing cavers (m29, f28, f25, f23) sheltering from the high water. They were assisted out to Valley Entrance via the Great Aven pitch. A third CRO/UWFRA team then entered Simpson's Pot to derig the SRT ropes from all pitches.

**22. Saturday 5 September by MCR at 17:35
(for 20 minutes)(1 rescue team members)**

Rhino Rift, Charterhouse, Somerset, lost or overdue

Two cavers (m32, m28) were reported 30 minutes overdue on a trip in Rhino Rift. As the MCR warden arrived at Base they returned safely. No further action was taken.

**23. Sunday 20 September by WBCRT at 18:04
(for 1 hour)(36 rescue team members)**

OFD I to Cwm Dwr, lost or overdue

Party (3m, f) reported overdue on trip from OFD I to Cwm Dwr. Failed to find route at Diver's Pitch so returned out through OFD I. Team stood down before entering cave.

**24. Sunday 20 September by CRO at 19:20
(for ¾ hour)(24 rescue team members)**

Hammer Pot, physically stuck

A caver (m27) was reported as being stuck and exhausted in Stemple Rift on the way out from the bottom of the pot. He eventually managed to sort himself out and, assisted by his two companions, then CRO, made slow but steady progress to the surface. All three were transported off the fell by team vehicle.

**25. Sunday 11 October by CRO at 23:05
(for 1 hour)(6 rescue team members)**

Ireby Fell Cavern, lost or overdue

Party of 3 cavers (m66, m61, m39) reported overdue on trip down Shadow Route and on to Ireby 2 via Skylight Passage. Located on the surface making their way down to their car at Masongill Fell Lane after 13.5 hr trip.

**26. Saturday 31 October by CRO at 14:58
(for 1¼ hours)(12 rescue team members)**

Lancaster Hole, hung up

A caver was reported to be hung up on the 34m entrance pitch with his hair caught in his descender. Just before CRO arrived at Bull Pot Farm a second report was received that he was now free. A small team went to the entrance to double check before standing down.

**27. Saturday 7 November by CRO at 16:18
(for 7½ hours)(28 rescue team members)**

Peterson Pot, Ease Gill Caverns, missing person

A caver (m27) was reported missing in Peterson Pot, Ease Gill. The party had been negotiating Roly Poly Passage; three turned back but one continued and was eventually reported overdue. CRO located him beyond the Sky Dive and brought him out via Mistral Hole, cold, wet and tired. Rescue hampered by heavy rain.

**28. Saturday 21 November by WBCRT at 16:50
(for 5 hours)(12 rescue team members)**

Ogof Craig a Ffynnon, flooding

Party of four cavers (m49, m46, f54, f51) became trapped by rapidly rising flood pulse. The alarm was raised by a fifth member of the party who surfaced earlier due to a damaged ankle, just clearing the duck before it closed. CDG divers were put on standby pending developments. A small team was deployed into the cave to monitor water levels, and



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eventually they made their way into the cave to locate the party safe and well. When the water levels had fallen further, a safe return to the surface was made.

**29. Sunday 22 November by ICRO at 23:30
(for 1 hour)(6 rescue team members)**

*Marble Arch Cave, Marlbank, County Fermanagh, NI,
flooding*

Caver (m33) sat out a flood pulse in cave causing him to be overdue. Team quickly located him as water levels fell and escorted to surface.

**30. Friday 18 December by WBCRT at 07:00
(for 10 hours)(25 rescue team members)**

Darren Cilau, lost or overdue

A party of four cavers (m18, f21, f21, f19) were reported overdue on a Darren to Prices trip. Search teams were deployed to the two entrances but communications problems meant no information was received on progress. Two of the missing party were located at the pitch down from Busman's to the connecting choke to Antlers by the Prices team. They were cold and thirsty. The other two missing cavers were located as this group started out for the surface. All the missing cavers were in reasonable condition and were able to make their own way out of the cave.

**31. Friday 18 December by DevonCRO at 09:00
(for 4 hours)(7 rescue team members)**

Torbryan Caves & Woods, Devon, assist police

Police reported a 42yr old male missing from home for a number of days. Search of a number of small caves and woodland in the Torbryan area that may be used as locations to sleep rough in.

**32. Wednesday 30 December by ScotCRO at 11:30
(for 10 hours)(4 rescue team members)**

Gorebridge, assist police

Missing person (f59) last seen 29 Dec. MRTs searching since 3 am next morning. SCRO called in to check derelict buildings and culverts associated with weirs on River South Esk. Check first site then spot body lying under a tree near top of wooded slope above river. No vital signs. Wait for three hours as other services gather - delayed by the shortest approach road being steep, covered in ice and with a low bridge forcing MRT Landrovers and other vehicles to take a roundabout route to the site.