



# British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

## Incident Report for Period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013

	Cave Rescue Organisation <sup>(4)</sup>	Cornwall Search & Rescue	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	South & Mid Wales CRT	Swaledale Mountain Rescue	Upper Wharfedale FRA	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	6	1	-	1	0	0	1	3	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	17
Assisting Authorities <sup>(3)</sup>	1	2	-	-	3	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Persons Assisted	12	1	-	1	-	0	0	4	-	-	-	-	9	-	2	29
Fatalities	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	0
Persons Injured <sup>(1)</sup>	2	0	-	1	-	0	0	4	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	7
Helicopter assistance <sup>(2)</sup>	1(1)	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	1
Animal Incidents	1	0	-	2	-	1	0	0	-	-	-	-	1	-	0	5
Reported Standbys	2	2	-	0	-	2	0	0	-	-	-	-	2	-	0	-
Assistance to other teams	1	-	-	0	-	-	0	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-
<b>Totals Underground Incidents</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28</b>
<p><sup>(1)</sup>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.</p> <p>These incidents are usually recorded in the Mountain Rescue (England &amp; Wales) Incident Report for 2013.</p>																
Surface Incidents	49	25	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	44	155
Persons Assisted	76	5	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	36	142
Fatalities	0	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	8
Persons Injured	39	1	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	22	82
Surface Animal Incidents	4	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
<b>Totals Surface Incidents</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>160</b>

### 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 those incidents where SARDA dogs and handlers were called to teams operating in other areas.
5. *Reported Standbys* are where a team is alerted to a possible incident but no operational action is taken by the team.



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## Summary of Incident Report, 2013

1. There were no underground caving fatalities in 2013.
2. There were 6 incidents where teams assisted the authorities in the execution of their duty – incidents 1, 2, 5, 9, 20 and 21.
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

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
assist police	5	5	9	4	6	29
cave diving			3			3
exposure/exhausted		2	2		1	5
fall	2	2	9	5	4	22
flooding	4	2	2	2		10
hung up	1	1			1	3
lost or overdue	11	9	7	9	5	41
marooned	1					1
medical emergency	2		4	1		7
missing person	1	1	1			3
other	1	1	1	2	2	7
physically stuck	3	3	4	2	3	15
rock fall	1	1	1	1	1	5
self marooning				1		1
unable to climb			1	1		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>154</b>

Table 2: Injuries Incurred

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Abdominal Injuries		1				1
arm/humerus shoulder	2		2			4
Chest Injuries			1	1		2
Drowned			2			2
Exhaustion/hypothermia	4	7	2	1	2	16
femur - pelvic injuries			1			1
Head Injuries	1	1				2
Knee Injuries			3			3
leg - lower/ankle			5	4	3	12
lower arm/hand					1	1
Medical condition	2	1	3	1	1	8
Other		1				1
Spine/back injuries	1		1	2		4
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>57</b>

In the 'other' row, in 2012 there was 1 incident of hypothermia resulting from a near drowning (See Incident Report for 2012 Incident 21).

4. The underground animal incidents included 1 sheep, 1 lamb and 4 dogs.

*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
CSRT	Cornwall Search & Rescue Team
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)

Team Abbreviation	Full Name
NWCRO	North Wales Cave Rescue Organisation
ScottishCRO	Scottish Cave Rescue Organisation
SECRO	South East Cave Rescue Organisation
SMWCRT	South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team
SwaledaleMRT	Swaledale Mountain Rescue Team
UWFRA	Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association
CDG	Cave Diving Group

**Copies of this report are available from the BCRC Website – [www.caverescue.org.uk](http://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.  
 Please send Email to [secretary@caverescue.org.uk](mailto:secretary@caverescue.org.uk)



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## Summary of Incidents for 2013

- 1. Sunday 20 January 2013 by CSRT at 09:00 (for 8 hours) (15 Team Members)**  
*Rinsey Head, Cornwall, assist police*  
Request by Devon & Cornwall Police to search mine shafts on behalf of West Mercia police for a high risk missing person with a negative result.
- 2. Friday 22 February 2013 by DevonCRO at 09:30 (for 4 hours) (3 Team Members)**  
*Pridhamsleigh Cavern area, Ashburton, Devon, assist police*  
Assist Devon and Cornwall Police Force Support Group with search and excavation of a small cave in the Pridhamsleigh area, that recent intelligence suggested could be a body deposition location. Nothing found.
- 3. Wednesday 3 April 2013 by CRO at 19:39 (for 4 hours) (35 Team Members)**  
*Gaping Gill, Ingleborough, hung up*  
A party of 23 cavers from Belgium were undertaking a variety of exchange routes in the Gaping Gill system when one, a French student (m, 31) studying in Belgium, injured his leg. As a result he made slow progress ascending up the Dihedral Route, adjacent to the 104m main shaft, and became hypothermic and hung up on the SRT rope. CRO was called away from a training exercise in Kingsdale and on arrival found that the casualty's companions were slowly hauling him to the surface via Jib Tunnel. He was now about 40m down, and had been hung up on the rope for two to three hours. Team members assisted in bringing him quickly to the surface for examination by a Team Doctor. Following warm air treatment for hypothermia the casualty was stretchered across the moor until a RAF helicopter arrived. The casualty was airlifted from above Trow Gill and flown to hospital.
- 4. Sunday 7 April 2013 by MCR at 17:46 (for 3 hours) (19 Team Members)**  
*Swildon's Hole, Priddy, fall*  
Caver (m48), on his first time caving, had become separated from the party he was caving with and tried to exit the cave on his own. He became dis-orientated in the wet way and whilst trying to reverse a climb out of the streamway, fell and sustained a serious multiple fracture of his ankle. The problem was worsened by the fact that the party he was caving with assumed he had exited the cave and did not take the same route out of the cave. Eventually he was missed by his colleagues who quickly searched the entrance series and located him in the wet way within five minutes of the entrance.  
  
The casualty's ankle and foot were put into alignment and was then splinted. He was placed firstly in a blizzard survival bag before being secured in the drag sheet/stretcher and carried out of the cave to the waiting ambulance.
- 5. Friday 19 April 2013 by CSRT at 09:00 (for 8 hours) (15 Team Members)**  
*mine workings at St Erth, Cornwall, assist police*  
34 mine workings searched over several days as part of a police investigation. Negative result.
- 6. Thursday 2 May 2013 by SMCWRT at 00:35 (for 6 hours) (18 Team Members)**  
*Ogof Draenen, lost or overdue*  
Two cavers (M) reported overdue from a trip in Ogof Draenen at 00:35. At round 02:00, the surface controllers received a call from one of the missing party who was still underground. He was able to use the bat hole in the rescue entrance (the Chapel end of The Nunnery) to get a mobile signal! We were informed that they had failed to find their way upstream through the 2nd boulder choke in the Main Streamway and due to a diabetic problem his partner was waiting it out. The informant had reversed the round trip to make the call. He was then going to make his own way back to the entrance. This information meant that we were no longer doing a wide search and could deploy directly to our casualty at a known location.  
  
A party of 5 were dispatched at 02:30 to locate the casualty. He was found at 03:10 just below the 2nd boulder choke in a survival bag and in good spirits. He was hyperglycaemic (not hypo) after his insulin pump had become disconnected. The casualty's own blood sugar tester gave a reading in the low 20s. In the absence of a Heyphone, a runner was dispatched to communicate this to the surface. We then had no option other than to escort the casualty out of the cave as quickly as reasonably possible. Good progress was made, but the casualty was clearly suffering. At 04:00 the casualty was able to self administer some insulin liberated from his insulin pump using a syringe. A further blood sugar test at Cairn Junction was 'off the scale' (30+). The casualty reached the surface at 05:20 and was passed to an ambulance crew at 05:30.  
  
A team was sent in to locate the 2nd member of the party, who had not yet reached the entrance series some 3hrs since the call from The Chapel. He was located in White Arch Passage and reached the surface at 06:00. All team member left the site by 06:30.
- 7. Sunday 5 May 2013 by MCR at 15:00 (for 3 hours) (8 Team Members)**  
*Reservoir Hole, Cheddar, Somerset, rock fall*  
Whilst supporting diving operations in Reservoir Hole a fall of rock injured one of the party (f) and trapped a second (m) by the hand. The un-trapped casualty exited the cave with another member of the party to raise the alarm. The second casualty was still trapped when they left for the surface. On arrival at the surface a 999 call was made and assistance requested by the two cavers.  
  
The trapped caver managed to release the hand from the rock and then made his way to the surface accompanied by others in the party. The injured hand was treated on the surface by representatives of the Ambulance service following his exit from the cave.
- 8. Saturday 11 May 2013 by CRO at 14:30 (for 1 hours) (22 Team Members)**  
*Long Churn Caves, false alarm with good intent*  
A member of the public expressed concern after a minibus was reported to be parked in Alum Pot Lane and a group (4 x adults; 6 x 12-14 year olds) seen heading up towards the Long Churn Caves in heavy rain and high water conditions. A small CRO team was sent to check that everything was OK; as the team was assembling at the cave entrance the group surfaced, safe and well.
- 9. Friday 17 May 2013 by DevonCRO at 18:58 (for 2 hours 37 minutes) (10 Team Members)**  
*RV at Paignton Library, Devon, assist police*  
Assist Devon and Cornwall Police & Ashburton DSRT with search for missing person as part of operation 'SEEKER'. The team search two culverts the third having no access past a steel grill. Nothing was found of interest to the investigation. Two gas detection units used
- 10. Tuesday 9 July 2013 by CRO at 01:52 (for 6 hours) (21 Team Members)**  
*Swinsto Hole, Kingsdale, lost or overdue*  
Two cavers (m, 45, 40) were reported to be seriously overdue after an evening pull-through trip down Swinsto Hole. The Police located their car in Kingsdale and CRO was called out. After checking Turbary Pot two search teams descended Swinsto Hole and Simpson's Pot, whilst a third searched up from Valley Entrance. The overdue cavers were discovered upstream of the final Swinsto pitch, having failed to find their way on from the Great Aven. Both were escorted to the surface, non the worse for their 12 hr underground experience.



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- 11. Tuesday 9 July 2013 by CRO at 22:45  
(for 1 hour) (19 Team Members)**  
*Thistle Cave, Ribblehead, physically stuck*  
A boy (13) was reported to be stuck in Thistle Cave after getting his knee jammed in a crack during an evening caving trip. CRO responded but on arrival at Ribblehead found that his own party had been able to extract him and assistance was no longer required.
- 12. Thursday 25 July 2013 by UWFRA at 14:45  
(for 2 hours) (19 Team Members)**  
*Dowkabottom Cave, fall*  
Caver (m26) fell on stalagmite slope near entrance. He was assisted out by colleagues. Team did not enter cave.
- 13. Saturday 27 July 2013 by CRO at 13:57  
(for 2 hours) (21 Team Members)**  
*Thistle Cave, Ribblehead, physically stuck*  
A caver (m, 16) got his knee firmly jammed in a crack whilst negotiating a side passage in Thistle Cave. CRO attended and used plugs and feathers to remove some rock to free him. He was then assisted to the surface and, after further medical checks, transported off the moor to his group's minibus near the Ribblehead Viaduct.
- 14. Saturday 10 August 2013 by CSRT at 15:00  
(for 2 hours) (3 Team Members)**  
*Bread and Cheese Shaft, Nangiles Mine, Poldice Valley, Cornwall, exposure/exhausted*  
CSRT called to provide support to Cornwall Fire and Rescue for mine explorer (m, 20s) too exhausted to climb back up the shaft. CFRS hauled individual out of shaft.
- 15. Saturday 7 September 2013 by DerbyCRO at 22:30  
(for 6 hours 51 minutes) (29 Team Members)**  
*James Hall (JH) Mine, Castleton, fall*  
Caver (f, 40) entered JH on solo trip at about 11.00. She left a friend with a "call out" time of 22.00. She missed the route in the Cartgate on the approach to Bitch Pitch and fell (probably about 12.00 midday) some 8 metres into old workings injuring her lower leg. Attempts to climb out were unsuccessful and precipitated a rock fall and additional injuries. Cavers went to JH after 22.00, found entrance pitch still rigged and raised the alarm. First team members made contact with injured caver at about 23.20 (nearly 12 hours after her fall) but could not reach her due to unstable rocks at the top of the hole. Moving kit in and making safe the hole took some time and she was not extracted from the hole she had fallen down until nearly 03.00. She was then transported back to the entrance shaft and was hauled to the surface shortly before 07.00. It then took another two hours to get all team members and equipment back to the surface.
- 16. Saturday 21 September 2013 by UWFRA at 21:30  
(for 8½ hours) (44 Team Members)**  
*Dowbergill Passage, physically stuck*  
Two cavers (m, 52, 49) became physically stuck in Dowbergill Passage on a trip from Providence Pot to Dow Cave. Rescue team members eventually freed both cavers and assisted them out to the surface via Dow Cave. A third caver (m, 61) who was with them was also escorted out. All three were uninjured and able to make their own way down to the road at Park Rash. Assisted by CRO.
- 17. Wednesday 25 September 2013 by MCR at 22:30  
(for 1 hour) (6 Team Members)**  
*Burwalls Cave, Leigh Woods, Avon Gorge, fall*  
A member of the public had fallen approx six metres into an open cave entrance. When arriving at the scene we were advised that as there was an easy walk in entrance directly to the casualty the attending ambulance and Fire and Rescue teams were dealing with the casualty and a short time later MCR were asked to stand down.
- 18. Wednesday 2 October 2013 by ICRO at 21:15  
(for 1¼ hours) (1 Team Members)**  
*Pollprughish Co. Cavan, ROI, other*  
Three cavers reported overdue. ICRO warden attended and checked car park for presence of car - none found. Cavers had failed to cancel callout after cutting planned trip short.
- 19. Friday 1 November 2013 by SMWCRT at 06:05  
(for 10 hours) (10 Team Members)**  
*Agen Allwedd, lost or overdue*  
Party of 2 overdue due to tiredness. Rescue Team met missing party as they returned to their car at Whitewalls.
- 20. Sunday 3 November 2013 by DevonCRO at 09:59  
(for 1 hour 50 minutes) (6 Team Members)**  
*Chudleigh Rocks area, Devon, assist police*  
Asked to give advice and search caves in Chudleigh Rocks area for vulnerable missing male. Missing person found deceased by Ashburton DSRT and Police team.
- 21. Saturday 16 November 2013 by CRO at 13:41  
(for 2 hours) (17 Team Members)**  
*White Scar show cave, assist authorities*  
A visitor (f, 43) on a guided tour of the Show Cave hit her head on the low roof about half a mile into the cave and fell over backwards, sustaining a badly fractured ankle. Following treatment by a CRO Doctor and paramedics the casualty was stretchered out to the surface by the team and transferred to a road ambulance.
- 22. Saturday 16 November 2013 by SMWCRT at 21:30  
(for 2½ hours) (12 Team Members)**  
*Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, lost or overdue*  
Party of 5 (m, 4f) from SUCC overdue due to route finding problems. Search teams were put in place to execute the OFD search plans, including teams entering OFD 1, Cwm Dwr and Top Entrance. As the OFD 1 party were making their way down to the entrance, and before any teams had gone underground, the missing party appeared, a simple case of not knowing the route and spending to much time looking around.
- 23. Monday 16 December 2013 by CRO at 03:53  
(for 11 hours) (37 Team Members)**  
*King Pot, East Kingsdale, lost or overdue*  
Three cavers (m, 20, 18; f, 19) were reported overdue on a trip into King Pot. While CRO was en-route a further member of their club descended the cave with survival equipment in an attempt to locate them. The first CRO team eventually found all four sheltering at the foot of Elizabeth Pitch, three hours into the cave, having become trapped by rising water following heavy rain. Additional team members were deployed underground and the three 'casualties' were assisted to the surface, with all clear of the cave and off the hill by 14.10