



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2012 - 31st December 2012

	Cave Rescue Organisation ⁽⁴⁾	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	7	-	-	1	1	1	-	3	-	-	-	1	10	-	-	24
Assisting Authorities ⁽³⁾	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	4
Persons Assisted	12	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	19
Fatalities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Persons Injured ⁽¹⁾	3	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	7
Helicopter assistance ⁽²⁾	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Animal Incidents	4	-	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	11
Reported Standbys	3	3	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals Underground Incidents	11	1	1	5	1	1	1	3	1	1	-	1	13	-	-	39
<p>⁽¹⁾Surface Incidents¹ 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 & Wales) Incident Report for 2012.</p>																
Surface Incidents	51	38	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	26	42	160
Persons Assisted	94	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	63	39	197
Fatalities	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	5
Persons Injured	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	19	17	74
Surface Animal Incidents	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Totals Surface Incidents	55	38	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	26	42	164

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, 2012

1. There were no underground caving fatalities in 2012. Incident 20 involved the deployment of 3 teams in the search for a missing child (f5) believed fatal.
2. There were 4 incidents where teams assisted the authorities in the execution of their duty – incidents 6, 12, 16 and 20.
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

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
assist police	4	5	5	9	4	27
cave diving				3		3
exposure/exhausted	2		2	2		6
fall	3	2	2	9	5	21
flooding	8	4	2	2	2	18
hung up	1	1	1			3
lost or overdue	14	11	9	7	9	50
marooned	1	1				2
medical emergency	4	2		4	1	11
missing person		1	1	1		3
other	1	1	1	1	2	6
physically stuck	1	3	3	4	2	13
rock fall		1	1	1	1	4
self marooning					1	1
unable to climb	1			1	1	3
Total	40	32	27	44	28	171

Table 2: Injuries Incurred

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Abdominal Injuries			1			1
arm/humerus/shoulder	1	2		2		5
Chest Injuries	1			1	1	3
Drowned				2		2
Exhaustion/hypothermia	2	4	7	2	1	16
femur - pelvic injuries	1			1		2
Head Injuries		1	1			2
Knee Injuries	3			3		6
leg - lower/ankle	1			5	4	10
Medical condition	1	2	1	3	1	8
Other			1			1
Spine/back injuries		1		1	2	4
Total	10	10	11	20	9	60

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

4. The underground animal incidents included 4 sheep, 3 lambs 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

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



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Summary of Incidents for 2012

**1. Monday 2 January 2012 by MCR at 21:15
(for 1 hour) (1 Team Members)**

Swildon's Hole, lost or overdue

A party of 3 entered about mid-day to carry out a traverse of the cave from the Priddy Green Sink to the Swildon's Hole entrance with an ETO of 19:30. A callout message was received at 21:25 through the wife of one of the team. First team member arrived at Priddy Green at 21:30 shortly followed by a Police Officer. The missing party's car was on the Green. Just before a search team was organized one of the missing team arrived to advise that the rest of the party were fine and making their way out of the cave. The balance of the party arrived at the Green at approx 22:15 and the team were stood down. It transpired that the team had misjudged the effort and time involved in doing this through trip !

**2. Saturday 14 January 2012 by DevonCRO at 13:25
(for 5 hours) (14 Team Members)**

Pridhamsleigh, other

A suspected body and light was seen in the lake at Pridhamsleigh Cavern – the report was made by an instructor from an outdoor activity centre. He informed Devon Cave Rescue directly - the team then advised Devon and Cornwall Police. The scene (cave) was declared a "crime scene" until further detail was known. 14 team members were tasked to support the police force group to investigate the lake. No body was found and the incident closed as a false alarm with good intent.

**3. Saturday 4 February 2012 by SMWCRT at 19:05
(for 2 hours) (18 Team Members)**

OFD I to II, lost or overdue

Party of 5m reported overdue. They were found at entrance gate at 20.30 by first party having just arrived at that location. Gate was slightly frozen. They had allowed 5 hours and streamway was reported as passable. Seems that they were slow, possibly due to a tired member in the party. Fortunate to have several experienced members of MCRO staying at the club and they were indeed the only cavers deployed!

**4. Saturday 25 February 2012 by SMWCRT at 22:35
(for 4 hours 5 mins) (31 Team Members)**

Daren Cilau, lost or overdue

A caving party (2m, f) went in at 10.30 and planned a trip to the Time Machine and possibly exit Ogof Cnwc by 21.00. None had done the trip before and they had no survey. Another party had done a Time Machine trip that day but had not seen missing party. The cavers had failed to find the Time Machine and decided to go for Prices exit. From Busman's they failed to find the connection but one had reached the Sump Bypass dig but convinced himself he was in the wrong place. This was about 6.30pm. After much ferreting about they decided to exit via Daren. Team member caught them up and they exited via Ogof Cnwc.

**5. Sunday 26 February 2012 by DerbyCRO at 16:56
(for 3½ hours) (28 Team Members)**

Bagshawe Cavern, Bradwell, fall

Novice caver (f14) tripped and fell over landing with her back across a rock edge whilst crossing the Hippodrome. Casualty was in a lot of pain and was evacuated in a stretcher.

**6. Tuesday 6 March 2012 by CornwallSRT at 15:45
(for 10 minutes) (6 Team Members)**

Wheal Herman, St Just, Cornwall, assist authorities

The team was callout out to assist with the search for an elderly male in the St Just area of West Cornwall. In conjunction with 4 SARDA Dogs, Devon and Cornwall Poilce, HM Coast Guard, and air support from the Police and Royal Navy, the area was extensively searched. Shortly after deploying an underground team to follow up on an indication from the

SARDA Dog teams, news came through that the missing gentleman had been located safe and well.

**7. Wednesday 7 March 2012 by SECRO at 21:30
(for 1½ hours) (18 Team Members)**

Chaldon Bottom Hearthstone Mine, Merstham, Surrey, fall

Explorer (f29) fell down 4m shaft after slipping while climbing off the ladder at the top. She had the presence of mind to basically check herself over and as she was not 'seriously' injured she was able to wriggle herself a short way into the mine to clear the shaft itself. She was very patient and calmly followed instructions as the cavers on the trip immobilized her legs, rigged sit harness, hauling rig and started evacuation as the rescue controllers and equipment were on the way. 8 SECRO members were on the 2 underground trips and were able to give the immediate assistance. Stretcher, cas bag and paramedics arrived as casualty just brought to surface. The ambulance crew watched as she was packaged and carried out of the entrance depression to the roadside ambulance. Several noticed shock set in the moment she was safely on the surface. Surgeon advised casualty that leaving her boot on and the way her legs were splinted saved a massive amount of work during the surgery, as it contained the bones and protected her dislocated ankle.

**8. Sunday 11 March 2012 by SMWCRT at 18:20
(for 1½ hours) (8 Team Members)**

OFD I, lost or overdue

Party (5f) reported overdue. Shortly after the rescue parties had changed one of the overdue party arrived at the club having run up the hill. They reported being lost in Roundabout Chamber then the Subway. They did find the way down out of Pi Chamber.

**9. Thursday 22 March 2012 by SMWCRT at 19:15
(for 9 hours) (46 Team Members)**

OFD I, fall

Caver (m) fell off the Shower Aven climb. Quote 'the holds just came off in my hands' is how he described the accident. He was made comfortable (the party had emergency kit with them) and two came out to raise the alarm. The caver felt that, once strapped and splinted, he would be able to self propel with assistance. The rescue did turn into a stretcher carry from Lowe's Chain. The water levels were too low to use the floating stretcher, although it was deployed, and rescue team members in the pots and slots in the Streamway justified the numbers deployed.

**10. Saturday 14 April 2012 by SMWCRT at 20:00
(for 2 hours) (20 Team Members)**

Agen Allwedd, lost or overdue

Party of 7f overdue. The person reporting the problem phoned 999 when the party did not report in at the agreed time but found that the the 999 call centre operator(s) were unaware of any procedures for cave rescue, so she phoned Penwylt on another phone while still on the line to 999. The party of 7, not the 8 reported originally – had had vastly underestimated the time required for the trip.

**11. Sunday 20 May 2012 by SMWCRT at 00:15
(for ½ hour) (7 Team Members)**

Daren Cilau, lost or overdue

The party (4 from Belgium) were slower than they expected but had no problems following the survey and enjoyed the trip. Rescue leader had spoken to the party during the week and was aware that they knew the way our call out works and they were unlikely to have got side tracked without phoning. The missing party called Penwylt at 00.55 and the team members on the way were stood down. (DP) Police control room was very clued up and helpful.



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**12. Sunday 20 May 2012 by DerbyCRO at 09:50
(for 1½ hours) (8 Team Members)**

Slintor Wood, Cromford, Derbyshire, assist authorities

Report of a suspicious object in a mine working. Object was about 3 metres down a narrow mine rift. It turned out to be a very old, sad and soggy cuddly toy!

**13. Saturday 9 June 2012 by MCR at 13:48
(for 1½ hours) (14 Team Members)**

Gough's Cave Cheddar Gorge, fall

A 20 year old female member of the public fell whilst on an adventure caving trip just off the main tourist route through the cave and suffered a suspected fractured tibia and severely bruised knee. She was treated at the scene by SWAST Paramedics and then stretchered out of the cave by MCR personnel. Avon & Somerset Cliff Rescue Team and HART assisted.

**14. Friday 29 June 2012 by CRO at 00:43
(for 1 hour) (2 Team Members)**

Sunset Hole, lost or overdue

A party of three cavers (m, 32, 25, 19) were reported to be overdue on a trip down Sunset Hole on Ingleborough. An initial CRO investigation team found the cavers heading back to their vehicle in Chapel-le-Dale.

**15. Monday 9 July 2012 by CRO at 19:13
(for 4 hours) (32 Team Members)**

Tatham Wife Hole, flooding

A party of cavers was reported overdue at Tatham Wife Hole on the side of Ingleborough. First CRO team found the entrance to the cave impassable due to flooding following forecasted heavy rain. As water levels fell CRO was able to enter the cave and found four cavers (m, 48, 43; f, 29, 28) sheltering in the first chamber. All were hauled out to the surface and accompanied down to the road at the Ingleton Granite Quarries.

**16. Monday 23 July 2012 by DerbyCRO at 13:06
(for 2 hours 44 minutes) (14 Team Members)**

Blue John Cavern, Castleton, Derbyshire, assist authorities

Tourist (f64) slipped on steps suffering severe back pain. Although a show cave, the narrow, steep and tortuous stairways present a number of difficulties. DCRO was supported underground by ambulance paramedics and members of both Edale and Buxton MRT's. Pain relief was administered by EMAS paramedic. Casualty put in a casbag in a vacuum mattress in a framed NR stretcher and evacuated to the surface.

**17. Saturday 28 July 2012 by SMWCRT at 20:45
(for 5½ hours) (30 Team Members)**

OFD II to I, lost or overdue

A party of cavers (4f) had route finding problems and turned around. After spending some 2 and a half hours trying different ways through, they had been unable to locate the way through the final choke into Boulder Chamber. They came back out of OFD 2 but no search parties had been deployed there as it was assumed that the party would come out of OFD 1 or Cwm Dwr.

**18. Thursday 6 September 2012 by SMWCRT at 17:50
(for 7 hours) (25 Team Members)**

OFD I to Cwm Dwr, lost or overdue

A party of 3 males had entered OFD1 at about 11.00 intending to do a through trip out of Cwm Dwr but were overdue. At 22.15 there was contact with the Cwm Dwr rescue parties via the Heyphone – which worked extremely well although the lost party were not there. The overdue party had failed to find their way out of Cwm Dwr, spending many hours in the effort. They then decided to wait it out at the Divers pitch. The party were later picked up from outside OFD 1 having decided 4.5 hours later to return via the way they had come.

**19. Saturday 15 September 2012 by CRO at 22:26
(for 4½ hours) (15 Team Members)**

Simpson's Pot, self marooning

A caver (m, 52) was reported overdue on a solo pull-through trip down Simpson's Pot. CRO teams searched Kingsdale

Master Cave to the Great Aven, and also descended the pot. The missing caver was found safe and well at the bottom of The Pit, having abseiled down the 'blind' shaft some eight hours earlier and pulled the rope down before realising his mistake. He was able to prusik up once a rope had been rigged and he was accompanied back out to the surface and off the hill.

**20. Wednesday 3 October 2012 by SMWCRT
(for 3 days with 76 Team Members overall on-site)
(MCRO – 16 Team Members for 2 days)
(NWCRO – 20 Team Members for 2 days)**

Machynlleth, Mid Wales, assist authorities

Search for missing child (f5). Throughout Tuesday it became obvious that any callout would require cave rescuers and those with a specialist knowledge of the area. Contact with Search Control was established. The Midlands and North Wales CRO'S were contacted and it was agreed that each team would pre-warn members and act as a single group in the event of a full call out. Areas of interest were established by Search Control (very ably led by Brecon MRT) from intelligence from the police. Areas that included mines and old workings were tasked to cave rescue.

The first tasking for the teams was to conduct surface searches along tracks and roads however after further discussions with Search Control this was changed to give cave rescue the remit to identify sites within the target area and to check them thoroughly.

At 17.00pm Friday 5 Oct all cave rescue teams stood down from the search. The controllers of SMWCRT, North Wales CRO and Midlands CRO agreed with Search Control that we had completed the tasks we had given within the target areas. Arrangements were put in place for a small team to be deployed to search specific sites Search Control may request our assistance with.

**21. Sunday 14 October 2012 by CRO at 16:15
(for 3¾ hours) (33 Team Members)**

Old Ing Cave, Hypothermia following near drowning

A caver (m, 45) on a through trip from Old Ing Cave to Dismal Hill Cave got into serious difficulty in deep water attempting to swim in the canal beyond Swift Falls Chamber. After disappearing underwater three times he was pulled out by a companion and CRO was called. The team responded and brought the casualty out to the surface via Dismal Hill Cave. Following further treatment for hypothermia by one of the CRO doctors the casualty was transported down to Horton in Ribblesdale in a team vehicle for transfer to a road ambulance.

**22. Sunday 14 October 2012 by MCR at 18:37
(for 1 hour) (2 Team Members)**

Swildon's Hole, Priddy, Somerset, unable to climb

Two cavers had been left stranded at the bottom of the 20 foot (7 metre) pitch when their companions had left the cave ahead of them and taken the ladder with them, mistakenly assuming they had already exited the cave. Their colleagues then felt too tired to re-enter the cave with the ladder. On entering the cave the rescue team encountered one of the two cavers who had managed to climb the pitch with the aid of an in-situ rope, leaving his colleague alone. The rescue team reached the pitch shortly after and assisted the cold but otherwise unharmed caver up the pitch and out of the cave.

**23. Saturday 20 October 2012 by SMWCRT at 13:03
(for 8 hours) (8 Team Members)**

Pant Mawr, fall

A 23 year old female student sustained an ankle injury after slipping from a ladder on Pant Mawr entrance pitch at about 13.30. She was part arrested by the belayer but fell 2-3m. One member of the party exited and raised the alarm via 999 as soon as he had a mobile signal. The NHS ambulance was pre-warned and turned up 1½ hrs before required and the paramedic immediately called out the new All Wales HART



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(Hazardous Area Response Team) without any reference to team. Air Ambulance was informed and was on standby.

**24. Sunday 4 November 2012 by CRO at 13:58
(for 2¼ hours) (21 Team Members)**

Sell Gill Holes, medical emergency

A caver (m, 70) suffering from a medical condition collapsed at the foot of the Fossil Route entrance pitch. Following treatment by CRO the casualty was hauled 9m to the surface and stretchered across a field to a waiting air ambulance.

**25. Friday 16 November 2012 by CRO at 21:54
(for 2 hours) (30 Team Members)**

Shep Pot, Leck Fell, rock fall

A caver (m, 50) was caught under a 'substantial' rockfall in Shep Pot (an active dig on Leck Fell), and sustained injuries to his shoulders, ribs and leg. With assistance from his caving partner he was able to free himself and make his way back up a climb to the foot of the first (8m) pitch. His companion then came out to the surface and called for help. As the first CRO team was heading across the moor to the cave entrance they met the casualty making his way slowly towards them, having managed to exit the cave under his own steam. He was accompanied back to the road.

**26. Saturday 24 November 2012 by GCRG at 16:00
(for 4 hours) (5 Team Members)**

Wet Sink, Gloucestershire, flooding

Party of 4 (m) reported overdue in wet conditions after unknown cars were seen at the cave. GCRG warden visited site and confirmed gate was open and it was probable they were in the cave. Conditions were monitored until the party successfully left cave under their own efforts.

**27. Sunday 9 December 2012 by SMWCRT at 13:00
(for 8 hours) (41 Team Members)**

OFD II, physically stuck

A male caver (43) became jammed vertically in a rift passage in the Labyrinth in OFD1. The plan was to attempt to reverse his route into the rift, with the assistance of Entonox. The alternative was to use plugs & feathers to remove the restriction directly restraining his pelvis. It was suggested that the alternate plan would improve moral. The plugs & feathers worked well and resulted in a clean cut and a significant slab of rock removed. Once released he was fed and watered, and warmed up using insulation, hot packs and the Little Dragon delivering warm moist air. He was then able to make his way out with assistance and rigging on the awkward bits, which saved 4 to 5 hours of stretcher carry.

**28. Thursday 27 December 2012 by CRO at 15:33
(for 4½ hours) (28 Team Members)**

Pippikin Pot, Ease Gill, physically stuck

A party of three cavers were descending Pippikin Pot when one (f, 27) became firmly wedged in Stemple Rift, the third of a series of tight squeezes. A member of the party came out to raise the alarm whilst the other remained with the 'casualty'. CRO responded and despatched a team in from below via Mistral, and another in at the top. Meanwhile the stuck caver managed to free herself and was met by the CRO team in Mistral and escorted out to the surface and up to Bull Pot Farm.