



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2007 - 31st December 2007

	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 MRT	Upper Wharfedale FRA	West Brecon Cave Rescue Team	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	12	-	-	4	-	-	1	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	27
Assisting Authorities ⁽³⁾	1	-	-	0	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	1
Persons Assisted	16	-	-	5	-	-	3	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	38
Fatalities	2	-	-	1	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	3
Persons Injured ⁽¹⁾	2	-	-	2	-	-	0	0	1	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	6
Helicopter assistance ⁽²⁾	1	-	-	0	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	2
Animal Incidents	2	2	-	2	-	-	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	9
Assistance to other teams	0	-	-	0	-	-	1	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Totals Underground Incidents	15	2	-	6	-	-	1	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	37
<small>'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 recorded in the Mountain Rescue (England & Wales) Incident Report for 2007.</small>																	
Surface Incidents	34	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 ⁽⁵⁾	-	-	-	-	-	14	23	-	72
Persons Assisted	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	39	31	-	108
Fatalities	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	4	0	-	5
Persons Injured	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	16	15	-	52
Surface Animal Incidents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	3
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Totals Surface Incidents	34	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	15	24	1	75

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. The surface incident handled by ICRO on the 24th November 2007 involved an injured female canyoning in the Aille River near Doolin. The rescue applied cave rescue techniques in the recovery from the canyon floor up the cliffs.

Explanatory notes on the contents of this report can be found on the web site below or from the secretary.

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, 2007

- There were 3 underground caving fatalities in 2007:
 - A caver was unable to climb the first pitch in Giant's Hole – incident 26
 - Two cavers were drowned in high water conditions – incident 28
- There was 1 incident where teams assisted the authorities in the execution of their duty – incident 11.
- 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

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
assist police	6	8	7	3	1	25
cave diving			1	1		2
exposure/exhausted	2		2	1	4	9
fall	6	6	3	4	4	23
flooding	1	1		4	1	7
hung up		1		1	3	5
lost or overdue	6	7	9	11	9	42
medical emergency		2		1		3
missing person	2			2		4
other		2	3	2	4	11
physically stuck	2	1	2	3	2	10
rock fall	1	1	1	1		4
self marooning				1		1
unable to climb	1	1				2
Total	27	30	28	35	28	148

Table 2: Injuries Incurred

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
arm/humerus/shoulder	1	2				3
Drowned			2	1	2	5
Exhaustion/hypothermia	2	2	2	3	5	14
femur - pelvic injuries	3	1		3		7
Head Injuries		1			1	2
Knee Injuries		1	1		2	4
leg - lower/ankle	1	2	2		2	7
Medical condition	1			1		2
Multiple Serious				1		1
Other		1			1	2
Spine/back injuries	1	2	1	1		5
Total	9	12	8	10	13	52

Note that the free diving incident 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 1 cow, 3 sheep, 1 lamb and 4 dogs. Further surface incident involved 1 cow, 3 sheep and 2 dogs.
- Attendance of rescue personnel at incidents has been recorded below; not all incidents are fully reported.

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of Incidents	30	33	17	25	25	29	27	31	28
Average number of people on incident	12	15	16	15	19	19	22	18	18
Average effort in "man" hours	48.5	88.25	168	82	180	112	214	89	83

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
CornwalMRO	Cornwall Mines Rescue Organisation
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
MRO	Mendip Rescue Organization

Team Abbreviation	Full Name
NWCRO	North Wales Cave Rescue Organisation
ScottishCRO	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 2007

- 1. Wednesday 3 January by CRO at 20:10**
(for ¾ hours)(10 rescue team members)
Lancaster Hole/County Pot, Casterton Fell, lost or overdue
Party of cavers (m, f) reported overdue; arrived at road head as CRO arrived.
- 2. Saturday 20 January by CRO at 16:30**
(for 2½ hours)(13 rescue team members)
Pikedaw Calamine Caverns, exposure/exhausted
Caver (m60) exhausted and unable to climb ladder on 18 metre entrance pitch. Ladder removed and casualty hauled up pitch and out of cave. Very high winds and horizontal hail on surface where haul was carried out. Also vivid sheet lightning and distant thunder.
- 3. Sunday 21 January by WBCRT at 15:15**
(for 9½ hours)(22 rescue team members)
Ogof Fynnon, Ystradfellte, fall
Caver (f20) fell on entrance pitch suffering concussion. Treated for head, neck and spinal injuries, evacuated from cave then airlifted to hospital. Assisted by GwentCRT and Central Beacons MRT.
- 4. Friday 26 January by CRO at 23:15**
(for 2¼ hours)(5 rescue team members)
Lancaster/Wretched Rabbit, Casterton Fell, lost or overdue
Solo caver (m39) on trip from Lancaster Hole to Wretched Rabbit got lost at Stop Pot and had to retrace steps. Met spearhead team at roadhead as they prepared to go underground.
- 5. Sunday 11 February by CRO at 20:50**
(for 2¼ hours)(32 rescue team members)
Big Meanie, Leck Fell, other
Caver (m18) unable to return through constriction at top of entrance pitch. Was lowered to ledge by other members of party. He was safely hauled to surface by rescue team.
- 6. Sunday 18 February by DerbyCRO at 14:25**
(for 6 hours 10 mins)(38 rescue team members)
P8 Jackpot, other
Caver (m57) suffering vomiting, nausea, giddiness and weakness as a result of suspected food poisoning. Patient was unable to remain vertical initially. He was insulated and given some time to recover (with help of i/v fluids) but when he did not seem to be improving a stretcher evacuation was begun. By the time the top of the First Pitch had been reached he had recovered sufficiently to be able to make his own way out to the surface with assistance on climbs. Supported by EMAS Cave Rescue Support Unit.
- 7. Sunday 18 February by GwentCRT at 22:00**
(for 9 hours)(34 rescue team members)
Agen Allwedd, Powys, lost or overdue
Group (m, 2f) attempting the Grand Circle trip anti-clockwise could not find way to Southern Stream Passage. After a number of hours searching, they decided to rest for 3 hours at High Traverse before reversing their route in a clockwise direction. Party found by search team just prior to their departure. Escorted out via Southern Stream Passage.
- 8. Saturday 17 March by WBCRT at 02:00**
(for 1¾ hours)(8 rescue team members)
Cwm Dwr-OFD II, lost or overdue
Party (2m,f) unable to find climb out of Maypole Inlet so returned to Cwm Dwr. Concern was raised because they were very overdue.
- 9. Sunday 18 March by MRO at 01:15 (for 4½ hours)**
(12 rescue team members)
Box Stone Mine, Wiltshire, other
Contacted by Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service following report of people banging on the mine door and calling for help. The informant reported the door was padlocked. Fire & Rescue attended and removed the lock and searched inside for a short distance before they decided they needed the assistance of the MRO. The mine was then searched by different teams from various entrances. The party was not found and by 05:40 all teams had exited & were satisfied persons were not on main routes. Consensus was to assume that the party had exited by another route. MRO team agreed with the police to stand down and await an overdue call should it occur.
- 10. Sunday 1 April by CRO at 22:22**
(for 40 minutes)(15 rescue team members)
Top Sink/Lancaster Hole, Casterton Fell, lost or overdue
Party of two cavers reported 4 hours overdue on trip from Top Sink to Lancaster Hole. Turned up safe and well whilst CRO were on route to road head.
- 11. Wednesday 4 April by CRO at 15:55**
(for 1 hour 25 mins)(13 rescue team members)
White Scar Cave, Ingleton, assist police
Member of guided show cave party (f13) unable to walk out of cave because of aggravation of old knee injury. Stretchered out of cave from foot of steps up to Battlefield.
- 12. Wednesday 2 May by MRO at 20:51**
(for 2½ hours)(15 rescue team members)
North Hill Swallet, fall
At approximately 8:30pm an alarm was raised direct to the Wessex Caving Club hut reporting a casualty who had fallen approx 6 metres and sustained substantial injury to the lower leg. Some problems establishing whether police had been advised of incident.
Team members attended casualty and administered analgesics and tended to injuries. The casualty was then hauled to the surface.
- 13. Thursday 17 May by UWFRA at 21:00**
(for 4 hours)(24 rescue team members)
Hell Hole, exposure/exhausted
2 cavers exploring cave. One (m22) became exhausted and was unable to get out unassisted. Brought to surface by rescue team.
- 14. Thursday 24 May by MRO at 16:17 (for 1 hour)**
(5 rescue team members)
Goatchurch Cavern, physically stuck
A party of young people were exploring Goatchurch Cavern when one of their number, aged 11 years became trapped when his knee wedged in a crack. Despite the efforts of the instructors he could not be freed and became increasingly distressed. Some confusion at police control centre lead to a delay in MRO being mobilised.
Spearhead party entered the cave at 16:40 and found the youth had his patella firmly wedged. After work with a chisel & small hammer what was assumed to be solid rock turned out to be flowstone on a mud base. The casualty was freed by 17:05. He was escorted to the surface and given a thorough check up in the ambulance. Apart from being bruised & shaken by the incident he was cleared to resume his stay at Charterhouse.
- 15. Saturday 2 June by WBCRT at 18:17**
(for 3 hours)(24 rescue team members)
OFD II - Cwm Dwr, lost or overdue
Party (2m) became lost in Cwm Dwr so reversed trip to come out of Top Entrance. Found in cave making their own way out.
- 16. Saturday 30 June by CRO at 15:40**
(for 1 hour 40 mins)(22 rescue team members)
Thistle Cave, Ribbleshead, physically stuck
Novice caver (m31) in led group trapped knee in narrow floor fissure whilst negotiating crawl. Freed by CRO first



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- response team and escorted to surface. (Although drills, plugs and feathers, hammer, chisels and washing up liquid were available none were needed or used).
- 17. Sunday 8 July by DerbyCRO at 15:15**
(for 11 hours 8 mins)(56 rescue team members)
P8 Jackpot, Castleton, fall
Caver (m30) slipped whilst climbing onto a ledge in the streamway downstream of the junction with the climb up to Mud Hall and landed awkwardly. Analgesics administered and dislocated knee relocated by doctor and paramedic. Knee splinted with neoprene splint. Patient opted to go for a non stretcher evacuation, which was agreed as arguments for and against were finely balanced. Even so the evacuation was a slow and painful process necessitating a lot of complicated rigging to assist on climbs, traverses and pitches. Supported by EMAS Cave Rescue Support Unit.
- 18. Monday 20 August by DerbyCRO at 15:25**
(for 2 hours)(12 rescue team members)
Giants Hole, Castleton, exposure/exhausted
Woman (55) too exhausted to climb laddered pitch. Casualty put in a harness, hauled up pitch and escorted slowly out.
- 19. Sunday 9 September by CRO at 15:13**
(for 2 hours)(30 rescue team members)
Kingsdale Master Cave, free diving
Party of 3 cavers intending free diving Rowten sumps from KMC and back. Turned right in error at T junction in KMC and found a dive line. Thinking it was Rowten sumps, the first caver (m23) free dived, expecting 1.5m sump. In fact it was the 30m 1st sump into Mud River Series. He could not turn round but managed to keep going to the far side. Having seen tag on dive line indicating 40m he sensibly decided not to attempt return but to wait for rescue. He had given signal tugs indicating he was OK but do not follow. Two others waited 1½ hrs then came out to raise alarm. First CRO team managed to get through sump 1 bypass crawl and bring him to safety before rescue divers arrived at sump. Cavers had no wet/dry suits or face masks; were wearing ordinary furry/oversuit clothing. Assisted by UWFRA incl. their cave diving kit en route and by CDG divers
- 20. Saturday 29 September by CRO at 12:42**
(for 4 hours)(24 rescue team members)
County Pot, Easegill, fall
Party of 3 descending County Pot. Casualty (m31) lost control abseiling down 1st Pitch and fell about 4m, sustaining a broken leg and bruising to the back. Had abseiled before but was only on second trip underground (both in County Pot). One friend came out to raise alarm at Bull Pot Farm. Small party of cavers from BPF went to site with grab sac prior to CRO arrival. Following treatment by CRO casualty hauled and assisted out of cave in rescue harness; short surface stretcher carry to air ambulance.
- 21. Thursday 4 October by MRO at 22:55**
(for 20 minutes)(4 rescue team members)
Fairy Cave Quarry, lost or overdue
Report of two cavers overdue. Police confirmed vehicles were parked at site. Returned to surface as MRO on route to cave.
- 22. Thursday 25 October by MRO at 22:16**
(for 1 hour 20 mins)(14 rescue team members)
Swildons Hole, exposure/exhausted
Report of caving party having problems on the 20ft pitch; one member was exhausted and unable to climb pitch whilst returning from sump 1. Confusion at Portishead control had led police to wrong contact information for MRO. The casualty was assisted to the surface by 23:26.
- 23. Saturday 3 November by CRO at 15:53**
(for 4 hours)(18 rescue team members)
Diccan Pot, Ribblesdale, hung up
A misunderstanding led to a caver being reported as hung up in water on first pitch; CRO responded and found that the situation had been resolved. However there was some confusion as to the well-being of the party who were still underground. CRO members descended both Diccan and Alum Pots and located the party (m25, m25, f20) near the bottom of Diccan Pot, all safe and well. Escorted out via their planned route of Alum Pot and Dolly Tubs.
- 24. Saturday 10 November by ICRO at 20:00**
(for 30 minutes)(1 rescue team member)
Coolagh River Cave, Lisdoonvarna, lost or overdue
Doolin Coastguard called ICRO following 4 cavers being reported overdue. The party returned to the surface as the local ICRO warden arrived at the cave entrance. They had route finding problems on their way out of the system.
- 25. Thursday 15 November by CRO at 23:15**
(for 2¾ hours)(20 rescue team members)
Notts II, Leck Fell, lost or overdue
Two cavers entered the previously unexplored Inlet 14 through a low airspace and constricted crawl in mud and water. One turned back after 20m but the other (m27) continued, feet first, and was eventually reported overdue. He was found by first CRO party approx 30 metres into Inlet 14, slowly making his way out having become stuck in mud and unable to turn round or exit. He had forced his way on to an aven about 100m in, and then waited for an hour shivering before making a second attempt at getting out. Accompanied to the surface, cold but OK.
- 26. Sunday 2 December by DerbyCRO at 20:19**
(for 3 hours)(27 rescue team members)
Giants Hole, Castleton, hung up
Called to assist caver (m50) stuck on pitch under waterfall. When team arrived at Garlands they found one person hanging unconscious in a harness a few feet below the pitch top. Second caver (m43) was beneath him on the ladder trying to push him up and a third party member was at the top of the pitch trying to pull him up. The rigging system they were using somehow prevented them getting first caver up the last bit of the pitch. With extra help and equipment this was rapidly achieved. The unconscious casualty was examined and evacuated by stretcher but was pronounced **dead** at hospital after efforts had been made at re-warming. The second casualty was very cold and tired but was able to make his own way out with help and was warmed up on the surface.
- 27. Thursday 6 December by CRO at 18:42**
(for 55 minutes)(18 rescue team members)
Yordas Cave, Kingsdale, hung up
Party of two abseiling down 1st underground pitch (6m) from middle entrance in high water conditions. One caver (m37) got hung up under waterfall as the rope had snagged on a projection when thrown down the pitch. Initially unable to free himself and seen to be struggling. Companion exited cave to raise alarm at nearby farm. Fortunately the stuck caver managed to complete changeover and prusik up; making his way to the surface prior to CRO arrival.
- 28. Friday 28 December by CRO at 00:30**
(for 4½ hours)(20 rescue team members)
Lower Long Churn, Ribblesdale, flooding
At 0030 two cavers (m33, f28) were reported overdue from Yordas Cave (should have phoned in by 2100). Investigation by CRO and Police found no car in Kingsdale. Search of roadheads/car parks located the car at Selside. Team called out at 0215 and subsequently found **two bodies** underwater in the Lower Long Churn streamway, adjacent to the upstream end of the Dam Pool oxbow. Both bodies were attached to a rope anchored further upstream. Brought by stretcher to the surface and transported to Leeds University hut for hand over to Police.