



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2018 - 31st December 2018

	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	International Assistance ⁽⁵⁾	Total UK Incidents
Caving Incidents	3	-	1	5	-	-	1	4	-	1	-	-	2	-	2	1	19
Assisting Authorities⁽¹⁾	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	4
Persons Assisted	8	-	-	17	-	-	2	6	-	-	-	-	1	-	7	17	41
Fatalities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Persons Injured⁽²⁾	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4
Helicopter assistance⁽³⁾	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Animal Incidents	4	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	10
Reported Standbys	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3
Assistance to other teams	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	5
Totals Underground Incidents	8	3	1	5	1	0	1	4	0	3	1	0	4	0	2	1	33
<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.</p> <p>These incidents are usually recorded in the Mountain Rescue (England & Wales) Incident Report for 2018.</p>																	
Surface Incidents	55	23	-	-	3	5	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	?	48	-	136
Persons Assisted	58	24	-	-	7	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	?	44	-	134
Fatalities	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	?	1	-	4
Persons Injured	42	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	29	-	76
Surface Animal Incidents	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	1	-	4
Reported Standbys	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	1	-	8
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	1	-	1
Totals Surface Incidents	59	23	0	0	3	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	?	49	0	141

Notes:

1. This row records incidents where assistance is requested by the authorities for non-caver incidents. These are identified on page 2 of the report.
2. Injuries include those assisted for a medical condition, but exclude cavers assisted through exhaustion.
3. This row records use of helicopter to evacuate a caving casualty.
4. The Cave Rescue Organisation is based in Clapham, North Yorkshire.
5. International incidents are excluded from the total UK incidents, and from the Incident Cause and Injuries Incurred tables on page 2.
6. '?' indicates that no report was received from the team.

Further details relating to this incident report or about the BCRC and its membership can be obtained from the Hon Secretary, Emma Porter via secretary@caverescue.org.uk



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Summary of Incident Report, 2018

1. There were no UK underground fatalities in 2018; however, a local rescue diver died during the Thailand rescue (incident 16)
2. There were three incidents where a team assisted the authorities in the execution of their duties – incidents 6, 10 and 19.
3. International assistance was provided once
 - One incident related to an protracted diving rescue (incident 16)
4. The main causes and injuries sustained in the UK over recent years are recorded here. The *Injuries Incurred* table includes fatalities and exposure/hypothermia incidents, but not where cavers were merely lost or delayed.

Table 1: Incident causes

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Assist authorities	6	2	2	-	4	14
Exposure/exhausted	-	-	-	-	1	1
Fall	5	5	5	6	3	24
Flooding	1	-	-	-	-	1
Hung up	-	-	-	-	-	0
Lost/overdue	8	15	3	15	8	49
Marooned	-	-	1	-	-	1
Medical emergency	1	4	-	3	-	8
Missing person	-	-	-	3	-	3
Other	1	2	1	-	1	5
Physically stuck	2	-	3	5	2	12
Rock fall	1	1	1	-	-	3
Self marooning	2	1	-	-	2	5
Unable to climb	-	1	2	1	2	6
Total	27	31	19	33	23	132

Table 2: Injuries incurred

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Arm/shoulder	2	1	2	1	1	7
Chest injuries	-	2	-	-	-	2
Exhaustion/hypothermia	-	1	2	1	2	6
Femur/pelvis	1	1	-	2	-	4
Head injuries	-	1	1	1	-	3
Knee injuries	-	1	1	-	1	3
Lower leg/ankle	1	-	3	1	1	6
Lower arm/hand	-	-	-	-	-	1
Medical condition	1	2	-	2	-	5
Multiple	-	1	-	1	-	2
Other	1	-	-	-	1	2
Spine/back	-	2	-	-	-	2
Total	6	12	9	9	6	42

5. The underground animal incidents included 2 sheep, 3 lambs, 8 dogs and 1 horse.
6. In 2018, there was a total of 2086 hours spent on UK callouts by teams, with an average of 10 team members and 80 man-hours per incident. These figures do not include resulting equipment maintenance and re-equipping of rescue vehicles. In this report, incidents are recorded where personnel have been deployed to the site; other problems or alerts are not included.



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Summary of Incidents for 2018

- Monday 29th January at 16:30 by COMRU: 6t, 5h**
Seathwaite Mine (Borrowdale), other
Mine explorers reported a very strong smell of death and decay and thousands of flies to the police. COMRU attended Seathwaite mine and searched the main levels. The smell was discovered to be coming from the "Old Man's Stage" at the bottom of the Grand Pipe, but was detected in Fairy's Stage via a side shaft. This shaft was descended to find a rotting sheep in the dead end tunnel leading off Old Man's Stage to what is commonly called the "Bait Cabin". In order to have got there it had to have fallen down a shaft, walked 50 meters along an internal level, fallen down a second shaft and walked into the dead end of the "Bait Cabin".
- Wednesday 21st February at 16:13 by SMWCRT: 14t, 3h**
Porth yr Ogof (Ystradfellte), physically stuck
A student (m14) became trapped by the knee in an enlarged limestone joint. After administering Entonox, lubrication was applied, and his knee was eased out after lifting his weight off the trapped leg. The casualty was then assisted out.
- Saturday 10th March at 21:29 by UWFRA: 28t, 18hr 11mins**
Dowbergill Passage (Kettlewell), lost/overdue
A party of cavers (m21, 22; f22, 23, 24) were reported overdue from a Providence Pot to Dow Cave through trip. A small team was dispatched to Providence Pot entrance and carried out a hasty search to Blasted Crawl. There was no sign of the cavers. A team was sent to Dow Cave entrance but was unable to proceed as the afternoon's rain had melted snow, causing a rapid rise in the stream level. A team then entered Providence Pot to search through to Brew chamber. Four members of the party were located at about 06.10 at the bottom of 60ft rift beyond Brew Chamber. The fifth member was located about 50 minutes later further down the chamber. Their way out, both forward and back, had been denied them by flood-water. All were in reasonable condition, although very cold. Due to the high water levels it was decided to move the party back out of Providence Pot. They were fed and accompanied to the surface, reaching Hag Dyke by 13.00. Here, they were assessed by a Yorkshire Ambulance Service paramedic, before being driven down to Kettlewell. They had been underground for about 26 hours. Assistance was provided by CRO and DCRO.
- Saturday 10th March at 21:45 by SMWCRT: 22t, 2hrs**
Agen Allewedd (Llangattock), lost/overdue
A party of six cavers (5m, 1f) were reported overdue from an Outer Circle trip in Agen Allwedd. One member of the party had been unable to pass a squeeze in the Coal Cellar, resulting in all returning the long way round. The party exited the cave as the first SMWCRT members arrived at Whitewalls.
- Saturday 24th March at 22:30 by CRO:3t, 3hrs**
Wretched Rabbit (Easegill), lost/overdue
Two cavers (f22, m24) were reported to be three hours overdue from a trip into Wretched Rabbit. Having alerted CRO, other cavers, staying at Bull Pot Farm, went to investigate and found that the two were still underground, unharmed, but moving very slowly. A small group of CRO members waited to make sure that all returned safely to Bull Pot Farm.
- Saturday 31st March at 00:00 by ICRO: 12t, 7hrs 45mins**
Cascades Cave (Co Fermanagh), lost/overdue
A callout was initiated after two cavers (m, f) were reported overdue. Local team members were dispatched to undertake a search, while the full ICRO team and local Mountain Rescue team were put on standby. The cavers were located lost but unhurt, and escorted to the surface.
- Saturday 28th April by CSRT**
Un-named mineshaft, St Ives, assist authorities
The police contacted the team for advice after a mineshaft opened up in a residential car park. There was a concern that the shaft may cause a safety issue for nearby residents or members of the public. A small contingent attended to inspect the mineshaft, which revealed that, despite the small 3 foot opening, the tarmac was actually suspended above a 10 foot by 8 foot shaft, dropping around 40 feet. It was unknown if it was choked at the bottom, but with the vertical shaft running through bedrock, one of the team who also works as a mining engineer was able to provide advice to the police and CORMAC.
- Sunday 29th April at 12:00 by MCR: 3t, 1hr 18mins**
Sidcot Swallet (Burrington Combe), unable to climb
A party of cavers had entered and explored the cave when one of them (m50) was unable to climb out of the Lobster Pot on the return journey. The team attended and provided an extra "foothold" so he could climb the Pot.
- Tuesday 15th May at 11:21 by MCR: 1t, 30mins**
Wookey Hole (Cheddar), fall
A member of the public (m80) slipped within the show cave and sustained minor injuries, requiring assistance to exit the cave. MCR attended and stood by to provide specialist assistance if required by the fire brigade, who were assisting the casualty out.
- Monday 28th May at 11:57 by DCRO: 11t, 1hr**
Giant's Hole (Castleton), self-marooning
A group of young people (10m, 20s) undertook a trip down Giants Hole using hand torches and no helmets. They had lowered themselves down the 8m Garlands pitch using a rope threaded through a single P-bolt attached to a chest harness. They were found at the bottom of Garlands by a local outdoor instructor who had advised them to wait while he called DCRO to help extract them. However, by the time the first DCRO members arrived they had self-extracted without incident. The team gave some advice about seeking further experience with a caving club, and pointed out some of the dangers of their chosen pitch technique.
- Saturday 2nd June at 09:36 by CRO: 4t, 1hr 45mins**
Yordas Cave (West Kingsdale), assist authorities
North Yorkshire Police asked CRO to assist in the search for an 'at risk' missing person (m50). Team members searched Yordas Cave and the immediate surrounding area. Nothing was found, nor was there any evidence that he had been there.
- Monday 4th June at 05:32 by CRO: 45t, 14hrs**
Lost John's Cave (Leck Fell), self-marooning
Two cavers (m23, 23) were reported to be more than five hours overdue from a through trip between Lost John's and Notts 2, which they had estimated would take four hours. CRO began searching both caves, along with other holes on that part of Leck Fell. Eventually, the cavers were found, stranded and off-route at the foot of Monastery Pitch in Lost John's. They were otherwise unharmed, and were accompanied to the surface. Assistance was provided by UWFRA, with COMRU and SMRT on standby.
- Friday 15th June at 21:15 by SCRO: 5t, 3hrs**
Assorted mineshafts, Jawcraig (Falkirk), assist authorities
The police requested advice on searching ground known to contain old mine workings, shafts and quarries. They were looking for a man seen to run into it and wanted to know how safe it was. The assistance of a small team of local SCRO members was offered and accepted. However, before they began



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searching the man was spotted running down a nearby road and apprehended, and the team was stood down.

14. Saturday 16th June at 19:11 by CRO: 1t, 2hrs

Heron Pot (East Kingsdale), lost/overdue

Four cavers had left a note at their caving hostel, giving a call-out time of 19.00, before going to Heron Pot. The duty controller asked a colleague from Ingleton to investigate. At just after 20.00, he found them emerging from the cave, having lost track of time.

15. Tuesday 19th June at 21:28 by MCR: 2t, 1hr 11mins

Goatchurch Cavern (Burrington Combe), unable to climb

Two cavers (m40, f40) entered the cave via the Main Entrance, and then attempted to exit via the alternative Tradesmen's Entrance. Due to the polished nature of the rock they found that they were unable to climb out, but managed to raise the alarm to their friends outside, who initiated a callout. MCR attended, with two Wardens entering the cave and providing a handline and lifeline to assist with the climb.

16. Monday 25th June, international response coordinated by BCRC: 11t, 16 days

Tham Luang Cave (Chiang Rai, Thailand), flooding

A group of twelve boys, with their coach (m11-25) went missing in Tham Luang Cave, Chiang Rai province, northern Thailand on Saturday 23rd June. Bicycles and personal belongings left at the entrance of the popular tourist cave were evidence that they had chosen to explore. However, monsoon rain led to the boys being flooded into the cave. A substantial search and rescue effort was mobilised by Thai civilian and military authorities but continued heavy rains hampered efforts to access and search the cave system, despite massive efforts to divert and pump the water. A request was made to BCRC for cave diving assistance.

An initial party of three BCRC divers arrived on 26th June. On the 28th June they made some initial dives, locating and rescuing four trapped Thai rescue workers. Diving continued, and on the 2nd July the missing party were located safe and well, but beyond several sumps and canals. This initiated an unprecedented international rescue operation, which included a further 5 BCRC divers and 3 surface support members. After days of planning, an audacious diving rescue saw all thirteen of the original party brought to safety. Tragically, one of the Thai rescue divers died during the operation.

While 11 BCRC members travelled to Thailand, there was a huge involvement from cave rescue personnel in the UK. DCRO and SMWCRT provided communication and diving equipment which was taken to Thailand; however, assistance of some form was provided by each of the 15 BCRC teams, with many more volunteers on standby to travel out if required. The BCRC committee and assistants also devoted hundreds of hours to logistics and support.

17. Saturday 14th July by DCRO at 12:39: 14t, 2hrs

Bagshawe Cavern (Bradwell), fall

A stag party were on a guided caving trip when one member (m30) slipped and dislocated his shoulder. He had previously dislocated the same shoulder. This occurred at the Gloryhole, and the party managed to get back to the Cave of Worms before sending for DCRO. The team attended, and one of the team doctors relocated his shoulder. The casualty was then able to evacuate under his own steam. They planned on continuing the stag weekend after a brief trip to A and E.

18. Saturday 28th July by DCRO at 20:19: 12t, 19mins

James Hall Mine (Castleton), lost/overdue

A party of 5 cavers was reported overdue on a trip from JH to Peak Cavern. A callout was initiated, but shortly afterwards the

party emerged, having taken longer than expected, and the team was stood down.

19. Wednesday 15th August at 22:45 by NWCRO: 2t, 4hrs 15mins

Croesor Mine (Beddgelert), lost/overdue

5 experienced cavers were reported overdue in a mine at Beddgelert, possibly Croesor slate mine. The informant had received a text at 17:25 that the group were going caving and requested a call-out time of 20:00. They heard nothing further and contacted the police at 20:40. Two NWCRO controllers were transported to the Croesor entrance by Mountain Rescue, while the remainder of team were put on standby. A search was made of the main Croesor-Rhosydd through trip route as far as the connection up from Croesor to Rhosydd slate mine. Nothing was found. The police continued to search local campsites while NWCRO remained on standby. It was later established that the cavers had exited safely and informed a person other than the informant of their whereabouts, at which point the team stood down.

20. Monday 20th August by CSRT: 7t, 3hrs

Unnamed mine shaft (Lanner), assist authorities

As part of an ongoing Police investigation, CSRT were requested to drop a shaft in the Lanner area, reported to be just 30-40 feet deep. The team duly attended and descended the shaft, finding that it was actually 70m deep, dropping further into water to an unknown depth. Just one item was retrieved from the shaft, although further investigation found that this wasn't related to the case in question.

21. Thursday 30th August at 23:10 by UWFRA: 28t, 15hrs 30mins

Dowbergill Passage (Kettlewell), lost/overdue

Two cavers (m30, 30) were reported overdue from a Providence Pot to Dow Cave through trip. Teams entered both caves, and the overdue cavers were located on the Providence Pot side of the 60ft rift. They were uninjured but both were cold, and one was exhausted. After an initial attempt to bring the casualties out of the Dow Cave end of the system, it was decided to exit via Providence. Assistance provided by CRO.

22. Sunday 2nd September at 18:24 by MCR:2t, 1hr 17mins

Box Mines (Wiltshire), lost/overdue

Two people (m30, 30) had entered the mines but were unable to retrace their route to the entrance, instead finding their way to the nearby Lady Hamilton's entrance that was gated, preventing their exit. They were, however, able to get a mobile phone signal from within the mine to call for assistance. Two experienced local cavers who know the area well attended and quickly escorted the pair to the surface.

23. Tuesday 9th October at 16:09 by DCRO: 5t, 34mins

Higger Tor (Burbage Valley), physically stuck

A member of an outdoor education centre party (m20) became stuck by the knee while weaseling. Edale MRT initially attended, but requested assistance from DCRO. One member was already attending as part of the MR response, and started to free the casualty. By the time the heavy rock moving kit was loaded onto the DCRO van, the casualty had been released and the team was stood down.

24. Saturday 13th October at 11:55 by DCRO: 7t, 2hrs 45mins

Blue John Cavern (Castleton), fall

A tourist (f20) slipped on steps and injured her ankle. DCRO were running a training session at Peak Cavern, so there was a rapid attendance by some of the team, followed by paramedics and two mountain rescue teams. Her ankle was splinted, and after administering pain relief, she was evacuated out on an ambulance chair.