



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2019 - 31st December 2019

	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	11	-	1	8	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	24
Assisting Authorities⁽¹⁾	1	2	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	9
Persons Assisted	7	-	-	6	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	17
Fatalities	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Persons Injured⁽²⁾	5	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	12
Helicopter assistance⁽³⁾	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Animal Incidents	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	3	1	-	11
Reported Standbys	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Assistance to other teams	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	3	7
Totals Underground Incidents	14	2	1	13	0	1	0	3	1	3	0	0	5	1	0	44
<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 2019.</p>																
Surface Incidents	90	30	1	-	1	9	-	-	4	-	-	-	1	?	9	145
Persons Assisted	96	12	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	?	6	116
Fatalities	6	6	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	?	1	16
Persons Injured	59	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	?	5	73
Surface Animal Incidents	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	1	7
Reported Standbys	15	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	?	1	22
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	-	0
Totals Surface Incident	95	31	1	0	1	9	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	?	10	152

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. '?' 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, 2019

- There was one underground fatality in 2019
 - A caver died after injuries sustained in a fall (incident 16)
 Additionally, there were two surface fatalities in incidents where teams were assisting the authorities in the search for missing people – incidents 27 and 31.
- There were 9 incidents where teams assisted the authorities in the execution of their duties – incidents 1, 7, 8, 10, 22, 23, 25, 27, and 31.
- 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

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Assist authorities	2	2	-	4	9	17
Exposure/exhausted	-	-	-	1	1	2
Fall	5	5	6	3	4	23
Flooding	-	-	-	-	1	1
Hung up	-	-	-	-	1	1
Lost/overdue	15	3	15	8	7	48
Marooned	-	1	-	-	-	1
Medical emergency	4	-	3	-	2	9
Missing person	-	-	3	-	-	3
Other	2	1	-	1	1	5
Physically stuck	-	3	5	2	3	13
Rock fall	1	1	-	-	-	2
Self marooning	1	-	-	2	-	3
Slip/trip	-	-	-	-	2	2
Unable to climb	1	2	1	2	2	8
Total	31	19	33	23	33	138

Table 2: Injuries incurred

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Arm/shoulder	1	2	1	1	2	7
Chest injuries	2	-	-	-	-	2
Exhaustion/hypothermia	1	2	1	2	4	10
Femur/pelvis	1	-	2	-	1	4
Head injuries	1	1	1	-	-	3
Knee injuries	1	1	-	1	-	3
Lower leg/ankle	-	3	1	1	2	7
Lower arm/hand	-	-	-	-	-	0
Medical condition	2	-	2	-	2	6
Multiple	1	-	1	-	-	2
Other	-	-	-	1	1	2
Spine/back	2	-	-	-	1	3
Total	12	9	9	6	13	49

- The underground animal incidents included 8 dogs, 2 lambs, 1 sheep, 1 goat and 1 calf.
- In 2019, there was a total of 4195 hours spent on callouts by teams, with an average of 12 team members and 93.5 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 2019

- 1. Tuesday 1st January at 14:30 by CSRT: 2t, 3h 45m**
Unnamed mineshafts (Porthtowan), assist authorities
CSRT were called by Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service for assistance. A member of the public had reported two dogs on leads running loose on old mining waste land and acting aggressively, along with a seemingly abandoned car at the nearest roadhead. The area is known to have several mineshafts and after discussions the team was deployed to conduct surface searches and investigate the shafts. No indication was found of anyone (or thing) having been down the shafts in the area, and surface searches were also negative. Subsequent investigations by the police found the dog's owners alive and well at home. The dogs belonged to a local resident, c. 1 mile away from the search area and have a history of escaping
- 2. Tuesday 8th January at 16:50 by COMRU: 22t, 5h**
Rampgill Mine (Nenthead), lost/overdue
COMRU received a report of a rucksack found at a main junction inside the mine containing clothing, as well as a direction indicator with initials and the previous day's date at the next junction. Team members undertook a fast search of the mine. They located and photographed the marker, but not the rucksack, and no cavers were found. The direction indicator had been left in error by a group who had explored the mine the previous day – confirmed by a quick phone-call to the person whose initials were on the indicator. Local knowledge also identified the possible owner of the rucksack - a known local explorer! Northumberland police contacted the person in question and confirmed they had been underground the previous day. A false alarm with good intent.
- 3. Tuesday 29th January at 14:00 by DCRO: 21t, 3h 30m**
Carlswark Cavern (Stoney Middleton), slip/trip
A competent caver (m43) dislocated his right shoulder following a slip/trip beyond the squeeze at the end of Cockle Passage. The casualty was attended by an EMAS doctor and paramedic, and his shoulder relocated before being evacuated to the surface by DCRO via Eyam Dale Shaft
- 4. Saturday 16th February at 15:07 by CRO: 1t, 30m**
Roaring Hole (Chapel le Dale), lost/overdue
Two cavers (2m) were reported 'trapped' two hours after entering Roaring Hole. A short time later they were reported to be on the surface, and no further action was required.
- 5. Saturday 16th February at 18:05 by SMWCRT: 15t, 2h**
Daren Cilau (Llangattock), physically stuck
A caver (f23) slipped into a rift in the floor known as "The Vice" around 80 metres into the entrance of Daren Cilau. SMWCRT were alerted, and two other cavers (not SMWCRT members) who had been at Whitewalls went into the cave to try to release her. When the team arrived, they found that the casualty had been extricated from The Vice by the on-site cavers and she was making her way out slowly, having hurt her shoulder in getting released. Once back at Whitewalls, the casualty was checked over by a SMWCRT Advanced First Aider.
- 6. Sunday 24th February at 15:46 by DCRO: 9t, 2h 45m**
Giant's Hole (Castleton), unable to climb
A small group (3m, 20's) were seen entering Giants Hole by a local caving instructor. They had new climbing equipment but no caving clothing/PPE. Despite the instructor's advice they headed underground, so he called DCRO. The team were just finishing a training session elsewhere so a controller went to Giants to assess the situation. Garlands pitch was poorly rigged on 9mm dynamic rope, and the party were seemingly unable to climb. A small DCRO team who were cleaning kit at base were dispatched. One of the 'cavers' managed to climb Garlands, but a ladder was rigged for the other 2 who swiftly exited, unhurt but embarrassed. They were given some suggestions about safer methods of trying caving. This was DCRO's 400th callout.
- 7. Wednesday 27th February at 15:28 by NWCRO: 5t, 4h 50m**
Great Orme (Llandudno), assist authorities
NWCRO were called out to investigate a mine/cave entrance as part of an on-going search for a missing person on the Orme. Two small mines were investigated, and a short pitch descended, but nothing of interest was found.
- 8. Saturday 9th March at 09:00 by DCRO: 21t, 2h 19m**
Alderley Edge Mines (Alderley Edge), assist authorities
Cheshire Police tasked DCRO with searching the cave and mine entrances on Alderley Edge as part of an on-going search for an adult male who had been missing for a number of weeks. The man was a 'rough sleeper' and had been identified as someone with an interest in the cave/mine entrances around Alderley Edge. DCRO searched over 30 entrances without success, although did find some potentially useful surface information. The search process was made considerably easier with the detailed local knowledge and pre-prepared search plan of the Derbyshire Caving Club (DCC).
- 9. Saturday 9th March at 22:14 by CRO: 1t, 2h**
Wretched Rabbit (Easegill), lost/overdue
A party of cavers were reported overdue on a Lancaster Hole – Wretched Rabbit through trip. The trip had been delayed due to two novices who were too exhausted to climb out. The party as assisted by cavers at Bull Pot Farm, including members of other cave rescue teams, and a full callout for CRO was not required.
- 10. Thursday 18th April at 18:14 by CSRT: 2t, 1h**
Unnamed mineshaft (Chacewater), assist authorities
CSRT were contacted by Devon and Cornwall Police to check out a newly opened mineshaft close to public areas. A small team attended, inspected the mineshaft and provided advice to the police and landowner.
- 11. Saturday 20th April at 11:14 by CRO: 15t, 2h**
White Scar Caves (Ingleborough), medical emergency
A visitor (f82) lost consciousness whilst going through the lower cave section past the steps. Paramedics from Yorkshire Ambulance Service attended the casualty, before CRO members helped with a stretcher evacuation to an ambulance at the cave entrance.
- 12. Sunday 12 May at 15:51 by DCRO: 3t, 18m**
Giant's Hole (Castleton), fall
The team was contacted by Derbyshire Police with a report of a caver sustaining an injured, possibly broken, arm somewhere down Giants Hole. A callout was initiated, but when the DCRO controller made contact with the initial caller it was reported the casualty had self-extricated and the team was stood down.
- 13. Sunday 12th May at 20:23 by CRO: 25t, 2h**
Simpson Pot (West Kingsdale), physically stuck
A party of cavers (m47, 50, 52, 56) were reported overdue on trip through Simpson Pot. The cavers had been underground for 8 hours, and were now 3 hours overdue. CRO were met by 2 of the missing cavers who had managed to exit the cave via Valley Entrance. One of their party had become physically stuck in Slit Pot. A CRO team abseiled through and assisted the stuck caver, before escorting them out via Valley Entrance



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- 14. Tuesday 14th May at 22:50 by DCRO: 20t, 2h 25m**
West Mine (Alderley Edge), fall
At around 21:00 a member of an organised party (f30) injured her ankle while walking through West Mine. The exit involved multiple short ladder climbs that she could not manage with her injury. A 999 call was made, and a variety of emergency services attended, including the Ambulance Service, the Fire Service, and a HART team. After some time it was realised that DCRO should also be contacted. A team attended, and offered technical advice and assistance. The casualty was evacuated by a combined effort of multiple services, and handed over to the ambulance service for ongoing care.
- 15. Wednesday 29th May at 15:00 by CRO:14t, 2h**
Gaping Ghyll (Ingleborough), medical emergency
A caver (m52) was brought to the surface via the winch after complaining of heart palpitations and a racing pulse. The Air Ambulance was unable to land due to low cloud, so the casualty was taken down to Clapham in a CRO vehicle and transferred to a waiting ambulance.
- 16. Saturday 1st June at 12:57 by CRO: 94t, 17h 30**
Curtain Pot (Fountains Fell), fall
An experienced caver (m74) fell approximately 6m down the final pitch of a newly explored cave, sustaining a fractured femur. The cave was unsurveyed, and the passages were too narrow to allow extraction of an immobile casualty without significant modification. As a result, neighbouring teams and CRO's extended "cavers list" were deployed to modify the passages and allow access and egress. The casualty was attended by a team doctor, assisted by advanced casualty carers. Unfortunately, due to the nature of his injuries, and the extended time needed to create a navigable way out, the casualty succumbed to his injuries and died just prior to the beginning of extrication. His body was brought to the surface, although this was extremely challenging due to the tight and arduous nature of the passages. Assisted by members of UWFRA, COMRU and SMRT. **FATAL**
- 17. Saturday 1st June at 15:52 by CRO: 24t, 5h**
County Pot (Easegill), fall
A caver (f36) fell down the 6m entrance pitch whilst derigging, sustaining and open fracture of her ankle. This incident occurred at the same time as the Curtain Pot incident (no 16) and a surface incident, so CRO were assisted by UWFRA and COMRU. The casualty was evacuated, before being winched aboard a coastguard helicopter for transfer to hospital. The team then deployed to assist the incident at Curtain Pot.
- 18. Saturday 22nd June at 16:00 by SMWCRT**
Ogof Ffynnon Ddu (Penwyllt), other
Whilst underground a novice caver (f18) had a sudden onset of dizziness, combined with no recognition of her location or the people around her. One of her group exited to alert SMWCRT, and she was assisted out by her party. Team members picked her up in the SMWCRT vehicle and returned her to SWCC to assess her further. Her episode of memory loss lasted ~ 2 hours, before spontaneously recovering.
- 19. Sunday 21st July at 15:00 by DCRO: 17t, 2h 30**
Higger Tor (Burbage Valley), physically stuck
A young person (m15) was out weaseling, when he slipped and became trapped by his knee. The initial call went out to Edale MRT, who asked DCRO for assistance. He was only just below the surface, but access was somewhat restricted. Some of the constricting rock was chiselled away, before a combination of hauling and physical manipulation freed him. He was stretchered to the roadhead, where he was checked over before making his own way home.
- 20. Sunday 4th August at 11:42 by CRO: 6t, 5h**
Curtain Pot (Fountains Fell), lost/overdue
A party of four cavers were reported overdue from Curtain Pot. The informant was concerned due to expected onset of a thunderstorm with heavy rain. While a team were assembling, there was information that four figures had been seen heading down from the cave. Further investigation confirmed that the party had left the cave safely.
- 21. Saturday 10th August at 13:55 by CRO: 6t, 6h**
Flood Entrance Pot (Ingleborough), hung up on rope
A caver (m20) was reported to be "hung up" on SE Pot, after going too low on a rebelay. He was rescued from the rope by CPC members who were running the Gaping Ghyll winch meet. The casualty had mild hypothermia, so was assessed by CRO casualty carers after exiting the cave.
- 22. Tuesday 13th August at 11:00 by DCRO: 8t, 5h**
Land near Brassington, assist authorities
DCRO were asked to support Buxton CID in a search for a possible body down a mineshaft. A small team searched a specific surface area, identifying potential locations and investigating one shaft that was accessible. Nothing of interest was found.
- 23. Friday 16th August at 20:00 by GCRG: 4t, 40h**
Bream (Forest of Dean), assist authorities
GCRG were asked to assist in the search for a missing person (f71). Initially this was a surface search, but by the 17/08/19 a request came from the Police for a full callout of GCRG to undertake searches of underground mine and cave locations within the search area. As the callout was being initiated, the missing person was located on the surface, and the team was stood down.
- 24. Wednesday 21st August at 12:20 by MCR: 4t, 1h 27m**
Wookey Hole Caves (Wookey), slip/trip
MCR were called out after a visitor (f30's) slipped and fell during the in chamber 2 during the show cave tour, landing on her hip/shoulders. She was complaining of neck pain, couldn't move, and was feeling very cold. South Western Ambulance Service and HART were also called, although the HART team were stood down when MCR arrived. A small team attended, and in conjunction with the ambulance service, stabilised the casualty before a stretcher evacuation to a waiting ambulance.
- 25. Friday 23rd August at 09:00 by DCRO: 13t, 3h**
Bickerton Hill (Cheshire), assist authorities
DCRO were asked to assist Cheshire SAR in the search for a missing person (m50). There were concerns for his welfare, and he was known to have an interest in the caves of the Bickerton Hill area. A small DCRO contingent assisted in searching underground locations as part of a large multi-agency search, which was unfortunately unsuccessful. DCRO were assisted by NWCRO due to the location.
- 26. Thursday 12th September at 16:30 by DCRO: 3t, 15m**
P8 (Perryfoot), lost/overdue
A party of 3 cavers were reported overdue from a trip down P8. DCRO were mobilised, but shortly afterwards the party emerged, and the team was stood down
- 27. Thursday 19th September at 11:38 by MCR: 4t, 5h 24m**
Ebbor Gorge, assist authorities
MCR were called by Avon and Somerset Police to assist with a search on Ebbor Gorge for a high risk missing person. Ebbor Gorge contains a number of small, short caves where it would be possible to be out of sight of a surface search, so MCR were tasked with searching the underground sites. The MCR team systematically searched all the viable underground sites without finding the missing person. The body of the missing person was



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found the following day by a surface Search and Rescue team.
FATAL

members. The group were experienced and well equipped, and once the pitch was rigged they exited under their own steam. Assisted by UWFRAs

28. Saturday 21st September at 20:35 by DCRO: 3t, 11m

Maskhill Mine (Castleton), lost/overdue

Two cavers were reported overdue from a trip down Oxlow-Maskhill. DCRO were alerted, and local team members checked the entrance. The party had been located by some friends, and were making slow progress out, so the team were stood down.

29. Sunday 29th September at 00:54 by NWCRO

Croesor-Rhosydd (Beddgelert), unable to climb

Two people attempting the Croesor-Rhosydd through trip entered Croesor quarry but were unable to find the route out of Rhosydd. They started to retrace their route, but on their return one person (m26) became partially immersed in water while crossing a flooded chamber and found himself unable to climb the lower of the two 80' pitches to exit Croesor. His companion left him and instigated a rescue. A combined group from NWCRO, AMRT, and SSSART entered Croesor quarry as far as the top of first pitch. NWCRO rigged and descended pitches and the exhausted person was hauled up. The casualty was cold, tired and hungry but otherwise OK. After some food and hot drinks, he was escorted out of the quarry and down the hill on foot.

30. Thursday 7th November at 18:45 by CRO: 1t, 1h

Jean Pot (Ingleborough), lost/overdue

A party of cavers were reported overdue from a trip down Jean Pot. As the Duty Controller was contacting the informant the cavers exited safely, and the callout was cancelled.

31. Thursday 7th November at 20:31 by CRO: 31t, 7h

Horton in Ribblesdale, assist authorities

North Yorkshire Police requested the assistance for CRO to search for a missing person (m77). The base of operations was the Village School in Horton-in-Ribblesdale. Team members descended and searched Sell Gill Holes, Jackdaw Hole, Hunt Pot, Hull Pot, and Calf Holes. As team members were nearing the completion of the first phase of the search the Police were notified by a farmer that the body of the casualty had been located on the surface. Once death had been confirmed the team assisted with the transportation of the deceased to a road ambulance. **FATAL**

32. Saturday 14th December at 19:55 by DCRO: 31t, 7h 20m

Titan (Castleton), exposure/exhaustion

A university caving group had been attempting the through trip from Titan to Peak Cavern, but turned back when the crawls through to JH were flooded. Two cavers took longer than the rest of the party, and when they had not surfaced after several hours a callout was initiated. The missing pair were located at the bottom of Titan, which was extremely cold and wet. One caver (m26) had become exhausted while attempting to prussik the bottom pitch of Titan, and they both retreated to shelter. Once DCRO arrived, it was clear that one caver would require hauling out, while the other was able to exit without assistance. While the haul was set up, the team doctor assessed the exhausted caver, and efforts were made to feed and rewarm them. The haul was complicated by the distance (140m - believed to be the longest single haul in a UK cave rescue), and the amount of water within Titan which made communication challenging. Surface conditions were also fairly unpleasant, with snow, sleet, and sub-zero temperatures.

33. Thursday 19th December at 00:24 by CRO: 16t, 5h 30

Corky's Pot (Gaping Ghyll), flooding

Two cavers (m21, 21) exploring the Gaping Ghyll system were prevented from exiting by rising water in Corky's Pot. They returned to Bar Pot to discover that other members of their party had de-rigged and exited. They waited at the foot of main Bar Pot Pitch, where they were quickly found by CRO team