



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2020 - 31st December 2020

	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	10	-	-	4	-	1	-	5	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	23
Assisting Authorities⁽¹⁾	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	-	-	9
Persons Assisted	28	-	-	9	-	-	-	11	-	1	-	-	12	-	-	61
Fatalities	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Persons Injured⁽²⁾	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	9
Helicopter assistance⁽³⁾	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Animal Incidents	5	2	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	-	-	15
Reported Standbys	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	4
Totals Underground Incidents	15	3	0	8	1	2	0	5	0	3	0	0	10	0	0	47
<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 2020.</p>																
Surface Incidents	68	54	-	2	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	50	214
Persons Assisted	85	26	-	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	50	193
Fatalities	1	6	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	10
Persons Injured	34	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	38	101
Surface Animal Incidents	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	6
Reported Standbys	9	5	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	23
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	8	2	13
Totals Surface Incidents	72	54	0	2	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	50	220

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.

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



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Summary of Incident Report, 2020

- There was two underground fatalities in 2020
 - A cave diver drowned in Lancaster Hole sump (incident 1)
 - A team assisted the police with the retrieval of a body from a well (incident 15)
 Additionally, there was 1 surface fatality where a team was called to a cave incident but the casualty was on the surface – incident 7.
- There were 9 incidents where teams assisted the authorities in the execution of their duties – incidents 5, 14, 15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 28 and 32.
- 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

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Assist authorities	2	3	4	9	9	25
Cave diving	-	-	-	-	1	1
Exposure/exhausted	-	-	1	1	1	3
Fall	5	6	3	4	3	21
Flooding	-	-	-	1	2	3
Hung up	-	-	-	1	1	2
Lost/overdue	3	15	8	7	8	41
Marooned	1	-	-	-	2	3
Medical emergency	-	3	-	2	3	8
Other	1	-	1	1	-	3
Physically stuck	3	5	2	3	-	13
Rock fall	1	-	-	-	-	1
Self marooning	-	-	2	-	-	2
Slip/trip	-	-	-	2	2	4
Unable to climb	2	1	2	2	-	7
Total	19	33	23	33	32	136

Table 2: Injuries incurred

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Arm/shoulder	2	1	1	2	2	8
Drowning	-	-	-	-	1	1
Exhaustion/hypothermia	2	1	2	4	3	12
Femur/pelvis	-	2	-	1	1	4
Head injuries	1	1	-	-	1	3
Knee injuries	1	-	1	-	1	3
Lower leg/ankle	3	1	1	2	1	8
Medical condition	-	2	-	2	3	7
Multiple	-	1	-	-	-	1
Other	-	-	1	1	-	2
Spine/back	-	-	-	1	-	1
Total	9	9	6	13	13	50

- The underground animal incidents included 11 dogs, 1 lamb, 5 sheep, 1 cow and 1 calf.
- In 2020, there was a total of 2604 hours spent on callouts by teams, with an average of 9 team members and 57 person-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 2020

- 1. Saturday 4th January at 16:56 by CRO: 40t, 13h 30m**
Lancaster Hole (Easegill), cave diving
A cave diver (m40) was reported as overdue from a dive in the main downstream sump of Lancaster Hole. Other entrances and exits were searched in case the diver had emerged elsewhere, while the sump was searched by CDG Northern Section divers. Sadly, the body of the diver was located 60m into sump. The team then undertook a lengthy and difficult extraction, before transporting his body back to Bull Pot Farm. Assistance provided by UWFRA. FATAL
- 2. Saturday 11th January by SMWCRT: 10t, 30m**
Ogof Ffynnon Ddu (Penwylt), lost/overdue
A party of cavers (m49, 50, 61, f42, 60) were reported overdue from a trip. As the team was mobilising, they emerged, having been delayed by high water levels.
- 3. Saturday 11 January 2020 at 21:56 by CRO: 50t 19h**
Large Pot - Rift Pot (Masongill), flooding
Four cavers (m19,19,19,19) were reported overdue from a New Rift Pot – Large Pot exchange trip. There had been heavy rain while the party had been underground, and initial investigations by CRO found both entrances impassable. With more heavy rain forecast, team members were put "on watch" overnight, and the callout extended to neighbouring teams. A series of joint teams entered both caves at around 10:00 the following day when water levels had decreased. The party were located in the Necropolis, in a group shelter, safe, but cold and extremely relieved. They had been hit by a flood pulse as they were about to start ascending, and had wisely waited it out. After some food, they were escorted through the connection to Rift Pot, arriving at the surface 26 hours after they had first entered. Assistance provided by DCRO, SMRT and UWFRA.
- 4. Sunday 26 January 2020 at 14:00 by MCR: 7t, 2h 30m**
Rod's Pot (Burrington Combe), slip/trip
A caver slipped while returning from the further reaches of Rods Pot, sustaining a knee injury. An MCR team, including a team doctor, attended and after stabilising their knee the casualty was assisted back to the surface and handed over to the ambulance service.
- 5. Tuesday 28 January 2020 by SMWCRT at 13:34: 9t, 5h 30m**
Cystanog mines (Carmarthen), assist authorities
SMWCRT was asked to assist with a search for a person (m55) reported missing in the Carmarthen area. Team members searched 11 adits and shafts at Cystanog on the outskirts of Carmarthen that had been identified as possible locations. Nothing found.
- 6. Saturday 8 February 2020 at 22:00 by SMWCRT: 20t, 6h 30m**
Daren Cilau (Llangattock), lost/overdue
A party of cavers (m29,23,19, f30,21) were reported overdue on a through trip from Daren Cilau to Ogof Cnw. They had realised they were overdue by the time they reached Antler Passage and decided to stop and wait as one of the party was moving very slowly, and had medical issues. SMWCRT team members searched from both directions and escorted the party out slowly via Ogof Cnw.
- 7. Monday 10 February 2020 at 13:51 by CRO: 21t, 1h 30m**
Thistle Cave, Ribblehead, medical emergency
An adult (m55) accompanying a group of young people suffered a cardiac arrest and collapsed at the entrance to Thistle Cave, which they had intended to explore. Unfortunately, despite prolonged attempts to revive him with CPR, this was unsuccessful and he was declared dead by the Air Ambulance paramedics.
- 8. Friday 14 February 2020 at 00:39 by CRO: 3t, 7h**
Lancaster Hole- Wretched Rabbit (Easegill), lost/overdue
Concern was expressed for four cavers (m23,23,20,f21), overdue from a trip between Lancaster Hole and Wretched Rabbit. Having made slower than expected progress, and realising that there was a risk of causing an un-necessary call-out, the cavers had split up at Stop Pot, with the faster two hurrying back to Bull Pot Farm. Unfortunately, they lost their way and were late back. When contacted by a CRO controller, the two at Bull Pot Farm reported the slower pair now 3 hours overdue. As two CRO controllers drove up to Bull Pot Farm, they saw lights in the distance. One ran across the fell to meet them and guide them back. The pair had also lost their way, both underground and across the fell, but were unharmed.
- 9. Saturday 29 February 2020 at 12:50 by CRO: 32t, 5h**
Aquamole Pot (West Kingsdale), fall
A group of 3 cavers were abseiling on ropes down the vertical pitches of Aquamole Pot. During their descent, the lead caver (m59) fell down the last 12 metre deep pitch of a section of cave known as the Rabbit's Graveyard. The caver was reported to have pain in his lower back, knee and ankle. He told his companions that he had mis-threaded the rope on to his descender and had plummeted down the pitch instead of making a controlled abseil. CRO team members treated and packaged the injured caver for possible pelvic, lumbar and leg fractures before hauling him to the surface. In a gathering storm, he was handed into the care of Yorkshire Air Ambulance paramedics and flown to hospital.
- 10. Saturday 29 February 2020 at 19:50 by CRO: 1t, 3h**
Alum Pot (Selside), lost/overdue
A group of 15 cavers were reported as not having got in touch with their contact by their callout time. The group consisting of one experienced caver, 2 novices and 12 first timers had entered the Alum Pot cave system at 11.30, planning only to go as far as the Bridge. A team member checked for the group's minibus at the usual parking place but found nothing. Soon afterwards CRO were informed that the party were safe.
- 11. Saturday 29 February 2020 at 22:15 by CRO: 5t, 2h**
Rowten Pot (West Kingsdale), hung up
A caver (m20) was unable to unload his short cowstail and became stranded for some hours, trapping two other cavers below him. Concerned at the delay, some of his companions returned to Rowten and called CRO for assistance. They were then able to lower a knife down to the stranded caver. Having cut his cowstails, he was able to lower himself back down to a ledge, now mildly hypothermic. CRO members rigged additional ropes, and the caver was hauled to the surface. The other 2 people were able to then exit under their own steam.
- 12. Sunday 1 March 2020 at 18:31 by MCR: 17t, 3h 13m**
St Cuthbert's Swallet (Pridly), flooding
MCR were called to St Cuthbert's Swallet after a group of 5 cavers were reported overdue from a trip. On arrival, the constricted entrance passages had become impassable due to high water conditions. DSFRS used pumps and water diversion to lower the water level and allow the team to enter the cave, where they found the cavers cold but unharmed. After further pumping the cavers were assisted out before being checked over by the ambulance service.



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- 13. Saturday 7 March 2020 at 12:57 by CRO: 24t, 2h**
Browgill Cave (Birkwith), medical emergency A caver (m21) was reported to have dislocated a shoulder above the climb in Brow Gill Cave. His companions had attempted to persuade/assist him to descend the climb, but the dislocation was such that this was not possible, so they called for help. Team members immobilised the injured part and offered pain relief, then lowered him off and assisted him out of the cave and to a team vehicle. While doing this, a team member sustained a painful ankle injury and had, himself, to be supported out and across the fell before being piggy-backed to the vehicles.
- 14. Sunday 22 March 2020 at 06:30 by SMWCRT: 13t 11h 30m**
Tre'r Ddol Area (Borth), assist authorities
SMWCRT undertook a mines search around the village of Tre'r Ddol, as part of a historic missing person investigation. 3 main mines were identified, along with a further 22 features to search.
- 15. Saturday 11 April 2020 at 17:00 by CSRT: 10t, 2h**
Unnamed well, Bodmin (Cornwall), assist authorities
The team were asked by the police to assist with the retrieval of the body of a man (55) who had hung himself within the confines of a well.
- 16. Tuesday 23 June 2020 at 18:20 by DCRO: 27t, 2h 7m**
Giants Hole (Castleton), fall
A party of 3 enthusiastic but ill-prepared young people undertook a trip to Giant's Hole. They were using hand torches, normal clothing and no helmets, and used a homemade dynamic rope-loop ladder to descend Garlands Pot. On the return, one of the party (f24) slipped while ascending, and fell with her leg caught in a loop, bumping her head. Her friends called for help. After assessment by the team doctor it was found that her head injury was very superficial, and she was hauled up Garlands before being escorted out.
- 17. Saturday 25 July 2020 at 00:20 by DCRO: 7t, 1h 40m**
Titan (Castleton), marooned
2 cavers (m21, 24) were reported overdue from a Titan streamway trip. The team were called out, and the first member on scene found their rope had inadvertently been partly pulled up by another party derigging, leaving it snagged on the shaft wall. The cavers were well equipped, and as soon as their rope was freed they were able to exit under their own steam.
- 18. Monday 27 July 2020 at 08:30 by SMWCRT: 2t, 1h 30m**
Pwll y Cwm (Clydach Gorge), assist authorities
A member of public reported cavers cars still parked in the morning near Craig y Ffynnon. Police contacted SMWCRT, who established they belonged to cave divers who had dived into Daren Cilau from Pwll y Cwm and planned to remain in the cave until 29/07/20. False alarm with good intent.
- 19. Tuesday 11 August 2020 at 21:00 by SMWCRT: 19t, 2h**
Dan yr Ogof (Abercraf), marooned
A pair of cavers (m47, f44) were reported overdue from a trip in Dan yr Ogof. There was particular concern over water levels as thunderstorms had been forecast. When cave gate was opened by the search team, the missing cavers were located on the other side. The gate had malfunctioned leaving them unable to exit. They had been waiting since 19:00.
- 20. Tuesday 18 August 2020 at 15:14 by CRO: 13t, 3h**
Bar Pot (Ingleborough), fall
A caver (f14) fell 2.5 metres whilst abseiling down the first pitch of Bar Pot. She had landed heavily on her feet and then tumbled backwards banging her head. Members of the Craven Pothole Club (CPC) were nearby and managed to haul the injured caver out of the entrance. When CRO arrived they fitted a splint for a probable fractured ankle, and after some pain relief, she was stretchered to a CRO vehicle at Trow Gill.
- 21. Wednesday 9 September 2020 at 10:50 by MCR: 1t, 43m**
Wookey Hole Cave (Wookey), medical emergency
MCR were called along with South Western Ambulance Service to a tourist (m80s) in the Wookey Hole show cave who had developed breathing difficulty. After assessment by paramedics, he was assisted out for ongoing treatment
- 22. Sunday 11 October 2020 at 17:28 by DCRO: 7t, 2h**
Cracken Edge Mines (Chinley), assist authorities
A distressed female went into one of the old mine workings and refused to come out. Mountain Rescue requested DCRO assistance, but as the team were on route, a joint DCRO/MR member escorted the police to the individual who was then extracted.
- 23. Sunday 11 October 2020 at 17:30 by GCRG: 29t, 2h**
Mine near Bream (Tufts Lydney), lost/overdue
A party of 4 cavers was reported overdue in a mine somewhere in Bream. As GCRG were preparing to deploy, the cavers reported themselves as out and safe and the team were stood down.
- 24. Friday 23 October 2020 at 17:36 by CRO: 15t, 5h**
Lancaster Hole - Wretched Rabbit (Easegill), lost/overdue
Cumbria Police were contacted by the wife of a caver who was overdue after a through trip from Lancaster Hole to Wretched Rabbit. Having alerted CRO, neither Police nor team controllers were able to call the informant back, so a team member went to Bull Pot Farm to make an assessment, whilst the team were alerted. Whilst talking to the informant, the team member saw a light heading across the fell towards Bull Pot, which turned out to be the missing caver. Once confirmed safe, team members were stood down. The caver (m55) was unharmed and had underestimated the time required to complete his planned trip.
- 25. Saturday 24 October 2020 at 15:30 by SMWCRT: 1t, 1h 10m**
Cwm Dwr 2 (Penwylt), assist authorities
A member of the public reported to the police that she had seen the gate to Cwm Dwr 2 open, with abandoned tents nearby in the quarry. SMWCRT were asked to search the entrance with them present as there were reports of sensitive information near to the tents.
- 26. Saturday 31 October 2020 at 11:45 by DCRO: 1t, 2h 15m**
Underwater pipes on River Wheelock (Sandbach Flats), assist authorities
DCRO were asked for advice regarding a potential dog rescue. The animal had fallen into the river Wheelock and had been sucked into partially blocked underwater pipes in fast-running water. A team member attended and confirmed that DCRO could not assist, but provided advice about additional netting and safety notices. These were in place on a return visit a few weeks later.
- 27. Thursday 5 November 2020 at 20:50 by MCR: 2t, 15m**
Single Way Mine (Bathampton), lost/overdue
MCR were alerted to a pair of cavers overdue from a trip down Single Way mine. As the team were preparing to respond, the cavers were located by the police and the team stood down.
- 28. Friday 13 November 2020 at 16:40 by NWCRO: 5t, 2h 7m**
Quarry near Lon Dwr (Llanllyfni), assist authorities
A farmer fell into an open quarry pit while attempting to rescue a sheep. NWCRO assisted Aberglaslyn MRT with the rigging and hauling of both casualties.
- 29. Thursday 19 November 2020 at 01:31 by MCR: 5t, 2h 35m**
Box Stone Mines (Box), lost/overdue
A party of 4 explorers entered Box Stones Mines, and made their way through to the Bat Grill entrance, which is permanently bolted. Unable to retrace their steps, they managed



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to get mobile phone signal and called for assistance. A small MCR team attended, and after passing space blankets through the entrance, escorted them out via an alternative route

30. Tuesday 8 December 2020 by DCRO at 22:09: 20t, 2h 40m

Giant's Hole (Castleton), exposure/exhausted

A party of 6 non-cavers (m33,28,27,25,29, f25) undertook a trip into Giant's Hole, down to the Vice in the Crabwalk. They were wearing surface walking kit and climbing harnesses, and had only been caving once before. The water conditions were high due to snowmelt. On returning to Garland's Pot, 2 members ascended using prussik knots, but the next (m27) became stuck on the ascent for around 35 minutes. His friends rigged a second rope to him, and cut the rope he was stuck on, and he was lowered back down. By now he was extremely cold and 'lost consciousness' on a few occasions. His friends raised the alarm, which initially went to Buxton MRT. When DCRO arrived, the 4 people stuck below Garlands were put into a Bivi shelter and the coldest casualty wrapped in a casbag. He was given food and warm drinks, and began to improve, having been looking very unwell when the team first arrived. After assessment by a DCRO doctor, all 4 were hauled up and escorted out to the surface, where they were checked. The coldest casualty had a very fast heart rate, and so was handed over to EMAS for ongoing assessment.

31. Sunday 20 December 2020 at 06:22 by DCRO: 18t, 3h 23m

Cumberland/Wapping Mine (Matlock Bath), slip/trip

A group spent a night camping underground in Wapping Mine. While exiting, one member (f38) slipped falling a few metres and hitting her head and arm. Her companions called East Midland Ambulance Service, who in turn contacted DCRO. The casualty was only just inside the entrance, although the far side of a wall with only ~60cm space. DCRO members and the HART team attended to the casualty, while other DCRO team members enlarged the route out. The casualty had an extremely painful shoulder and arm, and after significant pain relief she was extricated on a stretcher before walking to the ambulance for transfer to hospital

32. Tuesday 29 December 2020 at 10:00 by GCRG: 2t, 39m

Unnamed stone mine, Nailsworth (Gloucestershire), assist authorities

During a search for a missing vulnerable person (m35) in the Nailsworth area, smoke was seen coming out of an entrance. GCRG were asked to search the mine in case the person was there, but nothing of interest was found.