



British Cave Rescue Council

The representative body for voluntary underground rescue in the British Isles

Incident Report for Period 1st January 2023 - 31st December 2023

	Cave Rescue Organisation ⁽⁴⁾	Cumbria Ore Mines RU	Derbyshire CRO	Devon CRO	East Cornwall SRT	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	West Cornwall SRT	TOTALS
Caving Incidents	2	-	5	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	5	-	1	-	17
Assisting Authorities ⁽¹⁾	1	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	7
Persons Assisted	7	-	5	-	-	-	3	1	-	4	-	-	1	-	1	-	22
Fatalities	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	3
Persons Injured ⁽²⁾	1	-	3	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	7
Helicopter assistance ⁽³⁾	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Animal Incidents	4	-	2	1	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	-	2	-	2	-	17
Reported Standbys	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	2	-	-	1	2	2	-	14
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	3
Totals Underground Incidents	7	1	8	2	1	2	2	1	1	5	0	0	7	1	3	0	41
<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 2023.</p>																	
Surface Incidents	80	1	-	-	34	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	34	38	18	206
Persons Assisted	61	1	-	-	12	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	29	34	2	141
Fatalities	6	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	13
Persons Injured	49	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	29	1	115
Surface Animal Incidents	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	9
Reported Standbys	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Assistance to other teams	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	4
Totals Surface Incidents	86	1	0	0	34	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	40	18	215

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, 2023

1. There were 2 underground fatalities in 2023; incidents 2 (bad air) and 17 (fall). In addition, team divers were asked to assist in the retrieval of a body (incident 18, drowning)
2. There were 7 incidents where teams assisted the authorities in the execution of their duties – incidents 2, 4, 10, 12, 17, 18 and 19.
3. The main causes and injuries sustained over recent years are recorded here. The *Injuries Incurred* table includes fatalities and exhaustion/hypothermia incidents.

Table 1: Incident causes

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Assist authorities	9	9	8	3	7	36
Cave diving	-	1	-	-	-	1
Exposure/exhausted	1	1	1	1	-	4
Fall	4	3	2	2	1	12
Flooding	1	2	1	-	1	5
Hung up	1	1	1	-	-	3
Lost/overdue	7	8	4	13	10	42
Marooned	-	2	-	1	1	4
Medical emergency	2	3	-	1	2	8
Other	1	-	-	-	-	1
Physically stuck	3	-	-	1	2	6
Rock fall	-	-	3	1	-	4
Self marooning	-	-	-	-	-	0
Slip/trip	2	2	2	1	1	8
Unable to climb	2	-	1	1	-	4
Total	33	32	23	25	25	138

Table 2: Injuries incurred

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Arm/shoulder	2	2	1	1	-	6
Drowning	-	1	-	-	-	1
Exhaustion/hypothermia	4	3	3	1	2	13
Femur/pelvis	1	1	-	1	1	4
Head injuries	-	1	-	-	-	1
Knee injuries	-	1	-	-	1	2
Lower leg/ankle	2	1	3	-	-	6
Medical condition	2	3	-	1	2	8
Multiple	-	-	2	1	1	4
Other	1	-	3	-	1	5
Spine/back	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	13	13	12	5	8	51

4. The underground animal incidents included 7 dogs, 5 sheep, 3 lambs, 2 deer, a calf and a bullock.
5. In 2023, there was a total of 2195 hours spent on callouts by teams, with an average of 11 team members and 53 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 2023

- 1. Saturday 28th January at 19:06 by SMWCRT: 12t, 5h 16m**
Ogof Ffynnon Ddu (Penwylt), lost/overdue
Two cavers (m20, 20) planned a trip from Top Entrance, to OFD 3, and then exiting via OFD 1. They experienced route-finding problems towards OFD 3, so headed towards OFD 1. They were seen in the Marble Showers streamway, but then failed to emerge by their arranged callout. Initial search teams were dispatched, and a wider callout started in case a wider search was required. The cavers were located safe and well in the Cwm Dwr area, having been unable to find their way through to OFD 1. They were escorted out via Cwm Dwr.
when the caver was back at SWCC HQ and deemed safe and well.
- 2. Thursday 23rd March at 04:00 by SMRT: 8t, 6h**
Ayton Monument Mine (Great Ayton), assist authorities
SMRT were contacted by Cleveland MRT as part of a missing person search. Intelligence suggested he may have gone into Ayton Monument Mine, which has a known history of low oxygen levels. The mine was searched until bad air was encountered. A commercial mine rescue team using breathing apparatus then entered the system and located the casualty (m24), who was deceased. Oxygen levels were around 12% in the area he was located. FATAL
- 3. Saturday 1st April at 21:00 by CRO : 33t, 8h 45m**
Lancaster Hole (Easegill), lost/overdue
A party of 6 cavers were reported overdue from a planned Lancaster Hole to County Pot through trip. Initial search parties entered via County Pot, but found nothing, and a wider callout was initiated. Two of the group then emerged from Lancaster Hole, and it transpired that they had experienced route-finding difficulties. The remaining 4 cavers were hauled out of Lancaster, tired but unharmed. Assisted by SMRT and UWFRA.
- 4. Saturday 8th April at 09:37 by DCRO: 5t, 1h**
Tansleydale (Litton), assist authorities
DCRO were contacted by the police after walkers reported hearing shouts for help. Some local team members attended and undertook a brief search of mineshafts in the vicinity, finding nothing. DCRO were stood down, and Buxton MRT undertook a surface search, again with nothing found
- 5. Tuesday 11th April at 13:50 by SMWCRT : 10t, 1h 20m**
Ogof Ffynnon Ddu 2 (Penwylt), physically stuck
A caver (f20) was reported to be trapped by their leg near the Corkscrew area in Top Entrance. Initial attempts to free the person had not been successful so a call out was initiated. Just as the initial underground team was about to depart the message was received that the trapped caver had managed to free themselves. The team stood down
- 6. Thursday 13th April at 13:17 by CRO: 16t, 2h**
White Scar Cave (Ingleborough), medical emergency
A visitor (m, 60), with known medical conditions, was suspected of having a possible heart attack after climbing the steps into the Battlefield Chamber at the extremity of White Scar Cave. Team members, fire officers and a police officer attended and the patient was found to be conscious and breathing. A team doctor assessed him and agreed that he could be walked gently back to the cave entrance where he was handed over to YAS paramedics.
- 7. Saturday 6th May at 18:29 by ICRO: 11t, 10h**
Aillwee Cave (Burren), flooding
3 people were reported overdue from a maintenance trip into the wild section of the cave beyond the canals, where they had gone to service some pumps. During their trip there had been heavy rain, and the canals had flooded to the roof, sealing them inside. The dry cave was searched, before an ICRO diver located them safe, but stranded, beyond the sumped canals. Food and warming kit was dived through to them, and an attempt made to pump the water out, but to little avail. After the water level dropped, the casualties returned to the surface, cold and tired, but uninjured.
- 8. Wednesday 24th May at 18:30 by DCRO: 1t, 30m**
Mandale Mine (Lathkill Dale), lost/overdue
A party of 3 cavers were reported overdue from a trip in Mandale Mine. One local team member was sent to investigate as mobile reception is poor in the area, but on his arrival the party were safely out.
- 9. Sunday 28th May at 18:02 by SMWCRT: 4t, 1h 30m**
Tunnel Cave (Black Mountain), marooned
Two cavers (m42, 53) were reported overdue from a trip into Tunnel Cave. When the tam arrived at the entrance, it turned out that the exit gate had failed to open from the inside, trapping the cavers. Once the gate was opened by the rescuers, the party exited uneventfully.
- 10. Wednesday 5th July at 02:46 by GCRG: 2t, 3h**
Unnamed mines (Nailsworth), assist authorities
GCRG were asked to assist in the search for a missing person. The area of interest had a number of caves and mines that required checking, although nothing was found.
- 11. Wednesday 5th July at 14:16 by UWFRA: 30t, 5h 27m**
Goyden Pot (Nidderdale), slips/trips
UWFRA were called by North Yorkshire Police to reports of a novice caver (m17) who had slipped and injured his knee while on a school caving trip. The



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leaders had done an excellent job in getting him as close to the entrance as possible, meaning that when the team arrived a reasonably quick extraction was possible. He was hauled up a short pitch and then carried to the entrance where he was placed in the school minibus for onwards travel. SMRT and CRO were put on standby, and Yorkshire Water were contacted to ensure that there were no releases planned from the Scar House Reservoir.

- 12. Thursday 6th July at 18:10 by ECSRT: 22t, 2h 35m**
Mineshaft (Tywardreath Highway), assist authorities
A high-risk missing person (m30) fell down a disused mineshaft before contacting police. The casualty was assessed by paramedics, who identified potential pelvic injuries. Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service then led a rope rescue, assisted by ECSRT, before the casualty was then carried to a waiting air ambulance.
- 13. Sunday 30th July at 21:07 by SMWCRT: 5t, 1h 30m**
Daren Cilau (Llangattock), lost/overdue
Two cavers (m30, 36) were reported overdue on a through trip from Daren Cilau to Ogof Cnwc. They were located safely, having taken longer than expected.
- 14. Sunday 6th August at 16:17 by DCRO: 4t, 23m**
Black Rabbit Cave (Pindale), lost/overdue
A caver was reported overdue after passing a series of tight squeezes in Black Rabbit Cave. His colleague contacted DCRO, but as the team were loading engineering equipment onto the vehicle he emerged, having lost track of the time, and the team were stood down.
- 15. Saturday 19th August at 15:25 by NWCRO: 20t, 7h 22m**
Croesor/Rhosydd slate mines (Beddgelert), lost/overdue
Two cavers attempting Croesor-Rhosydd through trip were unable to cross Croesor final chamber because they were unable to retrieve the boat for the flooded chamber crossing. They started to return to the Croesor entrance, but one caver (m33) was unable to ascend the rope on Croesor top pitch. NWCRO teams were transported to the entrance by AMRT and vehicle from GoBelow. The casualty was easily hauled up the 25m pitch and escorted to the surface.
- 16. Wednesday 23rd August at 11:53 by DCRO: 15t, 4h**
Blue John Caverns (Castleton), medical emergency
A tourist (m72) suffered a medical episode and brief collapse while climbing the steps from the bottom of the show cave. He had significant previous health problems, including dementia, which made assessment challenging, but it was likely an exacerbation of a pre-existing abdominal problem. He was reviewed by the team doctor and EMAS crew, before being evacuated on an ambulance chair for ongoing hospital assessment.
- 17. Sunday 27th August at 10:36 by CRO: 25t, 11h 30m**
Gaping Gill (Ingleborough), assist authorities
CRO were requested by police to search for high risk missing person whose car had been found in Clapham. Initial surface searches were undertaken in the vicinity of Clapham as per police search protocol. 2 cavers were then sent to check Gaping Gill Main Chamber, entering by Bar Pot entrance. The body of the casualty was found under the waterfall in the main chamber. Initially police wished to be lowered down to casualty but they were advised against it. Additional cavers were sent in with a bodycam (supplied by the police) to record the scene, before the casualty's body was hauled out via Jib Tunnel, and transported in a CRO vehicle to Clapham. FATAL
- 18. Saturday 2nd September at 08:30 by SMWCRT: 4t, 6h**
Sgwd y Pannwr Waterfall (River Mellte), assist authorities
The team were asked to assist Central Beacons MRT to recover the body of a casualty (m28) from the deep pool below Sgwd y Pannwr Waterfall in the River Mellte. 3 Cave Rescue Divers and a Team Warden attended the scene and recovered the body which was at the bottom of the pool below the usual jumping ledge. Assisted by MCR. FATAL
- 19. Monday 4th September at 16:08 by DevCRO: 11t, 4h 23m**
Numerous small caves (Chudleigh), assist authorities
The team were asked to assist DSRT Ashburton with a search for a missing person. There were a number of cave entrances in the vicinity, which were checked by the team without finding anything of interest.
- 20. Saturday 9th September at 15:06 by DCRO: 18t, 4h**
Peak Cavern (Castleton), lost/overdue
A caver (m59) on a group trip to Moss Chamber decided to turn back before the rest of his party. He had planned to wait for them at the Upper Gallery junction, but took a wrong turn and ended up in Toadstool Aven. His fellow cavers raised the alarm when they exited, and several search parties were deployed to search likely locations. Once found, he was able to make his own way out with guidance.
- 21. Friday 17th November at 19:19 by NWCRO: 19t, 5h 20m**
Croesor/Rhosydd slate mines (Beddgelert), lost/overdue
In a recurring theme, two cavers (m30, f30) were reported overdue from a through trip. Search parties were dispatched to both entrances, and the overdue party was found quickly at the bottom of first pitch in Croesor. They had encountered problems with the boat, with one member swimming across the lake to retrieve it. Having then failed to find the Rhosydd exit they had returned to Croesor, but were unable to ascend the last pitch out. They were assisted up the pitch and out of the Croesor entrance.



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22. Saturday 9th December at 20:30 by MCR: 4t, 4h 15m

Brownes Folly Mine (Monkton Farleigh), fall

MCR were called to an experienced mine explorer (m55) who had suffered a fall in Brownes Folly Mine. He sustained a leg injury, and was unable to weight bear. A couple of MCR members were already on scene, and were joined by further experienced MCR members and several South West Ambulance Service HART team members. The HART team were escorted to the casualty where he was assessed and given pain relief, before being stretchered to the surface and handed over to a waiting ambulance.

23. Thursday 28th December at 18:05 by DCRO: 40t, 5h 45m

Giant's Hole (Castleton), lost/overdue

A party of 3 cavers (m43,15, f46) were reported overdue from a Giant's Round trip. The water levels were generally high, but not excessive for winter. Search parties were deployed in both directions on the Round Trip and the cavers were located at the bottom of Maggin's Rift. They had mistaken the connection to Oxlow as the Giant's Windpipe, and concluded it was impassable, but had concerns that the Crabwalk cascades would be too high to climb out, so had waited for assistance. 2 members of the party had Stage 1 hypothermia, but after some food and rewarming they were assisted out via the Windpipe, and hauled up Garlands.

24. Saturday 30th December at 20:59 by SMWCRT: 5t, 56m

Ogof Draenen (Blaenavon), lost/overdue

Two cavers (m30,30) were reported overdue from a trip in Ogof Draenen. The callout had been left with a party member's father for 16:30, but he had waited until 20:30 before calling SMWCRT. Whilst further details were being established, the lost party surfaced and cancelled the callout. The reason for being so overdue was not clear.