

Caving

The majority of caving trips undertaken are to give an insight into the safe practices of caving and potholing at an introductory and then progressive level as required.

All advanced trips will normally be led by Mike or Ruth or appropriately qualified cavers according to NCA guidelines.

Be sure that you know the cave and routes within it before you embark on a trip.

Check weather conditions and suitability of the cave for the group with Mike.

First Aid kits, survey, necessary safety equipment (rope, slings, 3 crabs minimum, spare lighting) to be carried on all trips.

Check that the group is appropriately equipped at the centre before leaving for the cave site. Check in particular footwear (wellingtons provided) and fitting of caving suits. No persons to be taken underground in training shoes whatsoever.

Ensure that the details of the trip are entered on a trip log sheet. including number, destination, intended trip, time in/out, leaders names.
Allow for transport time back to the centre. Note route taken.

Ensure that the lamps are fully operational.

All caving instructors and staff will be given ample opportunity to fully familiarise themselves with the caves to be used, routes within them, access arrangements, specialist equipment or techniques to be employed within them. These will be covered in detail on Staff training sessions regardless of whether or not individuals hold relevant NCA qualifications.

Cave Rescue Call Out Procedure

For groups which are late/overdue from trips sent out by Country Wide Weekends.

1. If a party has not returned within **40 minutes** of its due time, prepare a recce trip. Organise personal equipment, check group details (age ability, special needs?), destination, prepare transport. Is the group likely to be a particularly slow group? Busy time of year? School activity week? Other cave users?

2. Leave for cave via travel route designated **1 hour** after return time if nobody has returned. Be sure to use the same route to the cave location as group transport will use. Be on the look out for the group vehicle enroute in case of break down or traffic hold-ups.

3. Initiate call out with MRO(see MRO Call out procedure below) if nobody is found at parking area or cave entrance but vehicle is present.

Common sense must prevail. At peak tourist times traffic can delay a group upto 45 minutes travelling time to Burrington or Priddy. This needs to be taken into account. A simple call to a Priddy MRO warden to verify whether group transport is still present on the green might be advisable where heavy road congestion is anticipated.

4. Inform Mike or Ruth as soon as is practically possible.

CAVE RESCUE CALL OUT PROCEDURE

Go to the nearest telephone and DIAL 999 and ask for POLICE. Then ask POLICE for CAVE RESCUE. Give the number of telephone and location. WAIT AT THE TELEPHONE until you are contacted by an MRO WARDEN. Give information CLEARLY AND CONCISELY.

DO NOT USE THE EMERGENCY NUMBER FOR GENERAL ENQUIRIES i.e.: overdue parties, etc. Use the following Police Control Numbers:

North Somerset, South Somerset, S Glos: Taunton Police 01823-337911

(All areas formally under Avon).

Wiltshire: Swindon Control:01793-528111

All incidents to be fully logged in Staff Log book and were appropriate the accident book.

Procedure:

1. Introduce yourself
2. Run through the essential safety aspects of the equipment and it's operation. Inform the group of the safety information left with a non-caving call out person. and it's purpose. Also indicate what safety equipment you carry. First aid, spare light, bulbs, slings, rope and harness as appropriate.
3. Briefly explain the sequence of events that the group can expect including length of travel time, walk to cave and any specific details that you wish to bring to their attention. i.e.: On arrival you will explain about lights, special approach details, busy roads etc.
4. Ensure that everyone is fully aware of their own light operation. Particular care with foreigners.
5. Go through the official Rescue Call out procedure. Highlighting the closest phone location.
6. Explain where the group is going and how to pass information back to fellow members of the group. Make the group aware of the sensitive nature of the cave environment and the need for access and conservation of the underground environment. Where appropriate the potential contamination of underground water and the ensuing health hazards. (see current weal's disease literature).
7. Give information about the cave as you are entering the system. Some potted history.
8. Proceed with the route paying particular attention to explain manoeuvres as they arise and the importance of working as a team underground.
9. Always use a hand-line for small children, be aware that what might seem straightforward for one guest might be more demanding for another.
10. Watch the entire group and ensure that everyone is enjoying the trip. If any group member is uncertain and unwilling to proceed do not insist upon continuing. Rather explain the situation and take the appropriate action; an alternative route, reassurance as necessary. It maybe a shorter way out by carrying on than returning the way you have come. This ma need to be explained carefully. Be patient and flexible.

On completion of the trip and return to base be sure to sign in and log off the trip. Too often panic and unnecessary rescue call outs are due to improper record keeping!

Techniques

All instructors will be expected to be fully conversant with:

Conservation of the cave environment.
Basic first aid underground.
Rescue call out procedures.
Safe rigging of small climbs/scrambles with a hand-line.
Navigation underground and use of surveys.
Simple operation and maintenance of lamps.

For NCA approved leaders; the appropriate current reading list and content thereof. (Information yellow folder-NCA course details/syllabus)