

12. In a Dark, Dark Cave



Introduction

Cave rescue is a very specialist area of search, usually undertaken in moorland or mining areas and not for the faint hearted! Cave rescue rescues lost spelunkers, nosy children and trapped miners amongst others.

Activities

All ages

- Each team must rescue a casualty from a 'cave' system.
- Each group is timed in getting the casualty out from the 'cave' and time penalties can be added for every scream or swear word from the casualty!

Equipment

If you don't have access to a handy cave system, this can also be done at an activity centre in an above ground structure, or, simply make your own using whatever you have available – a stage, tables, sheets, blankets, tents, ropes, planks of wood, etc!

Some basic first aid equipment and a basic stretcher which can be home made in advance by teams or leaders.

Safety equipment such as helmets (if indoors this can be bike/canoe / skateboard helmets just to create the atmosphere), torches and even a smoke machine if you're feeling mean!

Setup

Easily done in patrols. Place a casualty somewhere in the cave system with the difficulty of the location and recovery dependent on your participants.

If a real cave is being used ensure you have the appropriate safety equipment and experienced leaders.

To build your own cave:

- Use an under stage area, a cellar or lots of tables covered with



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tarpaulins or blankets.

- A line of covered tables makes a good entrance.
- It must be completely dark – if indoors, once setup, turn off all the lights in the hall.
- Place a ‘casualty’ inside and send in your ‘rescue team’.
- The ‘rescue’ team’ should have head torches and any other kit that is available – helmets, ropes etc to increase the realism.
- Set the degree of injury to suit your group –the casualty should make plenty of noise any time their rescuers actions make their injuries hurt!
- Increase the tension by warning of roof collapses, imminent flooding etc and then start banging on the ‘roof’ or firing small water pistols!
- If you have a smoke machine, use it!

Acknowledgement is made that this cave rescue activity has been taken from The Scout Association Programmes Online tool – author unknown.

Further information

Cave rescue is a highly specialised activity to recover and treat injured, trapped or lost cave explorers.

Cave rescue borrows elements from firefighting, confined space rescue, rope rescue and mountaineering but has also developed its own special techniques and skills for performing work in conditions that are almost always difficult and demanding. Normal emergency staff are rarely taken underground, instead experienced cavers who take part in regular training are called.

Cave rescues are slow, deliberate operations that require a high level of teamwork and good communications. The extremes of the cave environment (air temperature, water, vertical depth) dictate every aspect of a cave rescue. Therefore rescuers must adapt skills and techniques that are as dynamic as the environment they operate in.

For excellent information and background on UK cave rescue visit the [British Cave Rescue Council](http://www.caverescue.org.uk/) website: <http://www.caverescue.org.uk/>. They also have a great fact sheet here: <http://www.caverescue.org.uk/ABOUT/AboutARescue.pdf>.

You’ll find information to help you build your scenario and cave relating to: typical causes of cave rescue; How a rescue is initiated; What happens when casualties are reached; At the site; Handling the rescue; Typical obstacles; and After the rescue.

You might be lucky and have a local cave rescue team or friendly potholer / spelunker / caver who you can come along to talk about their experiences; ask around and don’t forget to ask County. Now, build a ‘cave’ or book a session at an activity centre and get plotting!