

Risk Assessment – Reading University Caving Club (RUCC)

Risk Assessment Number 3 made by James Bouchard 24/10/03

(Number 1 made initially by Andy Rumming 15/5/97, re-typed by Sarah Brocklebank 15/10/00, number 2 made by Jonathan Majewicz 01/12/02)

The activity assessed is Caving; the vertical and horizontal exploration of natural and man-made underground voids, and related training; ladder climbing and Single Rope Technique at climbing walls and training centres.

Risk / Hazard / Danger	Controls in Place
Inappropriate conduct by members and in particular novice members	All members read and sign the Caving Club Code of Conduct and are responsible for familiarising themselves with the Caving Club Trip Procedures Trip leader(s) gives a safety briefing prior to entering any cave system or training area Trip Procedures differ according to the lowest level of caver present on each trip – see Trip Procedures for more information
Physical injury, exhaustion, light failure, hyperthermia, dehydration	Every trip carries a ‘Leader Kit’ containing basic first aid kit, spare bulbs, emergency snap-lights and whistle All trip members take on a sufficient amount of food prior to caving and also take on fluids to avoid dehydration All trip members carry an emergency survival bag and spare energy supplies Trip leader(s) ensures the RUCC large first aid kit is on the minibus or relevant vehicle parked outside the cave system
Water (including rain, snow and tidal conditions), static and flowing sumps – can result in drowning, exposure or water borne infections.	Trip leader(s) consults weather forecasts and observes local conditions Trip leader(s) gains knowledge of how flood prone the system is from guide books / locals Appropriate clothing is worn by all trip members Trip members inform trip leader(s) if they can not swim Trip leader(s) gives a safety briefing about potential hazards including water borne diseases and every trip carries a basic first aid kit.
Pitches – vertical sections of cave where you could fall, be hit by falling objects or become suspended (stuck) on a rope, and drops of height at a climbing wall	The layout of the cave is known by the trip leader(s) Experienced members rig and supervise the pitches and climbing wall areas Life-lines and harnesses are always used on electron ladders Helmets are always worn by all trip members when caving or training at height Hand-lines are used on free-climbs where advised or required Training is offered to all members for ladder climbing and is compulsory for Single Rope Technique - see Trip Procedures for more information Instructors in training are Experienced members who have at least 11 months experience in using the techniques to be taught
Rock falls, unstable rocks and false flooring	Trip leader(s) gains knowledge of the cave system from guide books and experience Helmets are always worn by all trip members Cavers are advised to keep clear of pitches and other dangerous areas by experienced members
Route negotiation failure	Experienced and knowledgeable members lead trips Surveys and descriptions read and internalized by trip leader(s) Surveys and descriptions carried when caving in more complex systems The trip leader will note the route taken at junctions and ensure that it is recognisable on return – in addition an experienced caver may bring up the rear of the trip and also note the route taken Every trip is summarised or ‘chalked’ by the trip leader including their expected time of return and a ‘call out’ time
Bad air - CO ₂ , methane and radon	Trip leader(s) gains knowledge of susceptible caves and passages from guide books / locals Trip leader(s) ensures trips avoid susceptible caves and passages
Life dependent / load bearing equipment failure	All members report problems or potential problems and damaged or suspected unsafe equipment to tackle-master The Tackle-Master ensures equipment is serviced and cleaned regularly and stored as manufacturer suggests The Tackle-Master regularly checks the equipment and decommissions it as he/she sees fit in accordance with the manufacturer’s guidelines The Tackle-Master keeps an up to date equipment inventory and makes requests to the committee for new equipment as required Equipment is not used for uses beyond its design