

## **Trip Procedures - Reading University Caving Club (RUCC)**

### **Definitions**

**Trip:** A group of people who enter an underground cave system or mine.

**Leader(s):** The person(s) designated as being in charge of a caving trip.

**Experienced Caver:** A person who has completed more than 6 trips using the techniques required for the system to be entered.

**Inexperienced Caver:** A person who has not yet completed more than 6 trips using the techniques required for the system to be entered, but who is not a novice caver.

**Novice Caver:** Any person who has never been caving before.

**Instructor:** A person designated as being in charge of instructing others in cave techniques and the use of equipment – both underground and overground in training. Leaders and experienced cavers can be instructors.

**Ladder climbing:** The climbing of wire transportable ladders to descend/ascend a pitch within a cave – where the caver will be life-lined using a harness and a rope for safety.

**Single Rope Technique (SRT):** The use of jamming and abseiling equipment and a harness to descend/ascend a pitch within a cave – the caver will secure himself/herself to the rope directly.

**Rigging:** To set up safe and suitable equipment to descend/ascend a pitch usually by the trip leader, e.g. attaching ladders, life-lining ropes and SRT ropes to the cave wall – or to a climbing wall when training. **De-rigging:** the opposite process to rigging.

### **All Trips**

#### **Pre-trip Procedure**

1. Every trip member must have Sports Federation insurance and must have read the RUCC Code of Conduct. The committee will be responsible for ensuring that no member caves or trains until the committee hold a record of their policy number and a signed Code of Conduct.
2. The committee will offer to provide training for trip members in Ladder climbing and insists upon training trip members in Single Rope Technique at Brunel climbing wall by our instructors. Before caving, participants must satisfy themselves that they are able to put on a harness and attach themselves to the rope in a safe manner appropriate for the technique being used.
3. The trip leader(s) will ensure that all trip members have received training or in the case of ladder climbing are confident, competent and have received a demonstration of the technique to be used.
4. The committee and trip leader(s) will ensure that each trip has at least one but preferably two First Aiders.
5. Every trip shall have an appointed leader or leaders and they will make themselves known to all during the safety briefing. It is the responsibility of all trip members to establish who the trip leader(s) are.
6. The trip leaders(s) shall ensure that each trip is summarised or 'chalked' on a recognised caving club board or to a responsible person. The summary will include the number on the trip, the cave system entered and routes being used, the time the trip departed and most importantly their expected time of return to the hut or minibus and a 'call out' time.
7. Prior to entering any cave system or training area the trip leader(s) will give a safety briefing, including how long the trip is expected to take, what techniques are to be used, what kind of terrain to expect, general information regarding safe conduct and basic emergency procedures.
8. Prior to entering any cave system the leader(s) must be aware of all hazards (e.g. rain/snow/tidal conditions, flooding risks, rock falls and potential dangerous gases) and must satisfy himself/herself/themselves by consulting weather forecasts and by observation of local conditions that the system to be entered is not in flood and is very unlikely to flood and that it is safe to enter with respect to all other hazards.
9. The trip leader(s) will check all rigging equipment (e.g. ladders and ropes) to be used on the trip prior to caving or training for condition and safety.
10. If there are two trips entering a cave system the leaders will establish prior to entering the cave system, how to recognise whether the other trip has left the cave system or are still underground and what action to take in both

circumstances – e.g. de-rigging or not.

11. Prior to caving or training the leader(s) will assess to the best of their ability that all trip members are fit to cave or train. However all trip members must inform the committee and the trip leader(s) if they have any medical conditions that should be known of. Furthermore, no member will cave or train if they believe themselves to be in an unfit state to do so (e.g. suffering from depression, heart condition, claustrophobia, under the influence of any drugs) It will be the individuals' responsibility to inform the trip leader(s) if they believe they are unfit to cave or train.

### **General Trip Procedure**

12. Each trip member must ensure that they are adequately clothed and safely equipped for the proposed activity. Appropriate clothing is as follows - caving undersuit (or wetsuit if there will be prolonged exposure to water), caving oversuit, Wellington boots or appropriate footwear for training. Furthermore warm clothing, a towel and some food for après cave will be required. All the above will be checked by the trip leader(s). Gloves, a balaclava, knee and elbow pads are optional.

13. Trip leader(s) will have significant knowledge of the cave system and if required have the relevant cave survey/rigging guide. 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. Trip leader(s) must ensure each trip carries a 'leader kit' containing basic first aid equipment, whistle, spare bulbs and snap-lights.

14. Trip leader(s) will ensure that all trip members wear helmets with Y hanger chin straps (when caving or training at height), and that every trip member carries a headlamp, spare club battery when using the FX2 lighting system and personal survival aids (emergency survival bag, spare energy supplies)

15. Whilst underground the trip leader(s) will regularly check the fatigue, ability and morale of the trip individuals and be prepared to turn back at any stage if he/she/they consider conditions or circumstances constitute an undue risk.

16. In an emergency the trip leader(s) will assess the situation and make suitable and safe arrangements for the given circumstance. When in a cave system this may involve the trip leaving in one group immediately or the trip awaiting help or a certain person(s) sent to the surface for help, said person(s) will act as instructed by the trip leader(s) and if this entails calling out Cave Rescue they will do so by dialling 999. When the trip leader(s) deems it suitable to do so, they will inform Reading University Security Office at the weekend or Student Union Membership Services during the week.

### **Trips with Novice Cavers**

17. There must be at least 1 leader for every 3 novices. There will also be a minimum of 2 leaders or 1 leader and 1 experienced caver per trip.

18. An instructor(s) will supervise novice cavers where necessary and an experienced member will bring up the rear of the trip.

19. Trips should not enter cave systems with which the leader(s) are unfamiliar or that are in the opinion of the leader(s), extremely dangerous and strenuous. Trips should not enter cave systems that will in the opinion of the leader(s) result in the novice cavers being unable to receive guidance where necessary.

20. The leader(s) will have a minimum of 11 months experience of entering systems that are comparable to that to be entered on the novice trip.

21. In addition to the safety briefing which will be given by the trip leader(s) prior to all trips, on a trip with a novice(s), whilst underground the leader(s) will warn the trip members of immediate dangers (e.g. falling and unstable rocks, static and flowing sumps, pitch heads and bases, false flooring and any other obstacle that may require cautionary action)

### **Trips with Inexperienced Cavers**

22. There must be at least 1 leader for every 3 inexperienced cavers.

23. An instructor(s) will supervise inexperienced cavers where necessary and an experienced member will bring up the rear of the trip

24. Trips should not enter cave systems that will in the opinion of the leader(s) result in the inexperienced cavers being unable to receive guidance where necessary.

25. The leader(s) should assess the established ability of the inexperienced cavers and choose to enter a system that suits the lowest level of ability on the trip.

### **Trips with Experienced Cavers**

26. A trip must consist of at least 2 people, one of whom is a leader.

27. The leader(s) must ensure that the requirements of the trip as a whole are considered over and above that of the individual.

28. If at any time an experienced caver has reservations about a technique that is to be undertaken, the safety of any caver or anything that could affect the trip as a whole, then it is his/her/their responsibility to bring this to the attention of the other trip members.

29. It must be ensured that the trip does not become fragmented to a level that could be detrimental to the safety of any individual club member.

**Instruction of Cave Techniques**

30. The instructor must have at least 11 months experience in using the techniques to be taught and must not let the number of inductees become so great that an instructor can not supervise them where necessary.

31. The instructor must satisfy himself/herself that all necessary safety precautions are taken during the instruction.

32. When instructing ladder climbing or Single Rope Technique overground i.e. at a climbing wall, the instructor will always be present and must ensure that the instructee can be reached to provide assistance from either below or above. In the case of ladder training the instructor may or may not be life-lining the instructee.

33. When instructing ladder climbing or Single Rope Technique underground in a cave system, an instructor will always be present at both the top and bottom of the ladder/rope to provide guidance to the instructee.

34. The instruction of Single Rope Technique must consist of at least a half day's session, during which the trip leader(s) will ensure that ample instruction time is allocated to each individual.

35. Where 'rigging' instruction takes place whether underground or overground, the instructor must satisfy himself/herself that the cave system to be entered or climbing wall facility to be used is of a level of difficulty that will allow the instructee to be fully supervised.