



National
Operational
Guidance

Control measure

Specialist resources: Below ground structures



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

Developed and maintained by the NFCC



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Control measure knowledge

Fire and rescue services may need to provide equipment and personnel to assist specialist organisations, rather than directly use fire and rescue personnel to enter and operate as the primary rescuers. It may be beneficial to use joint on-site training to identify and plan for potential incidents involving below ground structures.

Responders such as urban search and rescue (USAR), hazardous area response teams (HART) or special operations response teams (SORT) have specialist equipment to provide support at this type of incident.

The [British Cave Rescue Council \(BCRC\)](#) is the body recognised by the UK government as providing the underground search and rescue service in caves and abandoned mines. It has a seat on the UK Search and Rescue (UKSAR) operators group, where it meets regularly with other national search and rescue operators.

The responsibility for inland rescue usually rests with the police under their general public order powers and responsibilities. However, if the police are unable to conduct searches or rescues in caves and abandoned mines, they will rely on the members of the BCRC.

BCRC members are also called on by the police to assist in animal rescues and occasionally to carry out other types of search to assist investigations.

The range of below ground environments that may be accessed for recreational purposes is wide; some will have been formed by erosion within natural geological formations and others will have been created by mining or tunnelling operations. Many of the entry points to these sites will be in locations that are difficult to find and access and that may require approach by specialist vehicles or on foot over significant distances.

Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider using joint on-site training to identify and plan for below ground structures where their assistance may be requested



- Request specialist resources for assistance at below ground structure incidents

Tactical actions

There are no tactical actions associated with this control measure.