



Safe Caving: A Practical Guide

(or)

How To Survive and Make It To The Mexican Restaurant

Nashville Grotto
January 2020 Meeting

The Number One Safety Rule



Stay out of caves, and you will live. Misery free!



Outline: Major Considerations



- I. Gearing Up
- II. Trip Planning
- III. In the Cave or Pit
- IV. Building and Maintaining Skills

Gearing Up

At a minimum, safe cavers should have...



A Helmet



UIAA or CE certified.

Light Sources



Three independent sources
with spare batteries!

Gearing Up



Other useful **safety gear** might include...

- Gloves
- Elbow/Knee Pads
- Quality Footwear
- Proper (and extra) Clothing
- Disposable Heat Packs

Gearing Up



Other useful **safety gear** might include...

- Space Blanket
- Food & Water
- Minimal First Aid Kit
- 20' to 30' Climb-Spec Webbing
- Flagging Tape or Chalk

Gearing Up



When buying... consider gear from reputable companies and vendors.



POTENTIALLY COUNTERFEIT

CROLL
B16

ATTACHE
M35 SL

ASCENCION
B17

RESCUE
PSO

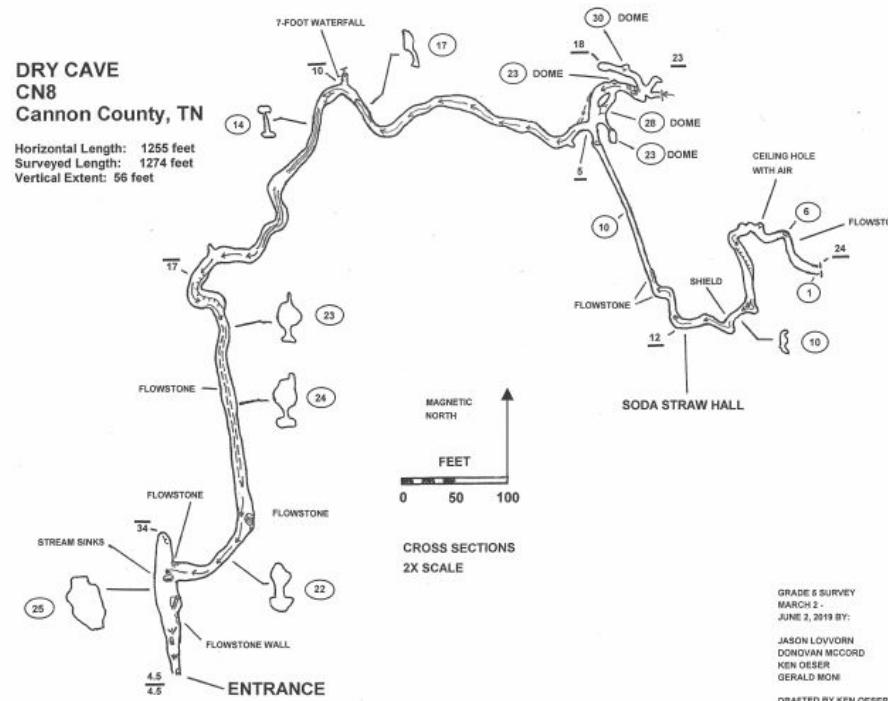
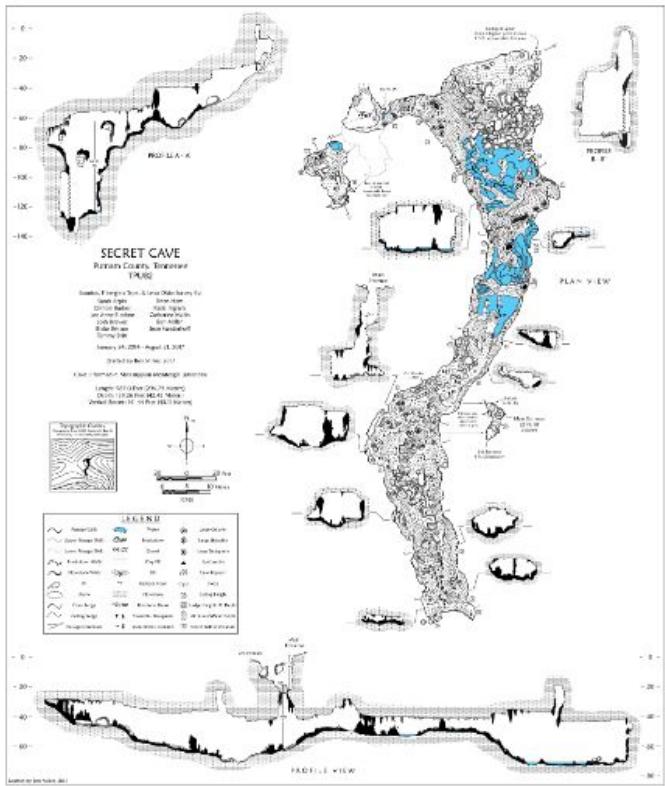


Major axis **breaks at 13 kN** (requirement = mini 20 kN)

Trip Planning



Do your homework. Collect all possible maps, location data, narratives, landowner information, etc.



GRADE 5 SURVEY
MARCH 2 -
JUNE 2, 2013 BY:
JASON LOVORN
DONOVAN MCCORD
KEN OESER
GERALD MONI
DRAFTED BY KEN OESER

Trip Planning



Be honest with yourself. Make sure your skills are sufficient for the demands of the cave.

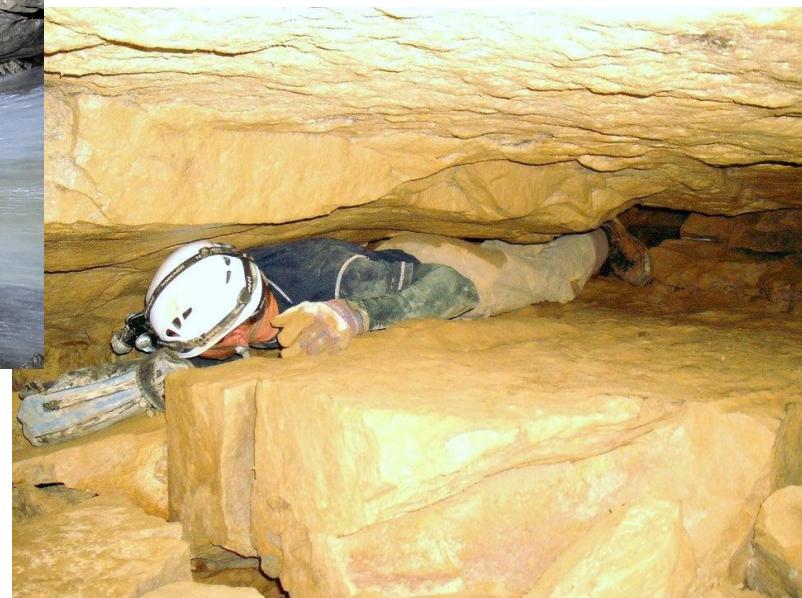


Photo credits, L to R: Rachel Saker, Adam Haydock, deucediggity on reddit

Trip Planning



Assemble gear in advance instead of right before you leave. Use a checklist. Keep gear together if possible.

- Helmet
- Headlamp
- Flashlight
- Polypro
- Knee/elbow pads
- Cave suit
- Neoprene socks
- Boots
- Gloves
- Cave pack
- Spare headlamp
- Batteries
- Food
- Water
- Garbage Bag



Derek Bristol
June 3 ·

Caving gear room tour video coming soon.



Trip Planning



Get permission, in advance if possible. Let landowners know estimated arrival/departure, and get information about proper parking.



Trip Planning



Establish a call-out. Let this person know whereabouts, trip plans, estimated time of exit. Notify your call-out when you leave the cave!



Trip Planning



Have a plan in case there is an incident that requires aid.

- If off the grid, consider location of the nearest cell-signal.
- Make sure keys are accessible for at least one vehicle (hidden in a wheel well, bumper, etc.), especially if signal is weak or absent at the parking area.
- If a more comprehensive med kit is available, make sure its location is known and accessible.



In the Cave or Pit

The Ten Commandments from *Exploring American Caves* by Franklin Folsom (1956)

1. Thou shalt not enter a cave alone.
2. Thou shalt not enter a cave if suffering from assorted ailments that may create burdens for others (heart trouble, epilepsy, etc.)
3. Thou shalt not enter a cave under the influence of John Barleycorn.



In the Cave or Pit

4. Thou shalt wear a hard hat on they head—and use thy head at all times.
5. Thou shalt carry into the cave three sources of light, and matches in a waterproof container.
6. Thou shalt always leave word outside the cave as to thy whereabouts and expected time of return.
7. Honor thy leader and obey his [her] instructions.



In the Cave or Pit

8. Thou shalt sit down at once and wait patiently on the spot if thy lights all fail, thus avoiding injury and making a minimum of trouble for rescuers who will surely come.
9. Thou shalt never jump. Thou shalt walk or crawl or wade or climb.
10. Thou shalt not kick down rocks on thy fellow cavers, considering their welfare in this as in all other matters.

In the Cave or Pit



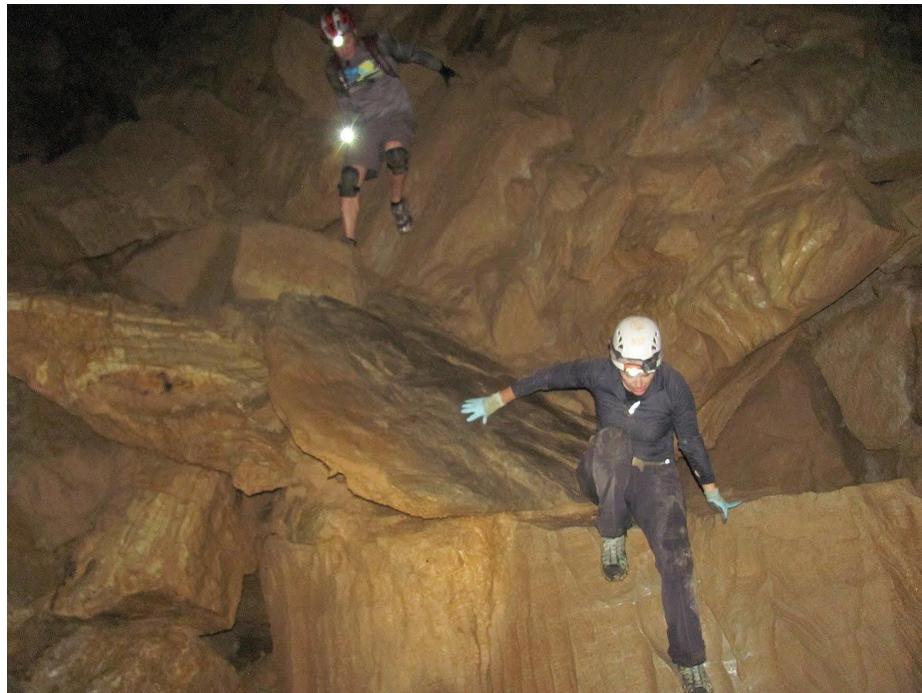
Movement: Shoot for three or more points of contact.



In the Cave or Pit



Movement: Get low and use your butt for what God intended—sliding. Don't jump!



In the Cave or Pit



Vertical Skills Big Picture:

- Learn and practice safe vertical techniques.
- Slow down and be methodical.
- Prioritize safety over ego.
- Look out for your fellow cavers.
- Continue to expand your skills.



Building and Maintaining Skills

Continue to work on preparedness.

“almost 90% of cave rescue callouts are for poorly prepared or inexperienced people.”

- On Call: A Complete Reference for Cave Rescue



Building and Maintaining Skills

Aim for versatility.

• Knots	• Rebellays / J-Hangs
• Rigging	• Self Rescue
• Ascent / Descent	• Rescue
• Changovers	• Medical



Building and Maintaining Skills

In addition to Grotto practices, consider taking a class or classes.

Huntsville Cave Rescue Unit

skill • knowledge • safety

SRT - Single Rope Technique

Class Dates:
Next SRT class will be in early 2020, date TBD

Single Rope Technique Class

HCRU: Single Rope Technique Class

Watch later Share



changeover from climb to rappel & vice-versa



Select Resources

NSS: Safety and Techniques

<https://caves.org/safety/safety.shtml>

SERA: Cave Safety

<https://caves.org/region/sera/safety.htm>

NSS: A Guide to Responsible Caving

https://caves.org/brochure/Guide_to_Resp_Caving.pdf

NSS: Cave Safely, Cave Softly

https://caves.org/brochure/Cave_Safely_Cave_Softly.pdf

Checklist of Caving Gear

<http://caves.org/grotto/ccg/docs/checklists/Checklist%20of%20Caving%20Equipment.pdf>