



Mountain Rescue Council England & Wales

Incident Report 1987

(Revised 02/12/2007)

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MOUNTAIN RESCUE COMMITTEE

MOUNTAIN INCIDENT REPORT (ENGLAND AND WALES) 1987

COMMENTS

The Welsh and English Mountain Rescue Teams in our eight areas covering the mountainous and moorland areas answered the call for help on 504 reported occasions during which 700 people were in distress and needing help and assistance often in extreme conditions of weather and darkness. This help is given by nearly 50 dedicated teams of volunteers who are backed up by the search dog units, the police and most ably and effectively by the R.A.F. helicopter service. The following figures summarise the aid given over the last five years.

Year	Incidents involving teams	People Aided		
		Total	Fatalities	Injured
1983	361	488	55	254
1984	432	668	55	347
1985	403	556	40	308
1986	376	538	41	321
1987	504	700	50	423

FATALITIES in 1987 Of the 50 fatalities on our hills which the teams were called upon to deal with, more than 50% were caused by :-

- a) Heart attacks - 18 - or 36%
- b) 'Non-mountain' - 11 - or 22% (i.e. aircraft crashes, suicides or occupational accidents on the hills)

The remaining 29 fatalities were caused by accidents while:

- c) Fell walking in winter conditions - 9 - 13%
- d) Fell walking in summer conditions - 3 - 15%
- e) Rock or ice/snow climbing - 4 - 8%

INJURIES in 1987 Of the 700 people in accidents or needing help:-

- a) Seriously injured - 165 - 23½%
- b) Less serious and minor injuries - 219 - 31%

UNHURT in 1987 About 33% of the people requiring help from our teams were in trouble because of badly organised walks and expeditions, poor route finding or in some cases lack of basic mountain sense.

LESSONS FROM 1987

- a) FOOTWEAR The number of accidents caused by slips where unsuitable footwear was involved in 1987 was 64 or 12½% of all incidents - this factor does not decrease and again indicates the need for both publicity about the hazards of footwear which give poor grip to keep one upright on all types of terrain, and also perhaps more training.
- b) EQUIPMENT The need for protective headwear for rock/ice climbing is again tragically illustrated in 1987 with 3 fatalities and 15 seriously injured when not wearing helmets. In 1956 there were 3 fatalities and 9 injured when not wearing helmets
- c) TRAINING The most important lesson again shown in the incident report is the need both to treat our hills with respect and to learn, acquire or be taught the basic safety rules - 238 people in 1987 were either incompetent, inexperienced, ignorant or- ignored the basics of navigation or the proper clothing necessary for the conditions or the terrain. None of the 238 were hurt, except in some cases their pride; however in some cases it was only the timely presence of the rescue team which saved those involved from more serious consequences. (Incidentally at least 40% of the above 238 were above the age of discretion!)
- d) WEATHER December 1987 was a very 'non-winter' month; this mild weather extended over January and early February 1988 and was in no doubt instrumental in most significantly reducing call-outs for our teams. However the weekend of February 6/7th saw the onset of extreme winter conditions especially in North Wales, the Lake District and North-East England with very heavy snowfalls which attracted large numbers to the hills. Although most were well equipped, the number of fatalities, injuries and people lost gave our teams one of their busiest weekends in bad conditions on record. Again the message to treat the hills with respect at all times is loud and clear.
- e) FINAL POINT Again just to stress that the number of incidents and accidents which involve our climbers and fell walkers (504 in 1987) must be related to the many thousands who come and find enjoyment on our moors or hills.

Bryan Stilling February 1988

MOUNTAIN RESCUE COMMITTEE

Mountain Incident Report 1987 (England and Wales)

	Lake Dist	N.E Eng	Yorks Dales	Mid Penn	Peak Dist	North Wales	South Wales	S.W Eng	Total 1985	Total 1986	Total 1987
Rock Climbing	17 17 (1)	- - -	2 2 -	- - -	16 16 -	18 22 (1)	2 2 (2)	- - -	49 50 (4)	33 34 (2)	55 59 (3)
Snow/Ice Climbing	4 4 (1)	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	6 6 (2)	- - -	- - -	12 16 (1)	4 7 (2)	10 17 (1)
Fell-Walking Apr-Oct	97 102 (16)	8 11 -	13 13 (1)	14 18 -	17 19 (2)	39 41 (4)	4 4 (1)	5 15 -	169 181 (16)	153 208 (17)	197 223 (23)
Fell-Walking Nov-Mar	47 52 (4)	2 2 (1)	7 8 (1)	1 1 -	5 6 (1)	16 16 (3)	3 7 (1)	3 17 -	64 67 (8)	73 84 (18)	84 109 (10)
Searches Injured	2 3 -	4 6 -	1 1 (1)	- - -	2 2 -	2 2 -	- - -	- - -	13 20 (3)	7 9 (1)	11 14 (1)
Searches Non-injured	29 51	18 31	7 15	1 1	7 9	9 30	6 14	10 32	58 152	60 139	87 183
Crag-fast Non-injured	12 21	1 1	2 2	- -	- -	13 24	- -	- -	23 56	19 49	28 48
Non-Mountain	7 7 (5)	4 22 -	5 5 (2)	4 5 (1)	3 3 (1)	5 5 (2)	2 2 (1)	2 2 (1)	15 18 (8)	27 30 (11)	32 51 (12)
Totals -Incidents -People -Fatalities	215 258 (21)	66 73 (1)	37 45 (5)	20 25 (1)	50 55 (3)	108 146 (9)	17 29 (3)	20 69 (1)	403 556 (40)	376 538 (41)	504 700 (50)
RAF H'cop Rescue Search	26 7	- 1	1 1	- 1	- 1	544	1 4	4 2	22 56	74 23	86 22
S.A.R.D.A	25	10	3	2	11	4	-	10	42	63	6

FREQUENCY OF INJURIES - England and Wales 1987

	Walking	Walking on snow	Climbing		Non-Moun	Total 1984	Total 1985	Total 1986	Total 1987	
			Rock	Snow/Ice						
Lower Leg	79	8	7	2	1	94	111	94	97	
Upper Leg	23	1	3	1	-	12	19	13	28	
Pelvis/Spine	5	-	6	-	1	-	11	13	12	
Chest	4	-	4	1	-	8	5	5	9	
Back Bruising	7	1	4	1	-	10	17	9	13	
Fracture	3	-	4	-	-	6	9	5	7	
Internal	3	1	2	-	-	8	5	5	6	
Arm/Shoulder	12	1	3	-	-	22	13	12	16	
Head Fatal	6	3	1	-	-	28	14	18	13	
Head Fatal No Helmet Climbing	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	
Head Non-Fatal	22	2	4	1	1	44	27	44	45	
Head Non-Fatal No Helmet (Climbing)	-	-	12	3	-	-	-	-	-	
Multiple Abrasion	5	1	1	1	-	15	11	7	8	
Exhaustion	Summer	21	-	-	-	-	23	31	24	21
	Winter	15	4	-	-	-	28	16	5	19
Hypothermia	Fatal Summer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
	Fatal Winter	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
	Non-Fatal Summer	26	-	-	-	-	5	16	12	26
	Non-Fatal Winter	12	6	-	2	-	8	22	24	20
Heart Attack - Fatal - Non-Fatal	16	1	-	-	1	14	17	20	18	
	18	1	-	-	-	21	12	10	19	
Drowning	2	-	-	-	2	1	2	4	4	
Illness	26	3	-	-	1	15	16	21	30	
TOTAL	308	32	51	14	9	371	375	350	414	

MAIN CAUSES OF INCIDENTS - England and Wales 1987

CAUSE		Lake Dist	N.E Eng.	Yorks Dales	Mid Penn.	Peak Dist	North Wales	South Wales	S.W Eng.	Total 1985	Total 1986	Total 1987
Slips Fell Walking	Footwear Satisfactory	40	2	3	1	9	18	1	1	88	61	75
	Smooth Sole or Unsuitably shod	23	6	8	4	7	13	2	1	63	56	64
Slips Fell Walking	No Ice Axe +/or Crampons	5	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	14	24	8
	Suitably Snow/Ice Equipped	3	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	11	17	9
Falls Rock Climbing or Abseiling	Roped	7	-	-	-	2	10	-	-	19	13	20
	Solo	6	-	2	-	2	2	1	-	15	11	13
Falls Snow/Ice Climbing or Abseiling	Roped	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	6	3	2
	Solo	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	5	3
Belay or Runner Failure	Climbing	2	-	1	-	5	2	-	-	10	8	10
	Abseiling	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	3	1	5
Rockfall		2	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	8	7	9
Avalanche		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	-
Inexperience Incompetence Ignorance Resulting in Exposure Exhaustion or "Lost"	April to October	49	25	9	11	19	32	7	16	90	139	168
	November to March	21	2	6	2	6	27	5	1	77	57	70
Suicide		1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	3	3	3
Attempted Suicide		3	2	-	1	-	-	1	1	7	4	7