



Mountain Rescue Council

Charity No. 222596

---

Mountain Rescue Council  
England & Wales

**Incident Report 2003**

Copyright © 2004 Mountain Rescue Council  
(First Revision 15-Jun-04)

All enquiries please direct to: -

Ged Feeney  
MRC Statistics Officer  
57 Castlesteads Drive  
CARLISLE  
Cumbria  
CA2 7XD  
Tel: +44 (0)1228 525709  
Email: [ged@gfeeney.demon.co.uk](mailto:ged@gfeeney.demon.co.uk)

## Mountain Rescue Council – England and Wales

### Incident Report 2003

This year's mountain incident and accidents in England and Wales are summarised as follows: -

Year	Incidents	Fatalities	Injured	Persons assisted
2003	597	33	391	742
2002	655	23	438	824
2001	421	18	274	518
2000	679	19	435	916
1999	635	37	390	835

For a number of years the dangers of rock-scrambling have been highlighted in these reports. Not only is the likelihood of an accident greater but the consequences much more severe. The death rate among those injured while scrambling is twice that of rock climbing. Whilst better preparation may not reduce accident, it will certainly mitigate the consequences; the proper use of a rope and the wearing of helmets would both help.

Rock climbing presents a different problem. While the death rate is small (0.03), the chance of serious injury is far too high (0.58). Many of these accidents are compounded because the placement of protection fails; this is particular true in gritstone areas. There are two possible areas where improvements would significantly reduce serious consequences of accidents. Users should improve their ability to place existing protection in such a way that it works with the rock. There appears to be a need for equipment designers to devise fall protection that harnesses the peculiar characteristics of gritstone better than at present.

This year's non-mountain incidents are summarised as follows:

Year	Incidents	Fatalities	Injured	Persons assisted
2003	334	28	97	260
2002	372	56	117	293
2001	277	51	75	235
2000	320	46	86	277
1999	277	29	87	260

Beside the usual assistance give during urban and lowland searches, teams have also assisted Fire Services attending remote moorland fires. These have posed their own problems but the teams have demonstrated their worth and training on all occasions. In all cases of non-mountain incidents, the expertises of the MRTs in terms of access over difficult terrain have proved invaluable.

Opinions have been expressed that some calls for assistance, particularly by the ambulance service, have been inappropriate. Some teams have expressed the opinion that perhaps the statutory services are using voluntary organisation as a way of achieving performance targets. The reverse side of this opinion is that good working relationships are re-enforced with these services, promoting better inter-service co-operation.

*Ged Feeney.*

Ged Feeney  
MRC Statistics Officer

## Mountain Incident Report

This report covers the period from 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003.

The report confines itself to those leisure activities that are mountain or wilderness-related to which Mountain Rescue Teams were summoned. It lists the number of incidents and persons assisted, regardless of degree of injury. The percentages are rounded to 1 dec. place. Please note that the percentage totals may not sum to 100% because of the round up error in the rows.

Hillwalking is a general category covering all instances of walking for pleasure, away from easy road or track access. The categories of summer and winter refer to the prevailing conditions reported at the time of the incident; it does not refer to any calendar period.

Activity		Lake District	Mid Pennine	N.E. England	North Wales	Peak District	South Wales	S.W. England	Yorks Dales	Total	%
Abseiling	Incidents	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0.5
	Subjects	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0.4
Fell Running	Incidents	3	2	1	0	7	0	0	4	17	2.8
	Subjects	3	7	1	0	7	0	0	4	22	3.0
Hill Walking - summer	Incidents	213	18	7	69	44	9	7	22	389	65.2
	Subjects	293	16	4	98	47	11	7	21	497	67.0
Hill Walking - summer (DoE)	Incidents	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	4	0.7
	Subjects	0	0	0	6	1	1	0	0	8	1.1
Hill Walking - winter	Incidents	16	4	1	10	5	2	0	1	39	6.5
	Subjects	17	4	1	13	6	2	0	2	45	6.1
Mountain Biking	Incidents	10	9	1	1	3	1	0	1	26	4.4
	Subjects	10	9	1	1	3	1	0	1	26	3.5
Orienteering	Incidents	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2
	Subjects	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
Parapenting	Incidents	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	1.5
	Subjects	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	1.2
Rescue Team Exercise	Incidents	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.2
	Subjects	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.1
Rock Climbing	Incidents	9	2	2	12	17	3	1	4	50	8.4
	Subjects	11	2	2	17	19	2	1	5	59	8.0
Rock Scrambling	Incidents	7	0	0	23	1	0	0	0	31	5.2
	Subjects	10	0	0	42	2	0	0	0	54	7.3
Search*	Incidents	13	1	1	2	5	0	1	1	24	4.0
	Subjects	7	1	0	0	4	0	1	0	13	1.8
Snow / Ice Climbing	Incidents	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0.5
	Subjects	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	0.5
Totals	Incidents	279	39	13	120	86	16	9	35	597	100.0
	Subjects	359	42	9	179	92	17	9	35	742	100.0

\* This category includes those activities not covered by the rest, where the subjects had either strayed, become lost, or whose whereabouts were otherwise unknown.

# Mountain Casualty Report

This report covers the period from 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003.

The report confines itself to those leisure activities that are mountain or wilderness-related to which Mountain Rescue Teams were summoned. It lists the number of incidents and persons assisted, regardless of degree of injury. The percentages are rounded to 1 dec. place. Please note that the percentage totals may not sum to 100% because of the round up error in the rows.

Hillwalking is a general category covering all instances of walking for pleasure, away from easy road or track access. The categories of summer and winter refer to the prevailing conditions reported at the time of the incident; it does not refer to any calendar period.

Activity		Lake District	Mid Pennine	N.E. England	North Wales	Peak District	South Wales	S.W. England	Yorks Dales	Total	%
Abseiling	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0.3
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.1
Fell Running	Uninjured	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0.4
	Injured	1	6	1	0	6	0	0	4	18	2.4
	Fatal	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
Hill Walking - summer	Uninjured	152	1	1	50	10	7	3	4	228	30.7
	Injured	132	15	2	47	34	4	3	15	252	34.0
	Fatal	9	0	1	1	3	0	1	2	17	2.3
Hill Walking - summer (DoE)	Uninjured	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	0.7
	Injured	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	0.4
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Hill Walking - winter	Uninjured	6	0	0	9	2	0	0	2	19	2.6
	Injured	10	3	1	1	2	2	0	0	19	2.6
	Fatal	1	1	0	3	2	0	0	0	7	0.9
Mountain Biking	Uninjured	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
	Injured	9	9	1	1	3	1	0	1	25	3.4
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Orienteering	Uninjured	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
	Injured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Parapenting	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	1.2
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Rescue Team Exercise	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0.1
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Rock Climbing	Uninjured	4	0	0	8	2	0	0	0	14	1.9
	Injured	7	2	2	9	16	2	0	5	43	5.8
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0.3
Rock Scrambling	Uninjured	6	0	0	31	2	0	0	0	39	5.3
	Injured	3	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	12	1.6
	Fatal	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	0.4
Search*	Uninjured	5	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	0.9
	Injured	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	4	0.5
	Fatal	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0.3
Snow / Ice Climbing	Uninjured	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.1
	Injured	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0.4
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Totals	Uninjured	176	3	1	104	17	7	4	6	318	42.9
	Injured	170	38	7	69	67	10	3	27	391	52.7
	Fatal	13	1	1	6	8	0	2	2	33	4.4

\* This category includes those activities not covered by the rest, where the subjects had either strayed, become lost, or whose whereabouts were otherwise unknown.

## Non-Mountain Incident Report

This report covers the period from 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003.

The report restricts itself to those incidents not directly related to mountain or wilderness activities. It lists the number of incidents and persons assisted, regardless of degree of injury. The percentages are rounded to 1 dec. place. Please note that the totals may not sum to 100% because of the round up error in the rows.

The search category covers mainly urban, coastline or lowland areas with good road access. Local incidents reflect assistance given to local communities and emergency services during severe weather or in cases of access difficulties etc.

Activity		Lake District	Mid Pennine	N.E. England	North Wales	Peak District	South Wales	S.W. England	Yorks Dales	Total	%
Aircrash - civil	Incidents	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	1.5
	Subjects	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0.8
Birdwatching	Incidents	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.3
	Subjects	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
Cave/Mine Exploration*	Incidents	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	0.9
	Subjects	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0.8
Local Incident	Incidents	18	47	16	6	22	7	0	6	122	36.5
	Subjects	11	11	16	0	15	5	0	3	61	23.5
Pony Trekking	Incidents	1	4	1	0	2	0	0	0	8	2.4
	Subjects	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	2.3
Road Traffic Accident	Incidents	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	5	1.5
	Subjects	7	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	10	3.8
Non-Mountain Search	Incidents	7	38	21	13	26	21	48	4	178	53.3
	Subjects	7	30	22	14	24	19	47	4	167	64.2
Sledging	Incidents	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	1.2
	Subjects	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	1.5
Water Sports (all types)	Incidents	6	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	2.4
	Subjects	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	2.7
Totals	Incidents	35	95	39	23	53	28	48	13	334	100.0
	Subjects	33	48	39	18	43	24	47	8	260	100.0

\* These details are also reported by BCRC, but are included here because support was provided by surface MR team(s).

## Non-Mountain Casualty Report

This report covers the period from 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003.

The report restricts itself to those incidents not directly related to mountain or wilderness activities. It lists the number of incidents and persons assisted, regardless of degree of injury. The percentages are rounded to 1 dec. place. Please note that the totals may not sum to 100% because of the round up error in the rows.

The search category covers mainly urban, coastline or lowland areas with good road access. Local incidents reflect assistance given to local communities and emergency services during severe weather or in cases of access difficulties etc.

Activity		Lake District	Mid Pennine	N.E. England	North Wales	Peak District	South Wales	S.W. England	Yorks Dales	Total	%
Aircrash - civil	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
	Fatal	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
Birdwatching	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Cave/Mine Exploration*	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0.8
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Local Incident	Uninjured	3	4	8	0	2	3	0	0	20	7.7
	Injured	7	7	7	0	11	0	0	2	34	13.1
	Fatal	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	7	2.7
Pony Trekking	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	2.3
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Road Traffic Accident	Uninjured	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	3.1
	Injured	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0.8
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Non-Mountain Search	Uninjured	6	17	16	8	9	13	34	4	107	41.2
	Injured	0	7	4	3	11	6	9	0	40	15.4
	Fatal	1	6	2	3	4	0	4	0	20	7.7
Sledging	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	1.5
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Water Sports (all types)	Uninjured	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
	Injured	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	2.7
	Fatal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Totals	Uninjured	16	21	25	8	11	16	34	4	135	51.9
	Injured	15	20	11	7	26	6	9	3	97	37.3
	Fatal	2	7	3	3	6	2	4	1	28	10.8

\* These details are also reported by BCRC, but are included here because support was provided by surface MR team(s).

## Main Causes of Mountain Incidents

This report covers the period from 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003, during which time 596 incidents were reported.

This report summarises the main causes of Mountain Accidents. It is based on a search of key words used in incident reports. All causes have not been listed, so the column totals may not agree with the total number of incidents. A typical report will illustrate another problem with totals:-

'...tripped on footpath whilst walking and fell 2 metres onto rocky ground.'

This will result in contributions to the 'Slip, Trip or Stumble' and the 'Fall or Tumble' categories.

Causes	Col. 1 Hillwalking (summer)	Col. 2 Hillwalking (winter)	Col. 3 Rock Climbing	Col. 4 Snow / Ice Climbing	Col. 5 Other Activities)	Col. 6 Total	Col. 7 Percentage
Avalanche	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Belay / Runner Failure	2	0	9	0	0	11	1.8
Benighted	14	3	0	0	1	18	3.0
Cragfast	14	2	16	1	0	33	5.5
Fall or Tumble	100	7	51	3	18	179	30.0
Lightening	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Lost	49	5	1	1	1	57	9.6
Medical Collapse or Illness	53	7	1	0	0	61	10.2
Overdue or Missing	41	2	2	0	12	57	9.6
Rockfall	0	0	2	0	0	2	0.3
Shouts, Lights or Flares Reported	5	0	2	0	7	14	2.3
Slip, Trip or Stumble	126	19	12	0	2	159	26.7
Unable to Continue	29	2	1	0	0	32	5.4

Notes:  
 Col. 1 This category also includes Fell Running and Orienteering.  
 Col. 2 This category is based on the prevailing weather and ground conditions at the time, not on a calendar period. It includes those incidents involving D of E expeditions conducted in wintry conditions.  
 Col. 3 This includes incidents of Rock Scrambling and Abseiling.  
 Col. 5 This groups all the remaining mountain activities of Mountain Biking, Hang Gliding, Parapenting, Ski-ing and Mountain Searches.  
 Col. 7 This is a percentage of all Mountain Incidents reported.

## Main Sites & Types of Injury

This report covers the period from 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003, during which time 521 incidents were reported.

This report summarises the main sites and types of injuries dealt with by MR Teams. It is based on a search of key words used in incident reports.

Injury Site / Type	Col. 1 Hillwalking (summer)	Col. 2 Hillwalking (winter)	Col. 3 Rock Climbing	Col. 4 Snow / Ice Climbing	Col. 5 Other Activities)	Col. 6 Non - Mountain	Col. 7 Total
Lower Leg & Foot	98	13	18	1	7	19	156
Upper Leg & Knee	31	2	3	0	1	6	43
Pelvis	5	0	3	0	1	3	12
Abdomen	3	0	2	0	0	0	5
Chest & Shoulder	18	1	13	1	10	10	53
Back & Neck	13	0	18	0	8	9	48
Arm & Hand	23	3	5	0	5	7	43
Head	29	1	12	1	4	11	58
Fractures	103	15	26	1	14	28	187
Lacerations etc	32	1	8	0	3	7	51
Exhaustion	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
Hypothermia	14	3	1	0	3	6	27
Heart Attack (non-fatal)	8	0	0	0	0	1	9
Heart Attack (fatal)	6	5	1	0	0	1	13
Illness	5	0	0	0	0	0	5

Notes:  
 Col. 1 This category also includes Fell Running and Orienteering.  
 Col. 2 This category is based on the prevailing weather and ground conditions at the time, not on a calendar period. It includes those incidents involving D of E expeditions conducted in wintry conditions.  
 Col. 3 This includes incidents of Rock Scrambling and Abseiling.  
 Col. 5 This groups all the remaining mountain activities of Mountain Biking, Hang Gliding, Parapenting, Ski-ing and Mountain Searches.  
 Col. 6 This groups all the non-mountain incidents as detailed on pages 4 & 5 of this report.



## Specialist Resources & Other Details

This report covers the period from 01/01/2003 to 31/12/2003, during which time 986 incidents were reported.

This report summarises the specialist resources used during incidents dealt with by MR teams. It is detailed on a regional basis, with explanations given as footnotes to each row. The percentage calculations (rounded to 1 dec pl.) are based on the total number of incidents reported by MR teams.

Category	Lake District	Mid Pennine	N.E. England	North Wales	Peak District	South Wales	S.W. England	Yorks Dales	Total	%
1. Incidents Attended by Helicopter	82	41	16	86	58	19	23	13	338	34.3
2. Helicopters Used for Evacuation	66	16	3	65	23	6	3	13	195	19.8
3. Helicopters Used for Searching	13	18	11	15	24	13	21	0	115	11.7
4. Helicopters Used for Deployment	2	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	8	0.8
5. Incidents Attended by SARDA Dogs	35	22	4	12	24	7	24	0	128	13.0
6. Search Dog Finds	4	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	8	0.8
7. Incidents Attended by a Doctor	103	2	11	6	49	3	0	0	174	17.6
8. Incidents Initiated by Mobile Phone	185	24	6	71	54	8	5	0	353	35.8
9. Animal Rescues	35	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	40	4.1

### Notes:

Row 1. The number of incidents where a helicopter or fixed wing aircraft (military, police or ambulance) was called to or attended the scene of an incident.

Row 2. The number of times the aircraft was used to evacuate the casualty(ies) from the scene of the incident.

Row 3. The number of instances when the aircraft was employed to search for the missing subject(s).

Row 4. The number of occasions when the aircraft was used to deploy personnel and/or equipment to remote locations.

Row 5. The number of incidents where Mountain Rescue Search Dogs were called to or attended an incident.

Row 6. The number of instances where the subject was located by an MR Search Dog and handler.

Row 7. The number of incidents where a doctor attended the scene of an incident - in most cases, these doctors were members of MR Teams.

Row 8. The number of incidents initiated by the person(s) requiring assistance using a mobile phone. In addition, the mobile phone may have been used by this person during the course of the incident, especially in a search.

Row 9. The number of animal rescues where a team has been requested by the police, local farmer or owner - these include cragfast sheep, dogs stuck on crags or down sink holes or larger animals unable to exit a deep gorge or stream bed.