

## Guidelines for Caving and Potholing with Voluntary Youth Organisations

Caves are unique, remote and delicate environments, which require care when visiting them, not all caves are suitable for novice groups and the cave environment has many real and perceived dangers that require careful risk assessment by the cave leader. Wild caves offer a special learning environment and a unique physical challenge for young people

### **Definitions.**

**Speleological Union of Ireland (SUI)** is the NGB (National Governing Body) for Caving and Potholing in Ireland.

**Caving** is defined here as entry into any wild caves (not show caves), which do not involve substantial vertical features necessitating the use of ladders or rope work.

**Potholing** is defined here as caving which necessitates the use of climbing and descent aids such as ladders, lifelines and ropes.

A **Wet cave** in this case is defined as one in which normal water levels are, in places, greater than thigh depth (of the smallest person). A wet cave may include swimming and or fast flowing water.

**Basic Cave Leader (BCL)** is the basic level qualification validated by the SUI. It qualifies leader to take Novices caving in appropriate caves as determined by the leader.

**Cave Leader (CL)** is the higher-level leadership qualification validated by the SUI. It qualifies the leader to take more advanced novice or progressive cavers in to appropriate caves as determined by the leader. These can involve some Ladder and Life Line Access.

**A Callout** is a formal procedure for notifying a responsible person of the activity. The Callout normally contains information about the name, location and section of the cave, number in the group and experience level, times of entry/exit etc.

An **Underground Kit** is carried by the group and includes emergency equipment and basic 1<sup>st</sup> aid equipment.

**A Comfort Sac** is a more substantial emergency equipment kit that is carried by the group for use in case of an incident. This is often left at the entrance to the cave.

**A Risk Assessment** is a formal procedure undertaken by the leader to identify the Hazards, Risks of the trip. The leader also ensures that adequate precautions to minimise the effects of these have been taken.

### **Guidelines**

- Caving and Potholing are suitable for most youth age ranges however the level of activity and type of cave need to be chosen with the age range and experience level of the group in mind. Potholing usually requires a degree of prior experience and training. If you are unsure about the level of activity you should consult your cave leader.
- Any Caving activity must be planned, co-ordinated and supervised by an experienced caver who has a minimum of a **Basic Cave Leader ( BCL)**
- Any Potholing activity must be planned, co-ordinated and supervised by an experienced caver who has a minimum of a **Cave Leader (CL)**
- The caving Activity shall be adequately planned and a written overview or **Callout** should be left with a responsible person prior to going underground. The Callout normally contains information about the name, location and section of the cave, number in the group and experience level, times etc.

### **Clothing and Equipment**

- A **Comfort Sac** should be left at the entrance of the cave or another suitable spot and normally includes emergency equipment, food etc.
- An **Underground kit** should be carried by the group. This should include emergency lighting, first aid equipment bivy bags, spare food, etc.
- All members of the group should be appropriately equipped with warm clothing, a water resistant over layer (or wet suit), Wellie boots and gloves.
- All members of the group must be supplied with a suitable helmet and lighting system. Helmets should be fitted with Y shaped chinstraps and helmet mounted lighting must be appropriate for the type of cave.

### **Conservation, Ethics and Caving Outside of Ireland**

- Conservation and protection of the cave environment is particularly important. Briefing of the group should include care with deposits, not touching speleothems and a no litter policy.
- The SUI operates a Code of good practice for children in Caving (this document is available on request from the SUI and should be consulted for more detailed information on caving with children)
- For caving activity outside of Ireland the SUI should be consulted for equivalent qualifications.

For further information on caving and how to make contact with a Cave Leader please contact the **Speleological Union of Ireland (SUI)** through the contacts on [www.cavingireland.org](http://www.cavingireland.org) or C/O Sports Headquarters, Joyce Way, Park West, Dublin 12.

Issued by SUI June 2006

