European Cave Rescue Association

Foul Air
Introduction

Why do we need to be concerned about Foul Air

Montérolier, France. 21st June 1995

9 died – 3 children, 1 parent.

And 5 rescuers.

Trois adolescents et six adultes, parmi lesquels des sapeurs-pompiers ont trouvé la mort dans

Ball Eye Mine, Derbyshire, England 1978

▶ 2 cavers exploring disused mine overcome by Foul Air

▶ Fire Service and Derbyshire Cave Rescue called.

▶ Fire Service first at scene and entered using breathing apparatus to discover and recover bodies.

▶ What would have happened if DCRO were first on scene?

Peak Cavern – 22nd March 1959

- Caver exploring new passage became entrapped down a narrow shaft

- Many attempts at pulling caver up thwarted by the equipment available at the time

- Bad air was recognised as a problem early in the rescue

- Oxygen used by rescuers in attempt to tie ropes onto casualty

- Oxygen used to 'flood' shaft with fresh air

- All attempts failed and Neil Moss died later on the Monday

Cote Gill, Yorkshire, England
15 October 1979

▶ Two cavers use 'several pounds of explosive' to remove a rock barrier

▶ The explosion released carbon monoxide

▶ The cavers returned into the cave too early and died as a result

▶ Rescuers were aware and used breathing apparatus during the recovery of the bodies

Aber Las Mine, North Wales
23rd August 2014

- Diver collapsed beyond a long sump in disused mine

- Body was located by cave rescue divers in abandoned dry passage after a 300 metre dive

- There was an abandoned level that would originally gone to surface but is now blocked, stopping air circulation

- We are not certain but carbon monoxide poisoning is strongly suspected as the cause in this case

Quick Summary

- So there is a need to be aware of Foul or Bad air

  - What gases we may encounter
  - When we might encounter these gases
  - How can we detect these gases
  - What can we do about these gases