

Level 1 AND Small Party Assisted Rescue



A technical seminar presented by the
**Southeastern Region of the
NATIONAL CAVE RESCUE COMMISSION**
and
**CHATTANOOGA-HAMILTON COUNTY
RESCUE SERVICE**



Level 1: March 29 – April 5, 2025

SPAR: March 29 – April 1, 2025

Circle K Corral, Sherwood, TN

About the Seminar

Level 1 provides extensive training in all phases of cave rescue. The curriculum covers the cave environment, ropes and devices, leadership and followership, incident command, patient packaging, medical and psychological considerations, hypothermia, media relations, raising, lowering, and belaying. It prepares a student to be a task force member in an organized cave rescue. A typical day involves lectures in the morning, field exercises in the afternoon, and skills check-offs in the evening. The seminar will end with a mock rescue, with leadership provided by experienced cave rescuers. This seminar will introduce students to nationally adopted cave rescue practices and the caving environment. Successful graduates are eligible to take Level 2 training which is offered at the national seminar each year. The seminar provides approximately 80 hours of instruction over seven days. The course is physically strenuous, and participants must be in good health. Students should be prepared to work in difficult situations, both above and below ground.

Small Party Assisted Rescue (SPAR) is an intensive four-day introduction to cave rescue techniques that a party of six or fewer people can perform, using minimal gear that can be carried on caving trips. Topics covered include preventing and preparing for common caving-related problems, basic medical skills, moving patients through obstacles, helping people who are stuck on rope, and building and operating haul and lower systems. The seminar provides approximately 40 hours of instruction. The course is physically strenuous, and participants must be in good health. Students should be prepared to work in difficult situations, both above and below ground. Students will need to study some material in advance so that the sessions reinforce and build on existing knowledge. Students will practice skills in a rope gym setting, and then build on those skills at cliff and cave sites. The course will be demanding, with long days and evenings, but will provide participants with valuable skills that they can use to help themselves and others when they are needed most.



Photo courtesy of Ron Miller

About NCRC

The National Cave Rescue Commission is a commission of the National Speleological Society (NSS), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. NCRC serves as NSS's representative on issues of cave rescue training and operations. By design, NCRC is not an operating cave rescue team. Rather, its mission is to provide training and development opportunities for persons and organizations engaged in cave rescue activities. All NCRC officers, instructors, and staff are volunteers.

Entrance Skills Demonstration

For safety and class efficiency, all students should be competent and comfortable with knot-tying and vertical-caving skills. Before taking either course, students must successfully demonstrate proficiency in tying knots and single rope technique (SRT). Level 1 students must demonstrate proficiency with the basic knots and SRT skills described in the [Level 1 Entry Skills Guide](#). In addition to the basic knots and SRT skills, SPAR students are also required to demonstrate proficiency with passing knots while on rope, as described in this entry prep document: [SPAR Entry Prep 2023 v231205.pdf](#). SPAR students will be encouraged to complete their entrance skills demonstration prior to the course (details will be provided after registration).

Pre-Registration and Registration

Class size in Level 1 is limited to 30 students, and SPAR is limited to 12 students. Level 1 students will be registered on a first-come basis. Level 1 pre-registration is open now and will continue until the course is full. To make SPAR registration more equitable and accessible, we are conducting a pre-registration process. The SPAR pre-registration window is open now and will run through 11:59 pm Eastern on December 26, 2024. After the pre-registration window has closed, if more people have pre-registered than there are places available, we will select registrants for open slots by random drawing. See <https://ncrc.regfox.com/southeastern-region-level-1-and-spar>.

Cost

The course fee, which includes meals and on-site tent/dry RV camping with showers and porta-potties, is:

Level 1: \$855 for members of the National Speleological Society (NSS) or \$905 for non-NSS members.

A small number of scholarships (up to half of NSS member tuition) for Level 1 may become available for students with demonstrated financial need.

SPAR: \$250 for members of the National Speleological Society (NSS) or \$300 for non-NSS members.

Non-NSS members may pre-register at the NSS member rate by first [joining or renewing NSS membership](#). NSS offers substantially discounted membership rates to individuals under the age of 26.

Schedule

- Friday, March 28: Check-in and dinner at 5:00 PM, with Level 1 vertical skills workshop (optional) and remaining SPAR entry skills demonstrations until approximately 9:00 PM.
- Saturday, March 29 - end of course: After breakfast on site, sessions will begin at 8:00 AM and will continue until approximately 9 PM, with breaks for lunch and dinner. Bring your standard caving gear to class each morning.
- Students should come prepared each day with snacks, water, and appropriate gear and clothing for classroom, rope gym, and cliff or cave activities. The schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructors.

Contact information

For questions regarding course logistics, prerequisites, gear requirements, or registration, email:

SE-registration@ncrc.caves.org

This email address is forwarded to all of us, but you may address your message to the appropriate person:

Seminar Coordinator, Brian Krebs (logistics and general course questions)

Level 1 lead instructor, Brandon Powers (Level 1 activities, prerequisites, or gear requirements)

SPAR lead instructor, Ron Miller (SPAR activities, prerequisites, or gear requirements)

Course Registrar, Cathy Borer (course registration)

Please see next page for more information.

Level 1 AND Small Party Assisted Rescue Circle K Corral, Sherwood, TN March - April, 2025

Accommodations and Food

The 37-acre Circle K Corral is located in Franklin State Forest, on Monteagle Mountain (2 Champion Road, Sewanee, TN 37375). It is about an hour west of Chattanooga and 1.5 hours east of Nashville. A 7,000 sq. ft. building provides classroom, rope gym, and dining space. Bluffs are within walking distance and caves are less than a 40-minute drive. All camping and showers are on site.

The course fee covers meals (Friday, March 28 dinner through April 1 lunch for SPAR or through April 5 lunch for Level 1). We will do our best to accommodate dietary preferences and restrictions that you share when pre-registering, but please remember you are ultimately responsible for your own health. Students should bring their own snacks as needed for field exercises. Bring your own reusable coffee mug/tumbler.



Lake at the Circle K Corral, Sewanee, TN

Primitive tent camping and dry RV parking with access to showers and porta-potties will be available on site. You must bring your own tent, sleeping bag, etc. No power generators are permitted. Water is available elsewhere on site and tanks are available for RV campers to transport water as needed. Hotel lodging is not recommended, but hotels are available in Monteagle, Winchester, and South Pittsburg (all are about a 20-25 min drive to the property). Bear in mind that class sessions will start promptly at 8:00 AM and will run late into the evening each day, so staying on site is recommended.

Field Sites / Weather

This course will include field exercises at cliffs and caves in south central Tennessee. Daytime highs are likely to be in the 50s to 60s, with nighttime lows potentially near or below freezing. Come prepared for the possibility of rain. We encourage students to bring folding camp chairs for the classroom and rope gym sessions.

Required Equipment

All gear must be clean and in good condition. All life safety gear (e.g., helmets and harnesses) must be less than 10 years from manufacture date. You must bring:

1. UIAA or CE approved helmet with a three (or more) point suspension system and non-elastic chinstrap.
2. Three electric, helmet-mountable sources of light, each sufficient to exit a cave
3. Caving-appropriate rugged outer layer with wicking synthetic base layer clothing
4. Sturdy boots with lug soles (no tennis shoes)
5. Well-fitting full-fingered gloves (garden gloves are fine)
6. Kneepads
7. Durable water bottles (2 liters capacity) and high energy packable snacks
8. Small, heavy-duty pack for carrying gear underground
9. Full SRT system including commercially manufactured seat harness, at least 2 gripping points (ascenders), attached to the seat harness directly or via a cowstail/tether, at least one of which should be operable with one hand, a second cowstail, and an appropriate descent control device (4-bar microrack with hyperbar, bobbin with braking device, standard rappel rack, or scarab-style device). Cowstails/tethers should be at least 9 mm dynamic rope, or commercially manufactured.
10. Two locking carabiners, independent of SRT system
11. 20 feet of one-inch tubular webbing (at least 15 kN minimum breaking strength) – two 20' pieces (Level 1); one 20' piece of webbing or accessory cord (SPAR)
12. **SPAR students** should bring any pulleys, Prusiks, or small rescue gear that you normally carry in your cave pack.
13. **Level 1 students** must have the NCRC Manual of US Cave Rescue Techniques 3rd edition; available at: <https://members.caves.org/store/viewproduct.aspx?id=14103126> or from other vendors.
14. **Level 1 students:** cave-worthy watch, paper, and pencil