



NATIONAL CAVE RESCUE COMMISSION
of the National Speleological Society
6001 Pulaski Pike
Huntsville, AL 35810-1122

Gretchen Baker
National Coordinator
PO Box 34
Baker, NV 89311
435-406-1041
national@ncrc.caves.org

National Cave Rescue Commission News Release

For Immediate Release: 11 September 2023

Contact: Gretchen Baker, national@ncrc.caves.org, 435-406-1041

Mark Dickey Successfully Rescued out of Morca Cave in Turkey

Mark Dickey, an instructor for the National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) for ten years, who became severely ill 1040 m (3400 ft) underground, has successfully been evacuated from Morca Cave thanks to an international effort.

“The global cooperation to get Mark out of this very deep cave is amazing,” said NCRC National Coordinator Gretchen Baker. “We are so grateful to the Turkish government and all the rescue teams for helping to get our friend to the surface. We know that the challenges of doing a rescue from such a deep location are extremely difficult.”

It takes about 15 hours for an uninjured, experienced caver to ascend from the -1040 m camp to the surface due to the tight passages, complex ropework, and extreme physicality required. The cave also presents challenges in that it is 4-6 degrees C (39-43 F) and is a fairly wet cave, with dripping water and pools. To get someone injured out, in a rescue litter, takes much longer.

“We thank those who were willing to use their specialized skills to help Mark,” continued Ms. Baker.

The rescue effort involved more than 160 people. The Turkish AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management) has helped coordinate logistics on the surface, assist with communications, as well as direct the overall rescue effort. The European Cave Rescue Association (ECRA) helped coordinate in-cave activities accomplished by Turkish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Italian, Croatian, Polish, and American cave rescuers.

Mr. Dickey has been transported by helicopter to an area hospital. “We will be following his progress and hope that he has a quick recovery,” said Ms. Baker. “We look forward to seeing his smiling face soon at an NCRC event.”

Background

Mark Dickey was reported to be extremely ill 1,040 meters deep in Morca Cave in the Taurus Mountains of southern Turkey late on Saturday, September 2, 2023 (Turkish time). Two expedition members climbed out of the cave and requested medications, which the Turkish government supplied. These were taken to Mark and helped, but it was clear that he would need additional assistance to get out of the cave.

The leaders of the expedition asked for international help through the Turkish Federation of Speleology and Turkish Cave Rescue, who are members of the European Cave Rescue Association (ECRA). On Sunday, September 3, 2023, a team from the Hungarian Cave Rescue Service arrived in the Morca area with a doctor. The group descended into the cave to the deep camp. When they arrived many hours later, they set up a tent to start providing intensive medical care.

Over the next few days, additional teams arrived from Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, Croatia, Poland, as well as individuals from the U.S. The Turkish teams helped facilitate communications between the cave rescuers and the Turkish Government and solved logistical problems. The cave was divided into seven sections, with different international teams assisting with each section.

While medical personnel worked to stabilize Mark so he was ready for transport, other rescuers worked to get a communications line working from the surface to the -1040 m camp. The cave rescue teams worked to enhance the rigging so that it would be in the best place to set up haul systems. They also enlarged narrow sections so that the rescue litter would fit through the cave. In addition, extra camps were set up on the way out of the cave so that Mark and the rescuers could rest and additional treatments could be administered.

Beginning the afternoon of September 9, 2023, Mark was in a sufficient medical condition that he was ready to begin moving out of the cave, and the rescue teams were ready. They moved him in a litter from camp to camp. At each camp, Mark rested and was medically treated. About 58 hours after starting movement, Mark was brought to the surface on September 12, 2023 in the early morning hours (Turkish time).

The extreme nature of the cave meant that much of the gear used during the rescue needed to be replaced. Many thanks to gear manufacturers and distributors for helping with this.

The National Cave Rescue Commission is running a [GoFundMe Campaign](#) to help raise costs for rescuers and cave rescue teams. The link also contains information for direct contributions to cave rescue teams.

For additional information or questions, contact Gretchen Baker, national@ncrc.caves.org, 435-406-1041, or check for updates on ECRA's website: <https://caverescue.eu/news/>

About the National Cave Rescue Commission. The National Cave Rescue Commission, as chartered by the National Speleological Society, develops, maintains, and disseminates the core requisite knowledge, skills, and resources related to cave rescue for those who recreate, work in, or provide emergency response to the cave environment. Through quality training and public education that stresses stewardship and conservation, we strive to facilitate the best possible outcomes for those in need. Learn more at <https://ncrc.info/>