

Teen-ager, rescuer freed from mine after 12-hour ordeal

Associated Press

DURANGO, Colo. — Rescuers today freed a teen-ager who became wedged in a narrow shaft off a limestone cavern, and also freed a rescue worker who got stuck head-first while trying to pull the youth to safety.

Thad Scheer, 17, and Keith Dahl, 28, were brought to the surface of the old Weaver Mine, as the cavern 23 miles north of Durango is known, and taken to Mercy Hospital.

Both men were conscious and talking, said Sgt. Dan Bender of the La Plata County sheriff's department.

Their rescue ended a 12-hour ordeal that included more than 100 people from 16 agencies and 10 local contractors, said Bender.

Scheer became wedged deep in the cave about 9:30 p.m. Thursday when he was about 100 yards from the entrance and slid 10 feet down an 18-inch shaft.

Scheer's companions reported the mishap a half hour later.

A professional mine rescue crew from Silverton arrived at the site at about 2 a.m. today, and about an hour later one of the rescuer workers slid head-first into the shaft, Bender said.

Initially Scheer was unconscious and the other man slipped in and out of consciousness, but oxygen fed through tubes brought both back to consciousness, said Bender.

About 7:30 a.m. today, rescuers using mining drills were able to free the two, but bringing them to the surface took another two hours.

The two were removed from the cavern on a 5-foot-wide path that has 25-foot dropoffs along the way and in some places is just 24 inches from the rock overhead, Bender said.

Workers were "crawling on their bellies and pulling the stretchers" to get to the surface, Bender said.

Scheer had earlier reported some suspicious mounds in the cave and the sheriff's department had planned to investigate today, but the boy returned first, Bender said.

1986 Teen rescued from Weaver Mine after 12 hours



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