

Teen spelunkers rescued from cave

DURANGO, Colo. (UPI) — A teenager who got stuck in a crevice while exploring a limestone cave and was trapped more than 10 hours says it will be a long time before he goes spelunking again.

"I think I'll let someone else try this next time," Thad Scheer, 17, said from his bed at Mercy Medical Center in Durango. "I was very fortunate to get out all right."

Scheer, of Durango, and Keith Dahl, 25, of Silverton, were in satisfactory condition at the hospital suffering from exposure and hypoxia (a lack of oxygen in the bloodstream). Dahl became trapped when he reached down to try to pull Scheer out and got wedged in the narrow passage.

Scheer had been trapped 100 yards inside the cave and about 50 feet below the surface for more than 10 hours and Dahl was trapped upside down for nearly five hours before they were rescued at 7:30 a.m. The rescue effort involved more than 100 people from 16 public agencies and nine private contractors and local businesses.

Scheer said he was "just walking along exploring" in the cave when he climbed into a crevice "and got stuck pretty good."

"Once I got down in the little hole there was no way to climb out," he said. "So I curled up in a little ball and I guess I passed out for most of the time."

Sgt. Dan Bender of the La Plata County Sheriff's Department said some of the openings in the cavern were 18 inches by 18 inches.

"Rescuers used jackhammers and air compression drills to carve their way out," Bender said. "There were several times where we had serious doubts whether either one would be taken out alive."

"The rescue people really did a fantastic job," said Katy Scheer, who stayed on the scene while rescuers tried to reach her son. "They kept their cool with each other and did everything right."

Scheer said her son was something of an explorer who had visited the cave at least twice previously.

Photography

United Press International

The earliest photograph was taken on a bitumen-coated, polished pewter plate in 1826 by Joseph Nicéphore Niepce, a French physician and scientist, in the courtyard of his house at Gras.

1986 Teens rescued from limestone cave



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