National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Jewel Cave
National Monument

11149 US Hwy 16
Building B12
Custer, SD 57730
605-673-8300 phone
605-673-8397 fax

Jewel Cave National Monument News Release

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Contact: **Bradley Block / Chief of Interpretation / bradley_block@nps.gov**

Jewel Cave Re-Opens in Time for Free Cave Tours on Veterans Day Weekend

Custer – Jewel Cave National Monument is re-opening the cave for interpretive tours, beginning Friday, November 9. The cave has been closed since October 12, due to the elevators being off-line. The elevators have been restored to working order and have been intensively tested over the past two days. Park staff are confident heading into the holiday weekend that all requirements are met for resuming visitor services.

Working in collaboration with ThyssenKrupp Elevator Company (TKE) and Black Hills Electric Cooperative (BHEC), park staff discovered that vintage electrical equipment from the 1950s was being used to power the elevators and Visitor Center. TKE and BHEC detected that insufficient power was causing the elevator problems. By upgrading the grounding field, conductors, and facility transformer to better meet the electrical needs, the elevators and Visitor Center now have a reliable power supply. Superintendent Larry Johnson states, "We are grateful to Black Hills Electric Cooperative for helping us diagnose and resolve this situation that has plagued us all summer. We also thank them for responding so quickly and proactively. They have been a great partner, and we are fortunate to have their high quality customer service in our local community."

Park staff took advantage of the down time to complete other Visitor Center maintenance projects. With assistance from a Black Hills contractor, a Transient Voltage Surge Suppression (TVSS) system was repaired. The system protects electrical equipment during power surges, such as lightning strikes as occurred on June 2 that caused elevators to go off-line for a few days. The existing TVSS system was damaged years ago and had not been repaired.

Cave tours are resuming just in time for Veterans Day Weekend, which is a Fee-Free weekend within the National Park Service. The Fee-Free days include Saturday through Monday, November 10 – 12. Although the weekend is geared for active military personnel and veterans, Jewel Cave is waiving cave tour fees for all visitors.

"National parks preserve places that commemorate our country's collective heritage – our ideals, our majestic lands, our sacred sites, our patriotic icons – which our military has defended through the years," said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. "We are grateful for the service and sacrifice of military members, past and present, and honored to tell their story at many of our national parks."

Johnson further comments, "We are excited to resume cave tours just in time for the holiday weekend. Between cave tours and hiking the surface trails, families can enjoy and experience the second longest cave in the world. Most importantly, we are thrilled to re-open in time to honor our military heroes and their families and friends with free cave tours."

Over

Jewel Cave offers two different types of public tours during the late fall season. The ever popular Scenic Tour is offered twice each day, at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. This one hour and 20-minute tour takes visitors along a one-half mile paved path that includes 723 stair steps. This tour is considered moderate to strenuous. The Discovery Tour is a 20-minute interpretive talk that exposes visitors to the cave resource; this tour is offered three times daily, at 9:05 a.m., 12:45 p.m., and 3:45 p.m.

Jewel Cave National Monument is open daily during the off-season from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. To learn more about the Monument, call the visitor center at 605-673-8300 and select Option 1. The Monument can also be visited online at www.nps.gov/jeca.

The National Park Service honors active military personnel and veterans this weekend through waived entrance fees. To commemorate the special event, Jewel Cave National Monument is waiving cave tour fees for all visitors.

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About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 395 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.nps.gov.