



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lava Beds
National Monument

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Lava Beds National Monument News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cave Rescue Team Formed at Lava Beds National Monument

TULELAKE, California — Every year Lava Beds National Monument welcomes more than 130,000 visitors, dozens of researchers, and a diverse seasonal staff hailing from across the United States. The monument has estimated that 80% of visitors venture underground to enjoy the many lava tubes found here. Along with these intrepid visitors, staff and guest researchers support the management of geologic and biologic resources found within caves.

The safety of the public is of the utmost importance to the monument. In preparation for potential cave search and rescue incidents, Lava Beds recently hosted a week long cave rescue training course. Instructors from the National Cave Rescue Commission, a section of the National Speleological Society, donated substantial time and effort to educate 13 students comprising National Park Service staff, neighboring agencies, local caving clubs, and members of local search and rescue teams. For eight consecutive days, students were immersed in learning and practicing vertical rope skills, patient packaging, communication and search procedures, and litter transport through a variety of cave environments. At the end of the week, a 12 hour mock rescue was held during which four “patients” were found and rescued from two separate caves within the monument. The complicated logistics, along with physical demands of performing cave rescue procedures for a lost or injured patient, instilled a strong value for safe caving practices among students and instructors. Information on the National Speleological Society and the National Cave Rescue Commission can be found at <http://www.caves.org/commission/ncrc/national/>.

Because of this training experience, Lava Beds now has a group of certified staff ready to conduct a safe and efficient cave rescue should the need arise. However, visitors are still responsible for their own safety while enjoying the underground adventures Lava Beds has to offer. In order to cave safely and softly, each person should wear a helmet and bring three sources of light, food and water,

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warm and protective clothing (long sleeves and pants), closed toed shoes, kneepads and gloves, and a pee bottle and/or wag bag. It's best to explore as a group and know your own limits, using maps to establish and follow your route. Finally, be sure to tell someone where you're going, and enjoy your time in the lava tubes!

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Lava Beds National Monument, established in 1925, is a land of turmoil, both geologic and historic. Over the last half-million years, volcanic eruptions have created a rugged landscape dotted with diverse volcanic features. Lava tube caves, Native American sites, historic battlefields and a high desert wilderness experience await you!

For more information about visiting Lava Beds National Monument, call 530-667-8110, email labe_interpretation@nps.gov, or go to www.nps.gov/labe. Also, visit the park's Facebook and Twitter pages.

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