

National Speleological Society Training & Education Division FALL 2025 REPORT

Prepared by Tim White (twhite@caves.org), Division Head

Training Department

National Cave Rescue Commission

Gretchen Baker, National Coordinator (national@ncrc.caves.org)

Progress

- Ed Comm is coordinating with Interest Groups and planning to pilot revamped Levels 1 and 2 in 2026 at the Texas Regional and the National July in Mentone, AL
- There were hands-on training stations for instructors at the 2025 Weeklong Instructor Update held before the start of the National Weeklong in July, held in VA, that included new devices and concepts that will be in the revamped courses.
- Five students passed the IQ Class and were selected to be provisional instructors.
- 19 scholarships were awarded at \$566 each for the National Weeklong. Just under \$8,000 is available for scholarships
- Developed and approved a policy to allow students under the age of 18 to participate in classes
- Classes taught to date:

Course Request	Course Location	Requested Course Dates	# of Students	# of Instructors/Specialist
SC Regional (1,2,IQ)	Colorado Bend, Tx	01/25/25-2/1/25	48	61
Level 1 + SPAR	Monteagle, Tennessee	03/29/25 04/05/25	39	36
SPAR	Natural Bridge Caverns, TX	05/09/2025- 05/11/2025	7	4
OCR	Albany County - Camp Pinnacle, ca	05/09/25-05/11/25	24	10
OCR	El Malpais NM	06/07/25-06/08-25	27	10
OCR	Fort Stanton	08/09/2025 to 08/10/2025	33	10
OCR	Woodland, Washington	08/16/25-08/17/25	30	10
OCR	Saltpetre Cave Preserve, Mt. Verno	08/23/2025 to 08/24/2025	30	12
National Seminar	Clifton Forge, VA	7/12-19/2025	84	37
Custom Course (Cave ALS)	Covington, VA	7/12/25-7/19/25	6	6
Approximate Totals so far			328	196

Plans

- Working on a matching funding drive for NCRC donations to help with scholarships and gear cache
- December 11-13: Ed Comm Retreat, Colorado and virtual
- February 18-20: Instructor Retreat, Texas
- February 21, 2026: Winter BORC meeting-Texas and virtual
- Future course requests/planned:

Course Request	Course Location	Requested Course Dates
SC Regional	Colorado Bend State Park	1/23-31/2026
ICEE	Wind Cave National Park	10/11-12/2025
SPAR	Little River property, Menlo, GA (former site of	10/18/2025- 10/21/2025
SPAR	Rippled Cave Western Cave Conservancy Prese	10/29/25 - 11/2/25
OCR	Ely, NV	10/4/2025-10/5/2025
SPAR	Carter County, Kentucky	11/13 - 16/2025
SPAR	Little River property, Menlo, GA	3/12-15, 2026
SPAR	Little River property, Menlo GA	3/7 - 10, 2026
National	Mentone, AL	5/8-16/2026
OCR	Rome, GA	Oct 2025?

Problems

- \$53,000 retail price for the updated gear that is needed for the NCRC National cache
- SPAR classes are in high demand, and challenges continue with limited instructor availability for implementation. Currently, there are only 8-9 qualified SPAR lead instructors, and additional funding for travel doesn't solve the issue for those who have time constraints.

Vertical Training Commission

Ron Miller, National Coordinator (ron.miller@caves.org)

Progress

- Level 1 trainer curriculum finalized
- Insurance sorted for Puerto Rico
- New print run of 200 VTC Level 1 Training Manuals
- VTC presentation presented at the Vertical Section Session at the 2025 NSS Convention
- Level 1 student materials have been published
- Webinar: NSS Vertical Training Commission: Building the Future of Vertical Cave Training
- \$50 per student (budgeted for insurance) will be transferred to the NSS general account starting in July.
- \$15 equipment fee added to Level 1 student courses that will revert to the national fund, not regionals.
- Developed a draft NSS Bookstore-VTC agreement

VTC course Sep 2024 Aug...			
Number of Level 1 course	Number of Level 1 students	Number of Level 1 trainer pilot course	Number of Level 1 trainer candidate
9	103	2	16

Plans

- Currently \$23,380.45 is in its bank account, with \$3,500 available for allocation to regions and ~\$4,450 in the Bill Cuddington Memorial Scholarship Fund
- Goal: Develop a \$1 million endowment program.
- \$9K spent on gear so far; assuming 10-year replacement, that's ~\$13 per student.
- Course plans for the next 12 months to be developed at the September meeting

Problems

- Excluded insured areas: CA, OK, LA, MS, and Miami-Dade County, FL. CA is a concern due to 400–500 NSS members residing there.
- Insurance renewed at \$50K, versus last year's \$40K.
- Insurance policy renewed on July 3, 2025, with a 25% premium increase.
- VTC insurance will reset in 3 years with an expected 5-15% increase.

Safety and Techniques Committee

John Ganter and Geary Schindel Co-chair

(ganterjohn@gmail.com, tablechair1492@gmail.com)

Progress

- John Ganter and Geary Schindel were appointed as co-chairs
- They have proposed 6 areas of work:
 - Technical assistance to VTC, NCRC, ACA, etc., as requested and available, for example, curriculum development or safety analysis.
 - Convention session focused on safety and techniques
 - NSS News articles focused on safety and human performance. For example, how to make decisions in low airspace caving, caving teamwork, team communication, etc.
 - NSS News articles focused on techniques and equipment. For example, what to consider putting in your cave pack, new equipment and techniques for low airspace caving, etc.
 - NSS News gear reviews: creating these or providing technical assistance to encourage completeness, quality, and accuracy of gear reviews in the News
 - New media: podcasts, videos for all the above
- John, along with Bill Storage, Keely Owens, Ben Miller, Adia Sovie, Ryan Boyce, and Geary Schindel wrote the first article for the NSS News; *P3: Past, Present, Plan: Quick questions for low air space decisions*
- Completed a 45-minute online questionnaire that was aimed at gathering insights into the types and consequences of adverse experiences in field settings by the Scientists' Adverse Field Experiences Research (SAFER) project.

Plans

- Publish and release *P3: Past, Present, Plan: Quick questions for low air space decisions* on Facebook and say "Forthcoming in the NSS News".
- *P3: Past, Present, Plan: Quick questions for low air space decisions* to be published in the News

Problems

- The News editors "forgot to include the article, then forgot all about" *P3: Past, Present, Plan: Quick questions for low air space decisions*

Education Department

Education Division Chief VACANT

Progress

- Dr. Annette Engel is working with the Training & Education Division to develop an Education Division Chief job description.

Plan

- Appointing an Education Division Chief

Problems

- Paula Hanson resigned as Education Division Chief in April
- Due to no job disruption, Paula struggled with the role

Education Grants & Scholarship Team

Pamela Tegelman Malabad and Emily P. Davis
(pam.teg.mal@gmail.com emilyp@caves.org)

Progress

- Jemison High School Science Initiative at the NSS Shelta Cave Nature Preserve - \$814.80
- Deposit Central School District Exploring Speleology: Middle/High School Education & Field Trip to Howe Caverns - \$750

Plan

- Cave Sim support

Brochures and Display Team

Tim White (twhite@caves.org)

Progress

- Funded the AGI Earth Science Week poster - \$300

Webinar Team

Jenna Crabtree, Chair (webinars@caves.org)

Progress

- 2025 NSS Webinar Serie
 - Introduction to the Webinar Program - January
 - NSS Vertical Training Commission: Building the Future of Vertical Cave Training - March
 - Introduction to the Features of the Cavway X1 Paperless Cave Surveying Tool - May

Plan

- The Evolution of the Cave Formation Repair Project - August

Problems

- Finding enough presenters to host a monthly webinar

Speleo Guest Coordinator VACANT