

Recovery at PluraCave

After the sequence of events had been cleared, the next question was what to do with the bodies? They were left at the bottom of the cave, more than 130 meters underwater and far from the entrance. Eventually, in late February, it was determined that trying to retrieve the bodies was too dangerous, and they were left where they were:

http://yle.fi/uutiset/finnish_divers_final_rest_in_norwegian_sea_cave/7106932

However, this week new information was released. between March 22nd and March 26th a group of 17 Finnish divers and support personnel had gone to Jordbrugrotta in order to retrieve the bodies. They did not have a permission for this dive, but neither was anyone there to stop them. They managed to retrieve both bodies, and yesterday released an English language report of their dive:

<https://www.sukeltaja.fi/content/fi/11501/10832/227/227.html>

This is a report from the recovery operation done 22-26.3.2014 in valley of Plurdalen. Recovery operation was arranged to get home the two divers who lost their lives in diving accident 6.2.2014. Further reasons to do this project in addition to help families of the victims to get their loved ones back, was to do a favor for the cave diving community to help keep the Plura cave open in the future. This was a very unfortunate accident inside a sport which has otherwise good safety record.

Planning of this project started after the official recovery project was cancelled. Team of divers and surface people, total of 17 were gathered to complete this mission. People to do this project were chosen for their capabilities, local knowledge, experience in these diving conditions, cave knowledge and especially familiarity of the deep section of the cave. Plan was to enter from Plura side and remove first victim from the restriction and then escort both victims to Steinugleflåget.

Project started Saturday 22.3.2014 with Steinugleflåget rigging, rope track across the collapse outside and inside hand rails were installed to help gear hauling. Total of 1100kg of gear including 26 safety gas tanks, 5 rebreathers, 5 dive scooters and additional gear were taken down to the Steinugleflåget cave to have two fully equipped safety diver teams in use.

Sunday 23.3.2014 were used to install the needed safety equipment to both Plura and Steinugleflåget sides. All 10 divers were using rebreather dive systems which are sufficient for the whole planned dive times. For emergency situations full safety gas reserve were needed, in Steinugleflåget reserve was planned for 2,5 persons and in Plura for 1,5 persons. Also there was bailout rebreathers in standby on both ends of the cave. To have 10-15min work time with the victims ment that dives would be 5-7h long. Worst case scenario was that divers can't go through from Plura side to Steinugleflåget side and have to come back, this would have ment +10h dive. Addition to the safety gas reserve, a safety habitat was built to Plura side. This habitat would allow divers to get out from the cold water and have safer decompression.

Everything was ready on Monday 24.3.2014 and the recovery could start. Work team started their dive 11:00 from Plura entrance and they were supported by 3 dive teams, one in Plura and two in Steinugleflåget. Travel time from Plura entrance to the victims is about 50min and it goes though the deepest section of the cave 130m. Work team arrived to the first victim and could see him in the narrow part of the cave, divers pulled the victim backwards and were able to cut him loose from the equipment. Transportation of the victim through deep and narrow cave system is very challenging task and job was done by first diver towing the victim with a dive scooter and second diver manouvering the victim. Support divers were met in the shallow water and they continued the transportation and work divers were left to finish their 7h dive.

Priority number one in Tuesday 25.3.2014 was to escort second victim out from the cave and if everything would go well, also take the safety gasses out from the cave. Work divers travelled now from Steinugleflåget to the accident place. Second victim was lying on his back, wearing all the dive gear. Again the victim were cut out from the equipment and attached to the scooter for towing. With this same dive, one backup computer, dive scooter and one bailout tank were brought up from the cave. As everything went as planned, all the 26 safety gas tanks were also taken out from the cave.

Wednesday 26.3.2014 were used to haul everything out from Steinugleflåget dry cave and also retrieve all the gear from Plura cave. In the evening the whole project group went down to Steinugleflåget and took out the bodies from water and put them to body bags. Silent moment was held for the memory of our lost friends.

All the work dives were documented with helmet cameras to provide further details about accident causes, all filmed material and retrieved gear is handed over to the local police. Project was done in 5 days, total of 101h of diving were need to complete the project.

We would like to address our deepest regret to the families of the victims, in time of the sorrow it's a relief to know that healing process can start now.

Big thanks to the project group who worked around to clock to make this happen, your voluntary work and determination made this happen.

On behalf of the whole project group
28.3.2014
Mo I Rana, Norway

Weitere Meldungen:

http://yle.fi/uutiset/second_finnish_divers_body_recovered_from_norwegian_cave/7163176