

Resumption of Caving Activities in France

Dear Members,

We thank you for being patient for a long time. We are now pleased to announce that the Ministry of Sports, after a proposal from our federation, has authorized going caving, canyoning and underground diving once again. The conditions for these activities have changed again recently following the further deliberations in the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Health, and we wished to delay writing in order to give you a definitive and officially validated position.

Despite the Prime Minister's announcement last Thursday, suggesting that our activities would be permitted, the implications of the resumption of caving, canyoning and underground diving has complicated decision-making processes inside government departments. The sharing of equipment (especially ropes) and our sporting environments did not make these discussions simple to resolve. Consequently we have proposed some limitations placed on normal practices in speleology, canyoning and underground diving to dispel any health fears on the part of the government so they can allow you to resume these activities from May 11.

This has been a team effort which combined government technical services, schools, rescue commission, medical commission together with the energetic support of our President and our National Technical Director. Remember to thank them when you next meet up.

The adapted rules, valid from May 11 to June 2, are designed to:

- limit the transmission of the virus during our sporting activities by respecting social distancing rules and any warning gestures
- allow the possibility of rescue without constraints such as getting a stretcher through a narrow passage.

Caving is limited to caves in 'Grade 3' or easier (see attached references) that have up to a few tens of meters of vertical elevation change and a few hundred metres of length. The caves must not have any pinch points and must allow for the movement of rescuers and a stretcher without any special intervention (like passage widening operations) in the event of rescue.

Canyoning can be carried out in all canyons whose rating does not exceed V3 for their vertical character (see attached references).

Cave diving activities are limited to non-decompression dives only and for a maximum duration of one hour.

These constraints are only an overview of various recommendations, so we suggest that before putting on your gear that you carefully read through the general guidance (pp. 5 and 6 of the Health and Medical Guide) as well as advice specific to our activities (speleology, canyoning and underground diving) which appear in the attached guide "Resumption of sports activities" (pp. 79-81 or by clicking on speleology in the summary) before embarking for your expeditions!!!

We draw your particular attention to the need to clean your hands before and after activity with soap and water, bio-degradable if possible, or with a sanitizer gel, to prevent transmission of the virus to companions. This is not always an automatic reflex that we have already acquired!

We are happy that our sporting activities can resume and we would like you to take full advantage, taking care of yourself and your loved ones! We continue to work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Sports to encourage a complete reopening of our sport activities as soon as sanitary conditions allow.

Yours,

FSS Federal Office