

Messes Were Made Over Time

Each year, crowds of cavers gather at various caves. Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico, Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky, and this one in Nevada. Their job is to wipe away the dirt that can threaten both the formations and the creatures that live in the caves.

Lint Everywhere

Every so often, the cave must be cleaned. During the three-day Lint Camp, two dozen volunteers from three states worked here. They took out a ton of scrap including concrete chunks from paths removed during cave repair work.

Cave visitors are not allowed to touch the formations. However, fibers, skin cells and hair build up anyway. Ben Roberts, the park's chief, calls lint a human problem that humans must clean up.

His feeling about the cave is that "it's just like any camping trip — if you pack it in, you pack it out."

The volunteers trudge deeper into the earth. They wear miner's helmets and carry large paint cans filled with brushes, gloves and tweezers.

It's a Friday morning and just eight cavers are here. Another 20 will arrive the next day. Roberts leads some cavers for the more important repair work.



Paul Kemp, of Sandy, Utah, cleans lint off stalactites inside Lehman Cave at Great Basin National Park in Baker, NV