
**NEVADA COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**



**DIVISION DIRECTIVE
10
Effective Date 04/28/99**

SUBJECT **SCUBA DIVING POLICY**

POLICY To establish guidelines for use of department personnel involved in scuba diving operations.

PURPOSE To ensure that all public safety diving under the auspices of the Nevada County Sheriff's Office is conducted in a manner that maximizes the protection of public safety divers from accidental injury and/or illness.

CODE REFERENCE

CASE LAW

DEFINITIONS

PROCEDURE

A. This document is to set forth minimal guidelines for the establishment of Nevada County Sheriff's Office recognized public safety diving programs, and the basic regulations and procedures for safety in public safety diving operations.

1.1 Team Organization and Content

The Dive Team will consist of no more than seven (7) sworn full time members and unlimited volunteers.

1.2 Diver Responsibilities

Each diver is responsible for maintaining a level of knowledge and training to enable an informed appraisal of the calculated risks involved in any diving activities undertaken.

2. Divers Qualifications

a. Each public safety dive member will possess at least a basic open water diving certificate issued by an organization in good standing.

- b. Each public safety dive member shall be trained, qualified, and certified for the diving mode being used. Each diver shall have experience or training in the following:
 - (1) The use of the instruments and equipment appropriate to the diving activity to be conducted.
 - (2) Dive planning and emergency procedures.
 - (3) Diver rescue techniques, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, oxygen administration, and other diving related first aid.
 - (4) Diving related physics and physiology as well as recognition of pressure related injuries.

- c. Each public safety dive team member shall complete the dive team physical agility test once every six (6) months or as determined by the dive team supervisor. All four exercise courses must be completed under the maximum allowable times for each course to qualify. The physical agility test is mandatory as an active member of the dive team. The courses are as follows:
 - 1. Rappeling and rope exercise, not timed. Rappeling and rope work are performed from just below the Englebright Dam Lookout. (This section may be rescheduled due to weather, unsafe conditions, etc.)
 - 2. Englebright Lake: dam overlook stair climb and scuba tank course. Starting from the Army Corps boat dock; carry two dive tanks to the base of the stairs leading to the Englebright Dam Lookout and then ascend stairs to the lookout, leaving tanks at the base of the stairs. Then return to the tanks at the base of the stairs. Then return to the tanks and carry them back to the starting point. Maximum completion time is six (6) minutes.
 - 3. 10 minutes to rest and prepare for the next exercise.
 - 4. Long distance swim across Lake Englebright and back following the dam buoy line. Wetsuit, fins, mask, and snorkel may be worn. 12 minutes to complete.
 - 5. 10 minutes to rest and prepare for the next exercise.
 - 6. Long distance dive at a depth of 10 feet starting at the Army Corp. docks to the dam and back. 12 minutes to complete.

- d. If a member fails to successfully complete a standard when tested, he/she will have thirty (30) days in which to pass the required test. Failure to do so will result in the member being released from the team. Exceptions will be made if and when a team member is injured or ill, and requires additional time to recover and rehabilitate to necessary skill/fitness levels.

- e. Drivers are required to attend all trainings and respond to all call outs in a timely matter. If a diver is unable to attend a training or

call out, they are required to submit a memo to the Dive Supervisor as to the reason for not attending. Failure to submit the memo or attend the training could result in removal from the dive team. Any member who misses three (3) training sessions in a six (6) month period may also be removed from the team.

3. Diving Procedures

- a. All diving conducted under the auspices of the organization shall be planned and executed in a manner as to ensure that every diver involved maintains constant, effective communications with at least one other comparably equipped certified public safety diver in the water. This “buddy system” is based upon mutual assistance, especially in the case of an emergency. Dives should be planned around the competency of the least experienced diver.
- b. If loss of effective communication occurs within a “buddy team”, all divers within that team shall surface and reestablish contact. Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis in the event of a rescue or other exigent circumstances.
- c. The solo line tended diver shall be sufficiently trained in this technique prior to his/her operational use of this type of solo diving. During a solo line tended diving operation, a standby diver in addition to the line tender shall be utilized.
- d. Where an enclosed or confined space is not large enough for two divers, a diver shall be stationed at the underwater point of entry; and an orientation line shall be used.
- e. Cavern and cave diving shall only be conducted by personnel with appropriate training and certifications.
- f. Each diver shall on every dive possess the capability of attaining and maintaining positive buoyancy. An inflatable exposure suit by itself shall not be used as the sole source of buoyancy.
- g. Both members of the diving pair must have an underwater timekeeping device, an approved depth indicator, and a submersible tank pressure gauge. Divers may delegate the determination of their depth and dive time to a surface tender or other individual appropriately equipped to perform such functions.
- h. An appropriate dive table or dive computer must be available at the dive location. Each diver utilizing a dive computer or dive table must be trained to understand basic decompression theory and properly and safely operate the dive computer with which he/she dives.
- i. Each diver relying on a dive computer to plan dives and indicate or determine decompression status must have his/her own unit. A

diver who is not using a personal dive computer is prohibited from relying on a computer used by another diver. If one of the computers fails, the dive will be immediately terminated using appropriate surfacing procedures. Ascent rates shall not exceed 60 FSW/min.

- j. When practical, the diver should make a 5 minute stop between 15 and 25 feet, especially for dives deeper than 60 feet. Throughout all dives, the diver shall maintain an awareness of maximum depth and bottom time.

4. Refusal to Dive

- a. The decision to dive rests with the individual diver. A diver may refuse to dive without fear of penalty whenever he/she feels it is unsafe to make the dive. The ultimate responsibility for safety rests with the individual diver. It is the diver's responsibility and duty to refuse to dive or continue to dive if, in his/her judgment, conditions are unsafe, unfavorable, or if diving would violate the precepts of his/her training, or the guidelines of this document, or the member organization's diving manual.

5. Termination of Dive

- a. Unless it compromises the safety of another diver already in the water, it is the responsibility of the diver to terminate the dive without fear of penalty whenever the diver feels it is unsafe to continue.
- b. The dive shall be terminated while there is still sufficient tank pressure to permit the diver:
 - (1) To safely reach the surface, including decompression time; or
 - (2) To safely reach an additional air source at the decompression station.
- c. It is suggested that an ascent to the surface from a dive of 100 feet or shallower be initiated when the tank pressure reaches 750 PSI.
- d. The diving supervisor may terminate the dive at any time for safety or other operational reasons.
- e. For each dive, one individual shall be designated as the diving supervisor. That person shall be in an appropriate location at the dive site or the dive location during the diving operation.

6. Dive Plans

- a. Before conducting any diving operation under the auspices of the Nevada County Sheriff's Office, the diving supervisor for a proposed diving operation should consider the following information:
 - (1) Other divers involved and their qualifications as well as the type of certificate held by each participating diver.
 - (2) Approximate number of proposed dives.
 - (3) Location of proposed dives.
 - (4) Estimated depths and bottom times anticipated.
 - (5) Current environmental conditions, such as temperature, visibility, et cetera.
 - (6) Proposed work, equipment, and boats to be employed, repetitive dives, and details of any hazardous conditions anticipated.

7. Post Dive Checks

- a. With the completion of a dive, each diver shall:
 - (1) Report any physical problems or symptoms of decompression sickness or air embolism.
 - (2) perform an equipment check and report any problems or malfunctions to the diving supervisor.
 - (3) When diving outside the no decompression limits, the divers should remain awake for at least one hour after diving and in the company of a dive team member who is prepared to transport him/her to a hyperbaric chamber if necessary.

8. Record Keeping Requirements

- a. The diving supervisor shall maintain an appropriate diving log for each diving operation under the auspices of the Nevada County Sheriff's Office. Team members are encouraged to record and keep a log when recreational diving.
- b. All diving accidents requiring decompression or resulting in injury shall be reported to the department's regular procedures for accident reporting in accordance with the appropriate Labor Code section.
- c. Each dive team member must be able to perform the following minimum skills in open water:

- (1) Entering and leaving open water or surf (where applicable) wearing scuba gear.
- (2) Entering and leaving open water from a diving support vessel while wearing scuba gear.
- (3) Surface dive to a depth of 10 feet without the aid of scuba.
- (4) Clearing of regulator and mask while submerged.
- (5) "Buddy breathing" (air sharing) as both donor and recipient.
- (6) While wearing scuba gear, kick on the surface 1,000 feet without breathing compressed gas.
- (7) Maneuver efficiently in aquatic plants or other aquatic environments (where applicable) at and below the surface.
- (8) A complete simulated emergency swimming ascent.
- (9) Ability to achieve and maintain neutral buoyancy while submerged as well as proper weighting and controlled ascent, including a hovering stop.
- (10) Ability to navigate underwater.
- (11) Techniques of self rescue and "buddy rescue."
- (12) Specialized emergency procedures that are used in local diving operations.
- (13) Ability to plan and execute a dive.
- (14) Judgment adequate for safe diving.

9. Diving Equipment

- a. All diving equipment used by public safety divers shall conform to the standards set forth in this document. Every effort will be made to have all equipment standardized and compatible.
- b. All inspections, tests, and maintenance must be accomplished by a technician or facility approved by the dive team supervisor.
- c. Each equipment modification, repair, test, calibration, or maintenance shall be logged, including the date and nature of work performed, serial number of item, and the name of the person performing the work.

- d. Scuba regulators and auxiliary equipment used in the Public Safety Diving Program shall be inspected prior to the first use and serviced at least once a year.
- e. Scuba cylinders shall be designed, constructed, and maintained in accordance with the applicable provisions of the unfired pressure vessel safety orders.
 - (1) Scuba cylinders must be hydrostatically tested at least every five (5) years.
 - (2) Scuba cylinders must have a visual cylinder inspection at intervals not to exceed twelve (12) months.
 - (3) Scuba cylinder valves shall be functionally tested at intervals not to exceed twelve (12) months.
- f. Backpacks and weight systems shall be regularly examined by the person using them.
- g. All weight systems and backpacks worn by the diver shall be equipped with quick release devices designed to permit jettisoning the entire gear. The quick release device must operate easily with a single motion from either hand.
- h. All personnel involved in the diving operation should wear personal flotation devices (PFD) appropriate to the task that they are performing.
- i. Each dive team member will be provided with county issued equipment. Each diver is expected to take care of his/her issued equipment and have it ready to go at a moment's notice. Each diver will be allowed to keep his/her equipment at home, so that he/she will be solely responsible for keeping it all together and in proper working order.
- j. Each diver will be allowed to use the equipment for recreational diving in order to stay proficient with the equipment. This type of non-department sanctioned diving is allowed in Nevada County or neighboring counties only, absent Sheriff approval.
- k. Any issued equipment lost, stolen, or damaged beyond normal wear and tear when used for anything other than when on departmental time will have to be replaced or fixed at the dive team member's own expense.
- l. If a team member will be using his/her own equipment, it has to be approved by the dive team supervisor. The diver will have to provide a written list of equipment he/she intends to use while being a member of this dive team.

- m. Any personal equipment in need of servicing that has been approved for use on the dive team will be paid for out of the dive team budget. Personal equipment that is damaged will be fixed or replaced if at the time the equipment was being used during a dive team operation.
- n. Nevada County Sheriff's diving equipment will be used exclusively by members of the department's dive team. During a request for mutual aid, our equipment may be utilized by other professional diving units. At no time will Nevada County Sheriff's Office equipment be loaned or borrowed by civilians or family of sheriff's office personnel.