

Policies and Procedures for SCUBA Divers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

UC Diving and Boating Safety Consortium

Return to Fieldwork in the time of COVID-19

As the Consortium serves multiple campuses, authorization to return to work and research will be left to each campus's policies but should include a confirmation document from a Chair or VC level administrator acknowledging that your work is considered "essential". There are reports that some facilities (boat ramps) and even some beaches are enforcing the shelter in place order and requiring proof of authorization from an employer.

Once your campus has approved your request to return to the field, you will need to submit a new or updated dive or float plan, which must include specifics of how you will address CoVid-19 transmission concerns.

Possibly one of the most important concepts from the attached policy guidelines is to behave as if one member of the team has the novel coronavirus but is asymptomatic. Each participant is expected to follow these procedures as thoroughly as circumstances allow, and if any participant feels the spirit of these guidelines are not being met, the activity should be halted until new procedures can be developed.

Key Procedures and Policies

General

1. These Guidelines are dynamic and may change with little or no notice as the situation changes.
2. Participants shall follow CDC guidelines including the use of PPE and social distancing, as much as possible.
3. Transportation to and from the work site should be in individual vehicles for all persons not quarantined together.

Diving

1. Each diver will handle, dive, and disinfect only their own equipment.
2. Buddy checks will be conducted in view of each diver, but with each diver inspecting their own gear.
3. Air sharing should be conducted passing the redundant 2nd stage (octopus) unless doing so would pose a greater risk to the health and safety of either diver. Please review and practice this procedure if you have been using some other technique prior to this notice.

Boating

1. All aspects of the operations should be assigned to one individual who will complete that task himself or herself.
2. Environmental conditions and close quarters may necessitate active adaptations to minimize exposures for all crew. Try to avoid being directly downwind from other crew members.

Be safe out there, and please contact me if you have any questions.

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GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Approved essential dive activities should make every effort to mitigate transmission as outlined by the current [CDC](#), [CA-State](#), & [DAN](#) recommendations plus the guidelines noted below:
- All boating operations must be conducted with the consideration that any member of the operations is potentially asymptomatic, infected and contagious.
- Each team member should be asymptomatic for at least 2 weeks prior to field day and will not participate should they feel ill or have reasonable cause to believe they have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Dive teams and auxiliary personnel must be kept to a minimum and must be approved by the Primary Investigator (PI) and the Dive Safety Officer (DSO).
- Before each field day the PI will review with the team: the plan, PPE to be used, the current CDC recommendations and any general concern for safety associated with the field operation.
- During all aspects of the operation, social distancing of 6ft or greater should be maintained unless appropriate PPE are employed. Since social distancing of 6ft or greater can be difficult to effectively maintain while working on vessels, PPE is also required to be worn while on the boat.
- Proper PPE and sanitizing procedures must also be practiced during use of any shared equipment: VHF radio, GPS, Nitrox Analyzer, etc. (see UC D&B Boating Guidelines for Boat and Boat Specific Equipment Cleaning/Disinfection)
- The PI of the project is to ensure all team members have the appropriate PPE with appropriate training and they are being used correctly.
- Vehicle sizing must also be planned to allow adequate social distancing and personnel driving in separate vehicles may be required.
- Additional protective measures may be required any time the current social distancing and PPE recommendations, including face coverings, are difficult to maintain.

DIVER REQUIREMENTS

- All divers must get direct approval from the DSO before joining an approved dive project.
- Divers must prep their own SCUBA gear in a predetermined "diver zone" on the boat or at the dive site to help ensure appropriate social distancing is maintained. A mask defogger solution, not saliva from a diver, should be used if mask defogging prep is required before a dive.
- Each diver must only handle, test and clean his/her own SCUBA equipment.
- Each diver will perform functional testing and demonstrate operation of his/her equipment while observed by their dive buddy.

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- SCUBA equipment (Reg/BC/Mask/Snorkel/Wetsuit) used by one diver will not be used by another diver unless equipment has been cleaned, disinfected and dried before use. Contact the DSO for recommended disinfectant to use with SCUBA gear.

BUDDY AND EQUIPMENT CHECKS

- During pre-dive checks, divers must not breathe from their own secondary second stage. Pre-dive functional testing must be accomplished via depressing the purge and listening for free flows.
- If air sharing is required, refrain from sharing a single second stage unless refraining would result in injury or loss of life. Responding divers will establish contact and control, and then donate the secondary second stage.
- Configurations with auxiliary second stages integrated into a BC inflator are not compatible with this requirement and cannot be used as the divers second stage until further notice. All regulators must have an octopus second stage.

RESCUES

- In-water surface tows should be performed with the primary objective of expediting extraction and proper PPE, such as a pocket mask, should be used for rescue breaths if necessary.

DUE DATES FOR ACTIVE STATUS REQUIREMENTS

- Dive Physical: Expiration date for any recently expired dive physical may be extended for a limited time and any requested extensions are at the discretion of the DCB.
- Regulator/BC Inspection Date: Expiration date may be extended for a limited time for any recently expired Regulator/BC Inspection Date after a functional check is completed by the diver in the presence of the Lead Diver of the project. Any requested extensions are at the discretion of the DCB.
- Diver Emergency Management Training: Annual Diver CPR/O2/1st Aid expiration dates may be extended by 12-months if a current UCSB diver completes DAN's First Aid for Professional Divers eLearning program and reviews UCSB Diving Emergency Management Procedures. Any requested extensions are at the discretion of the DCB.
- Activity requirements: Divers unable to make the required minimum number of dives or depths in the preceding 6 or 12 months may request a waiver from the DCB. Recreational dives (logged as "Non-UC Dive and Baot" in WebDiver) may be counted towards active status requirements at the discretion of the DSO.
- Please contact the [DSO](#) to inquire about requesting an extension of an expiration date noted on Webdiver.

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Links:

[DAN - Prepping to Return to Diving](#)

[DAN - CPR and COVID-19](#)

[UHMS - Return to Diving Post COVID-19](#)