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Phil Crombie          Diving Operations Strategy Team (HSE)
Andrew Wigley         HSE infoline
INTRODUCTION

For years the majority of Diving Supervisors and Instructors have been quite afraid of those dreaded words RISK ASSESSMENT. We as Dive Supervisors and Instructors have a DUTY of CARE to those who we are supervising or teaching To ensure that the environment we are operating in is as safe as we can possibly make it for all those involved. As dive leaders and above we have always carried out a Risk Assessments without even thinking about it each and every time we get into the water by putting together a dive plan, which includes looking at the weather, tides, buddies etc. Building a Risk Assessment is nothing more than the same only we document our findings and relay to others our assessment of the risks involved in our diving environment.

This document has been put together with the help of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). It contains notes and information to assist you as planners and trainers in putting together a written Risk Assessment To minimise the risk for whatever type of sport diving activities you may be undertaking, whether it is in the classroom, swimming pool or open water. This document and recommendations have been developed along side all UK sport diver training organisations.

WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT

Whatever you may think a risk assessment is, it is a no more than a written document and common sense approach to spotting a potential hazard. Identifying who or what may be affected by those hazards and taking the necessary action to combat the risks. Therefore reducing the harm to anyone or anything, this includes non diving participants and the general public, whilst recording your findings as documentary evidence.

CODES OF PRACTICE

Being members of the Sub Aqua Association there are two codes of practice which should also be taken into consideration when planning diving activities and compiling a Risk Assessment document:

1. SAA Safe diving practices

Scuba Diving is a hazardous activity, however quite a number of the risks involved are already minimised to a certain degree by our high standards and procedures during diver training. Example being the likely hood of a diver having problem clearing their ears due to the water pressure, this is minimised by the techniques taught to all divers early on in diver training. This then is no longer a significant hazard as a control measure is in place when the diver adheres to the procedures taught.

DEFINITIONS

RISK Is the chance that somebody will be harmed by a Hazard

HAZARD Anything that may cause harm
THE FIVE BASIC STEPS TO CONSIDER WHEN CARRYING OUT A RISK ASSESSMENT

Carrying out these five basic steps will assist you in compiling a comprehensive risk assessment document. More often than not the majority of risks will be the same for each diving location. However we must not get complacent and take familiar locations for granted because and each dive is unique and may alter from hour to hour.

**Step One  IDENTIFYING THE HAZARDS**

Identifying the hazards can be as complex as you make it, have a common sense approach and don’t get carried away. Only identify hazards which are significant to your diving purpose. Include potential concerns no matter how trivial as these can lead to more serious hazards. These concerns may have been overlooked and any hazard may have more than one risk so do not take things for granted. Some hazards are applicable to all diving sites where others will be more specific to certain locations.

Examples: Drift diving (time and state of current) Night diving

**Step Two  WHO MAY BE HARMED AND HOW**

The majority of hazards will apply to all divers but don’t forget others within the group such as trainees and spectators who also may be in the vicinity. Simply thinking how a person may be harmed may be the remedy to prevent the hazard, such as a cylinder being laid down not left standing on the pool side.

Examples: Divers, Trainees and Public.

**Step Three  EVALUATE THE RISK**

Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm, this will determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk. Even after all the precautions have been taken some amount of risk will remains. What you have to do is decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is HIGH MEDIUM or LOW Your real aim is to make all risks low, if this is the case then an element of common sense, experience and prior knowledge should determine the outcome. A point to remember is a risk may change from a low risk to a high risk and vice versa throughout a diving period hence the need for on going evaluation.

**GENERIC and SPECIFIC RISK’S**

The difference between Generic and Specific are, The majority of hazards involved with Scuba Diving are the same for all aspects of diving whether in the pool or in open water sites (Generic). An example being pressure damage to ears and lungs can occur at any location. However there are times when (Specific) control measures are put into place for a specific activity or location such as for night diving or deep diving. Whatever the location or diving activity you may be undertaking there MUST BE AN ON GOING EVALUATION.

**Step Four  RECORDING YOUR FINDINGS**

Once you have identified the hazards and put into place the control measures to minimise the risk, write them down and keep a written record for reference during the activity and for future use. This can then remind you of the potential hazards at a particular location or dive site. It will also show that a proper check had been carried out for each location and diving activity.
Step Five  REVIEW ASSESSMENT AND UPDATE AS NECESSARY

During any dive you should be aware of things that may change, such as divers getting tired, different gas mixes, underwater visibility and not forgetting the unpredictable weather. The list is endless so you must be aware of all changing circumstances with regards to your risk assessment and update accordingly.

Example: Visibility underwater getting worse, the use of a buddy lines or the need to abort the dive.

CREATING YOUR OWN RISK ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT

Risk Assessment documents as we have already said can be used in a court of law both for the positive side and the negative. Having a Risk Assessment document one no matter what shape or form it takes is better than none at all. Creating your own risk assessment document and the format it takes is down to the individuals. Documents can be created and kept on file for site specific to be used time and time again, (BE AWARE THINGS DO CHANGE) also be aware things change form hour to hour while on a dive site, so changes must be made and recorded. One piece of sound advice is “KEEP IT SIMPLE” don’t get bogged down with pages and pages of writing.

Listed at annex a. is an example of a Generic/Specific risk assessment document.

These are examples of potential hazards. Looking at who is at risk, the control measures either Generic or Specific and the relevant assessments put into place to minimise the risk of injury.

Annex a. Example Risk Assessment Document
Annex b. Blank Document
Annex c. Blank on going document/Aide Memoir (Double sided waterproof document)
## Pool Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Who is at Risk</th>
<th>Control measures put in place to reduce risk</th>
<th>Update and Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Trip Slip or Fall</td>
<td>All Divers</td>
<td>Pool discipline, no walking in fins, all briefed on how to carry equipment, the buddy system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pressure Damage to: Ears Mask</td>
<td>Trainee’s</td>
<td>Trainees to receive specific instruction for equalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Falling Equipment</td>
<td>All Divers</td>
<td>Correct stowage of equipment briefing of trainees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Open Water Diving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Who is at Risk</th>
<th>Control measures put in place to reduce risk</th>
<th>Update and Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cold water</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Pool discipline, no walking in fins, all briefed on how to carry equipment, the buddy buddy system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low Visibility</td>
<td>All Divers</td>
<td>Trainees to receive specific instruction for equalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Net entanglement</td>
<td>All Divers</td>
<td>Correct stowage of equipment briefing of trainees.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Boat Diving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Who is at Risk</th>
<th>Control measures put in place to reduce risk</th>
<th>Update and Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Propeller Injury</td>
<td>Divers</td>
<td>Qualified boat handler, Propeller guard fitted, Use of SMB or delayed SMB Correct entry and exit to boat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lost Divers</td>
<td>Divers</td>
<td>Qualified boat handler, Propeller guard fitted, Use of SMB or delayed SMB correct entry and exit to boat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** The above lists are taken at random of potential Hazards from a variety of diving activities and do not constitute a full Risk Assessment document.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Who is at Risk</th>
<th>Control measures put in place to reduce risk</th>
<th>Update and Review</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
### ONGOING RISK ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Who is at Risk</th>
<th>Control Measures Put Into Place</th>
<th>Review And Update</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Blank Table)

**Note:** The table is empty and requires filling with data.

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**Appendix c**

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10.3A
**RISK ASSESSMENT CHECK LIST**

- Identify The Hazard
- Who is at Risk
- Evaluate the Risk
- Record Your Findings
- On going/Update Regularly
- (Generic or Specific)

### POOL/ TRAINING
- Slip Trip or Fall
- Pressure Injury
- Run Out of Air
- Falling Equipment
- Equipment Malfunction
- Panic
- Flooding Mask
- DCI
- Use of Buddy Lines
- Apprehension
- Separation
- Exhaustion
- Cold
- Inversion
- Rapid Ascents
- Over Weighted

### OPEN WATER
- Access to Water
- Running out of Gas
- Return to Entry Point
- Weather Change
- Low Visibility
- Depth
- Water/Air Temp
- Entanglement
- Free Flow
- Cramp/Exhaustion
- Injury from Sharp Metals
- Bites and Stings
- Dehydration
- Sun Burn

### BOATS
- Propeller Injury
- Lost Divers/ Boat
- Other Boats
- People Unwell
- Engine Malfunction
- Weather Conditions
- Stowage of Kit
- Current
- Wet Decking
- Loss of Communications
- Entry and Exits
- Run out of Fuel

**NOTE! This is NOT a complete Risk Assessment guide, plus any hazard may fall into one or more categories**
Further Information:


3. HSE website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

4. Are you involved in a Diving Project? HSE leaflet INDG266 and Five steps to Risk Assessment - HSE leaflet IND163 (rev 1)

5. To order HSE Regulations: The Stationary Office, PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT, Tel: 0870 600 5522, www.hmso.gov.uk
   To order HSE publications: HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 2WA, www.hsebooks.co.uk

Useful Web Sites

- [www.sita.org.uk](http://www.sita.org.uk)
- [www.directlearning.net](http://www.directlearning.net)
- [www.hse.gov.uk/diving](http://www.hse.gov.uk/diving)
- [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)
- [www.hmso.gov.uk](http://www.hmso.gov.uk)
- [www.freesafety check.co.uk](http://www.freesafety check.co.uk) (courses)