TOPSIDE

NOAA Diving Program News - July 2008

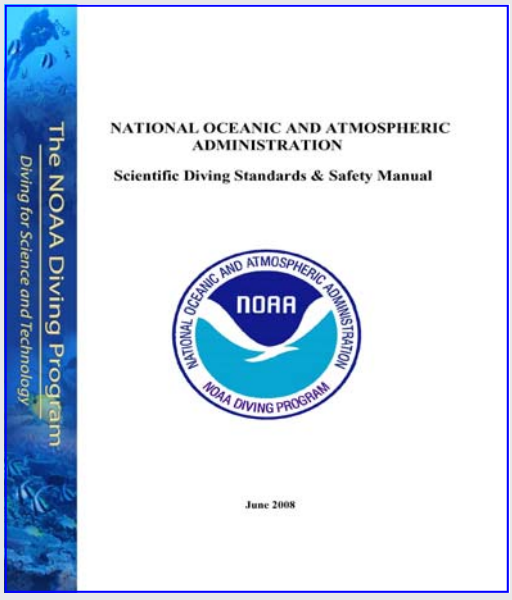
Announcements

UPDATE - The final report on the March 17 dive fatality is still being drafted. Once completed the facts and lessons learned will be widely shared with the diving community.

NEW NOAA SCIENTIFIC DIVING STANDARDS AND SAFETY MANUAL

The NOAA Diving Safety Board is in the process of making final edits to a new set of diving standards to be used by NOAA divers when performing science-oriented dives. The new standards will be contained within a manual, NOAA Scientific Diving Standards and Safety Manual. Once approved, the standards will become policy for all NOAA dives defined as scientific per Appendix B of 29CFR1910, Subpart T (OSHA Commercial Diving Regulations). It is anticipated that the new NOAA Scientific Diving Standards and Safety Manual will be approved and ready to be implemented by early August 2008. At that time, the standards will be distributed to all divers simultaneously and a series of call-in sessions will be scheduled to answer questions concerning the new manual.

The current NOAA Diving Regulations (NAO 209-123) and OSHA regulations for commercial diving apply for those policies and procedures not covered in the new scientific diving safety manual. It has also been determined that the OSHA regulations apply wherever NOAA divers dive on official work time.



NOAA Science Camp 2008

From inside NDC's training tower, CAPT Jane Powers, USPHS, teaches diving concepts to the Science Camp students. The campers were able to talk to CAPT Powers using hard-wired comms.

LT Cimilluca led the campers on a simulated boat ride and dive. Blind-folded "divers" followed down-lines to the "bottom," they conducted circle searches and discovered touch tanks filled with objects. Using radios, they reported finding broken propellers and other boat parts to the topside students. This exercise was part of a greater Science Camp scenario in which the kids went to various NOAA Western Regional Center offices to discover clues to solve an environmental mystery surrounding a "fish kill." At NDC, they found a shipwreck and surmised this led to an oil spill and so on.

NOAA Science Camp and NDC made the local news. For more information, go to **http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/369944_summercamp08.html**

NDC Project Support

The NOAA Dive Center shares a building with the National Ocean Service's Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, Pacific Operations Branch. This group, which has its own 6-person dive unit, is responsible for installing and maintaining oceanographic and meteorological instrumentation along the West Coast, in Alaska, and throughout the Pacific Islands. The work includes maintaining the sensors and instrumentation that make up NWLON (National Water Level Observation Network) stations and PORTS (Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System) systems.

A new project involving the installation of an ADCP (Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler) at the Cherry Point PORTS (just north of Bellingham, Washington) calls for the use of surface-supplied diving operations, per industry regulations. To meet this requirement, NDC has been requested to provide diver training and supervision of the installation. In response, NDC has developed a short, project-focused course in the use of lightweight surface-supplied diving equipment. NDC Instructor Bill J. Gordon will supervise the training and on-site operation in early August.

Training in line-tending will be integrated into this September's Working Diver class and provided to the greater NOAA diving community in the next couple weeks. **Standby divers, when required, should either be line-tended or deployed as buddy teams.**

As time permits, this training material will be more fully developed into the previously mentioned Lightweight Surface-Supplied and Tethered Diving course, that has been postponed.

New Reserve Air Supply Systems

The following is an update on NDC Reserve Air Supply System (RASS) distribution. NDC staff have been conducting hundreds of visual cylinder inspections and valve installations. Oceanic has shipped NDC 250 regulators and 250 gauges that are scheduled to arrive this week. The remaining 250 units will be available at the end of the month. Once NDC receives these regulators, they will inventoried, assembled, tested and shipped to divers in a 'High Priority' status. Many units have notified NDC of their urgent need for the RASS in order to continue diving operations. These groups will receive the first batch. NDC plans to begin shipping by early next week and have all 500 systems in the field by mid-August (if not sooner).

Once divers have received the RASS they will be required to complete the following academic and practical training. UDS' should be notified upon completion of the training requirements.

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Academic-

- Review on-line training presentation and take the end of course quiz
- NDC will automatically be notified that you have completed this portion of the training through the Commerce Learning Center

Practical-

- Shall be supervised/demonstrated by UDS or divemaster
- Topside practice - equipment assembly, proper positioning on BCD, donning, regulator retrieval procedures, filling procedures
- In-water practice - prior to open-water dives it is required that the system is used in confined and/or controlled waters.
  - Entries/Exits
  - Weighting/trim
  - Regulator retrieval
  - Ditching cylinder (on surface)

In an effort to enhance safety in an emergency, it is crucial that the NDP standardize Oceanic regulator configuration. The above photo shows the 'proper' configuration for first stage regulators. The high-pressure (HP) hose is connected to the HP port on the bottom, left side of the first stage and the hose is routed underneath the diver's left arm keeping the hose where the diver could easily locate it. The breathing air supply hoses are attached to the low-pressure (LP) ports located at the top of the regulator making them easy to reach during a regulator recovery. Standardizing the regulator configuration will cut down on confusion during an emergency between NOAA divers.

Laurie's Corner

Important Announcement!

TRI Air Testing kits are being shipped to units this week. NDC is requesting a 30-day turnaround on these. This will help get most units back on the same schedule. If you have any questions or if you need to make arrangements to have your kit longer, please contact Laurie Barber.