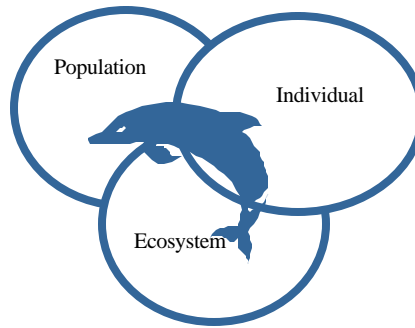


**Safety Standard Operating Protocols for the  
Dolphin Health and Risk Assessment (HERA) Project**

**Dolphin Capture-Release Studies in the  
Indian River Lagoon, FL and Charleston, SC**



**October 12, 2004**

**Prepared by: Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, Ft. Pierce, FL and NOAA/NOS/Center  
for Coastal Environmental Health & Biomolecular Research, Charleston, SC**

## Safety Protocols for Dolphin Health and Risk Assessment (HERA) Project - 2004

**TO ALL PARTICIPANTS: Please read and acknowledge your full acceptance and understanding of this document by signing the final page as indicated.**

This document provides safety protocols and their rationale for conducting live dolphin collections to be carried out in association with the HERA project in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) and Charleston (CHS) study areas. In this work, we will be operating in a potentially hazardous environment, which requires the collection and sampling of wild dolphins in an open-water environment. On a daily basis, these operations will involve activities that include coordinated use of 7 to 9 research vessels, deployment of a large collection net, the handling and restraint of large marine animals and logistical support provided by a team of more than 50 to 60 people. Therefore, safety becomes a project priority and is everyone's responsibility.

With your safety in mind, the following information is intended to provide important protocols and guidelines that will ensure everyone's safety. The following terms and abbreviations are used throughout this document to define key personnel:

*Collection Supervisor (CS)*

*Regional Collection Supervisor (RCS)*

*Medical Safety Officer (MSO)*

*Dolphin Capturer*

*Principal Investigator (PI)*

Anyone with a pre-existing medical condition(s) and/or those with severe medical allergies, or those who depend on prescription drugs MUST advise the MSO and Regional Collections Supervisor (RCS) prior to commencement of collections. If you are allergic to bee stings, then you should also carry your own personal first-aid (epi-pen) as an added precaution, although epinephrine will also be available through the medical support personnel. Due to physical demands and the potential for injury and/or disease transmissions, pregnant women are strongly advised to voluntarily excuse themselves from participation in the live capture portion of this project, and provide notification to the RCS if they are already scheduled to participate. Along similar lines, if you are deemed to have a health risk that could endanger yourself or others, you will not be authorized to participate in these operations. Those who have active certification in first-aid or CPR, should also be identified to both the MSO and the RCS by signing the Safety / Medical Staff list which will be distributed during orientation or by e-mail request.

**1. Chain of Command/Communication** – The HERA Dolphin Project is a collaborative research project between the National Ocean Service (NOS)/Center for Coastal Environmental Health & Biomolecular Research (CCEHBR) with Patricia Fair, Ph.D. (PI) and Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution (HBOI) with Gregory Bossart, V.M.D., Ph.D. (PI). The purpose of this scientific study is to evaluate the health of dolphins at two southeastern sites, in Charleston (CHS), SC and the Indian River Lagoon (IRL), FL. HERA research activities are authorized under a special federal permit issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Dr. Greg Bossart, Director of HBOI's Division of Marine Mammal Research and Conservation is the PI for the NMFS Scientific Research Permit. As the PI, Dr. Bossart MUST authorize any/all final decisions regarding these operations, subsequent research activities and dissemination of data. In his absence, Dr. Bossart will delegate on-water operations

responsibility to one of his co-investigators and/or Larry Hansen who is the Collection Supervisor (CS).

**2. FIELD COMMUNICATION** – Only authorized cell phones, VHF radios (on an assigned channel) will be utilized for ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communication. Boat skippers should limit VHF radio conversations in order to allow necessary communications between Chase I and the Net Boat to take precedent. Currently, the project is exploring the possibility of in-water communication in the field via water-proof hands-free communication devices. All vessels will be equipped with VHF radios.

**3. ROLE OF THE COLLECTIONS SUPERVISOR (CS)** – The CS serves to oversee all on-water activities and resources needed to conduct and maintain safe and efficient operations. The CS operates Chase Boat 1 and makes the final call on “net sets” in cooperation with assigned photo- ID staff and the skipper of the net boat. Whenever possible, the CS will remain aboard Chase Boat 1 to direct and deploy necessary resources and people. When animals are in the net compass the CS will further advise on the safest means in which to secure the animals. When animals “strike the net” the CS will make decisions and deploy the necessary resources and most experienced people to respond. As long as animals are being restrained, and until they are released, the CS will direct personnel activities. Thus, it is absolutely imperative that the CS direct activities when dolphins are in the net and that other persons surrounding the net do not try to give orders which add confusion. The RCS works with the CS and can also direct efforts when asked to do so by the PI and/or CS. **NOTE: Once animals are on the processing boat, on-boat operations are under the direct supervision of the PI or the assigned senior veterinarian. In case of an accident, the roles of the CS, RSO and MSO will overlap to effectively handle emergency situations.**

**4. SAFETY EQUIPMENT:** In order to maximize safety in our working environment, each vessel is equipped with approved U.S.C.G. safety equipment, fire extinguishers, and first aid kits. Additional safety equipment includes:

- Oxygen (DAN O<sub>2</sub> Kit)
- Automatic Electronic Defibrillation (AED) unit
- Floating spine board and neck/spine collar
- Primary hand held pony bottles (30 breaths)
- Secondary 80 cu ft scuba air tank w/octopus regulator
- VHF radios/cell phones for ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications as required
- Primary First Aid (Field Trauma) Kit
- Secondary Paramedic Safety Bag
- Eye Wash Field Unit/Protective Eye Wear
- Betadine scrub Kits, Disinfectant scrubs, rubber gloves for handling potential zoonotics

All necessary medications, including epinephrine, are available in the paramedic safety bag/primary first aid kit which will be on-site during all field operations. Paramedic consultants have cautioned that the AED unit should be operated under dry conditions. Additional safety equipment will include a hot water bottle and boot for stingray lacerations and appropriate remedies (vinegar, meat tenderizer) for jellyfish stings. **Oversight of all safety equipment is the responsibility of the primary MSO on board the Chase Boat and as designated by the CS.**

## **5. Role of Medical Safety Officers (MSO)**

Two MSOs will be on-site each day during the captures to assist safety efforts under the direction of the CS/RCS. One of the MSOs will be designated as the primary MSO and will serve on an assigned chase boat. Thus, the primary MSO will be in close proximity as the net is deployed and can visually survey in-water operations as trained and experienced marine mammal handlers respond to animals in the net compass or the net. The MSO will keep a head count of in-water people. The assigned chase boat with the primary MSO will be designated as the first response unit and will contain all emergency medical supplies on the same boat (in addition to each boat having their own first aid kit). A key function of the MSO, together with the CS, will be to provide surveillance of the compass perimeter from an elevated position (if possible) to observe activities. Thus, the MSO serves as a lifeguard to monitor the people in the water and will communicate directly with the CS/RCS in order to provide an alert about potential problems or issues. In the event of a human related accident, the MSO will direct all necessary efforts to provide a maximum safe response for immediate assessment, stabilization, treatment and evacuation to the nearest shore-based ground transportation location and hospital. Plans will be in place for alternate medical response providers, emergency contact lists and alternate pick-up areas (boat ramps, docks, access areas) for all areas of operation in the event an accident occurs in a remote area away from the base dock. If required, additional assistance will be provided from staff veterinarians and other team members who have certification in first-aid or cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

## **6. In Case of any Serious Injury or Medical Emergency**

- 1) Immediately notify the MSO/ CS/ RCS who will direct response efforts.
- 2) Until the MSO arrives, and without risk to you, work to stabilize and support the victim, being careful to limit any movement of the neck and spine.
- 3) Help secure area (notify 911 and/or USCG via VHF Ch. #16). Alert all other research boats and direct shore-based emergency response to the nearest point of pick-up.
- 4) Make a designated first-aid platform ready with all necessary medical treatment kits.
- 5) Begin a safe release of all restrained animals as directed by the PI and/or the CS.

### **The MSO will take charge and implement the following measures:**

- a) Check for pulse (CPR / AED – Auto Defibrillator kit / **Yellow** pelican case)
  - b) Stop the bleeding (first aid kit / **Orange** pelican case)
  - c) Clear the airway (support with O2 / DAN O2 kit / **Green** pelican case)
  - d) Treat for shock (keep warm, comfortable and shaded)
  - e) Splint all possible fractures (sand splints preferred over air splints)
  - f) Prepare for transport (RCS, MSO and Boat Skippers)
  - g) Evacuate injured victim(s) (Designated Boat Skippers, MSO and designated staff only).
- 6) Following safe evacuation of any injured persons(s), all collection activities will cease and all boats will return to the dock as directed by the PI or CS. Once ashore, all vessels need to be secured and any evidence safeguarded and photographed before boats are cleaned and/or refueled. A mandatory safety investigation report and/or police and insurance claim report(s) will commence. All potential witnesses must remain available for interviews. Appropriate follow up will take place with the injured party and/or their representatives.

These six aspects of our safety protocols are essential safety plan components of the HERA collections and we ask for your cooperation in the unlikely event someone is injured, or any other unexpected

situation should arise. Please read and familiarize yourself with the following additional information and guidelines in order to help ensure a safe working environment.

### **7. In Case of Fire**

Boat skippers should verify all personnel are wearing Personal Flotation Devices ( PFDs) and begin immediate evacuation of personnel. They should call for help and, without risk to their own personal safety, work to contain fire with on-board fire extinguishers. Cut all lines attached to other vessels and isolate the burning vessel from all other vessels to prevent the fire from spreading. Notify 911 by cell phone and United States Coast Guard (USCG) on VHF marine radio (Ch 16). Bring all necessary resources and fire extinguishers to bear in an effort to contain the flame source. If possible, and without risk, safely tow the burning craft into an open area down-wind from other vessels and people, and secure the vessel with an anchor. If such attempts are unsuccessful, or deemed too dangerous, then abandon the boat and allow it to drift and burn in an open area.

### **8. Inclement Weather/Lightning**

During summer collection months, afternoon storm cells and associated lightning are prevalent in the southeastern coastal region. During such events, VHF weather monitoring resources and radar sources for real time weather advisories will be consulted. The decision of the PI about continuing or aborting collecting activities will be final. As directed, all animals will be safely discharged and all staff will return to their boats. Crew will secure for foul weather (windscreens down, lights on, antennas down, wear rain gear). The RCS and CS will coordinate and direct all boats to travel to the closest safe harbor until conditions allow operations to resume, or for boats to return safely to originating base of operations.

### **9. Sinking Vessel**

If for any reason any boat begins to take on excess water and/or is in danger of capsizing, staff involved with the vessel should act immediately. High priority actions include: 1. distribute PFD's and flare signaling kit to crew; 2. attempt to bail water or stop source of incoming water; 3. call USCG VHF Ch. 16 for help, and provide vessel name, location, # of passengers and status; 4. signal any nearby vessels; 5. abandon boat only as a last resort. Boat skippers may make an attempt to slowly ground the boat in shallow water outside the InterCoastal Waterway (ICW).

### **10. Vessel Aground**

Running aground in the shallow waters of the IRL and the CHS regions is a possibility. Boat skippers and crew should note distinct color or texture changes of water indicating water depth. If vessel begins to ground, immediately bring the boat to neutral and simultaneously stop the engine and lift the motor. Check crew for any injuries. Notify any boats on selected VHF Channel. Safely evacuate up-wind from boat and attempt to refloat to shallow water.

### **11. Research Vessels/Operation and Safety Guidelines**

- **General Boat Operations/Boat Skipper Responsibilities** – Assigned 'boat skippers' are responsible for the safety of their crew and for the safe operation, maintenance, docking and cleanliness of their respective vessels. Skippers should familiarize themselves with the operational characteristics of their boat and safety equipment. If any skipper is unfamiliar with the region, then they should consult charts and exercise great caution and reduce speed in shallow areas where clam shoals and sandbars may be present. Use depth poles to confirm depth readings of on-board electronic sensors. Be aware of all posted ICW markers, channel

markers and speed zones. If you are unsure of depth, lift (trim up) the outboard motor and slowly make your way to the main ICW before resuming on-plane speed. Be careful not to disturb sea grasses by pole pushing the boat if necessary. Skippers should not relinquish the wheel to anyone else on the boat so they can respond to an animal (unless their boat has already been anchored securely). EACH Boat Skipper is responsible for checking to make sure **sufficient PFDs are on board AT ALL TIMES** for their crew. Following daily operations, re-fuel, clean and safely secure your vessel in the assigned dock slip each night. Report any problems or missing equipment to the RCS immediately.

- **Life Vests/Personal Flotation Devices** – To comply with NOAA's Small Boat Safety Program and Policy concerning Personal Flotation Device (NOAA Administrative Order 217-103), **ALL** participants on any vessel are required to wear PFDs at all times while the boat is operated. Use of PFDs is mandatory and this policy is to be adhered to at all times.

During the capture activities the following procedures will be in place:

- During deep-water sets **ALL** participants entering the water will wear PFDs
- During shallow-water sets PFDs are not required and use will be discretionary
- While vessels are anchored in shallow waters during animal processing, PFDs will not need to be worn on the boats

**Note:** PFDs will help to increase visibility and locate people from a distance and provide flotation, as well as assist in supporting yourself while holding an animal. However, be aware that if entangled in a net, a life vest will not support you or necessarily keep your head above water. These criteria for use of PFDs during capture operations take into account the special circumstances and situations that may arise when wearing a PFD may create additional risks of entanglement and also interfere with the safe handling of the animals in and out of the net. Each person will be assigned a PFD and it will be your responsibility during the two week period.

- **Stay in Sight of Boat Skipper** – At all times you are in-water, remain visible (in the “line of sight”) of your skipper. Be careful not to obstruct the skipper’s view while underway and do not hesitate to alert the skipper to any water hazards or wildlife outside of their field of vision.
- **Stay Away from Boat Propellers** – In or out of the water; sharp multi-bladed boat propellers can cause serious injuries and mutilation. Skippers will be responsible for operating boats in a safe manner and remain aware of any swimmers and/or animals in their operating zone. The command “STOP” or “NEUTRAL” will be called to immediately bring the boat motor to a “Neutral Gear” position and/or engage the kill switch. Before restarting a boat engine and placing it in gear, each boat skipper must look and call “Clear”; to make certain nobody is near the propeller. NEVER use the propeller or lower unit of an outboard to return (climb) aboard any vessel. Remember when you are on shore, exposed boat propellers can be equally dangerous. Give boats on trailers a wide “walk around” in order to prevent accidental contact injury.
- **Do Not Place Hands, Arms or Legs or Fingers In-Between Boats** –Sampling and processing boats will be ‘rafted’ alongside each other (beam to beam) while sampling operations are underway. All boats will have protective rubber bumpers placed between them to avoid damage to both people and boats. Do NOT place your hands and fingers on the side of the boat when near potential hazards such as other boats, docks and pilings.

- **Watch for Boat Wakes** – Be alert to other boat traffic and alert others as necessary. Vessels operating in/or near the collection/sampling sites can produce large wakes, especially when they approach shorelines. Skippers should notify approaching vessels by VHF (Ch. 16) or by visual means (flag) and request a “slow pass.” Even small wakes can cause rafted boats to slam against each other; NEVER place yourself between two vessels.
- **Boat Anchors, Lines and Bumpers** – Each boat is equipped with a primary anchor in the bow (front) and secondary anchor in the stern (rear), as well as rafting lines and bumpers. It is important for in-water staff to be aware that these outstretched lines and ground anchors can be an unseen hazard. Exercise caution when deploying and retrieving anchors. Note the position of extended anchor lines and safely stow anchors and all lines before getting underway.
- **Boat Towing (On Water)** – Will be done under the advisement of the RCS. Use balanced towing harness. Place engine in neutral and center the steering. Take any nonessential equipment and people off the disabled craft. Stay well away from the towline trajectory and be aware that heavy boat lines (and metal boat cleats) can unexpectedly break and become high speed flying projectiles when they give way under the strain of towing a heavy load. Drive/Tow slowly.
- **Boat Docks and Boat Ramps** – Use caution in/around marina, boat ramps and dock areas as these can be slippery and uneven surfaces. Use added caution when boarding or disembarking from any marine craft, or when transferring equipment and personal gear. All loose items should be secured before entering the dock area. Make sure all boats are secure with lines fore and aft, including spring lines and boat bumpers to provide access and prevent damage. Wear white anti-skid deck soles or booties on boats. Boat ramps are notoriously ‘slippery’ on the tide lines. Use special caution.
- **Boat Towing (On Land)** – Will be done only under the supervision of the RCS or boat owner. Check and re-check all trailer lights, tire pressure and trailer hitch and lock-pin connections.
- **Boat Launch / Recovery** - Will be done only under the supervision of the RCS or boat owner. Use caution. Be respectful of others. Keep off active ramp when staging or breaking down.
- **Avoid Electrical Shock** – Use caution aboard the primary processing boat and sampling boats where 110/VAC will be utilized to power medical equipment (e.g., centrifuges) and hoists. In such areas, remain dry and avoid splashing any of the power generators and/or power strips. NEVER touch any electrical cord unless you are completely dry and have been directed by the boat skipper to do so.
- **Anthropogenic Noise** – Boat skippers should always take added precaution in operation of boats in areas around the net and/or where animals are being restrained. Whenever possible turn engines off to avoid unnecessary noise that might agitate or alarm animals and caution crew against jumping, splashing or banging equipment on boat hull while in around the boat.
- **Use of Caustic Chemicals** – Operations on both the sampling platform and processing boat involve the handling of hazardous materials and liquids. It is essential that lab personnel and others wear protective clothing (OSHA approved gloves, aprons and/or eyewear) and take precautionary measure to limit risks. **In the event of skin or eye contact with a causative**

**liquid or material, immediately notify the MSO and use the portable field eye/skin wash liquid aboard the processing boat.**

- **Use of Liquid Nitrogen (LN)** – LN is used to freeze-brand animals and can result in serious injury and/or severe burns. All LN containers should be well marked and securely stored to prevent accidental spillage. All personnel involved in the handling of LN should take every necessary precaution and utilize approved gloves and eyewear to limit exposure to themselves and others. At times where LN is in use, any/all non-essential personnel should stay clear of the area, especially at times wear LN is being transferred from containers and being disposed of. After use with LN branding irons will be placed in a designated area which will be marked as ‘Hazardous, Do Not Touch’. Branding irons used to freeze brand animals may remain at sub-zero temperatures for some time after actual use and need to be handled with extreme caution. In the event of contact with LN, immediately notify the MSO and douse with water.
- **Use of Disinfectants and Special Handling of Animals with Suspected Zoonotics** – Some animals in the study areas may have potentially zoonotic (transmissible) diseases. In such cases, contact will be limited as directed by the P.I. or senior veterinarian. Those with open wounds, cuts or sores should refrain from direct contact with these animals. All other animal handling staff should take the added precautions of protective clothing, gloves and surgical masks if deemed necessary. Following the animal’s treatment and evaluation, all persons (and equipment) who may have had contact with that animal, should isolate themselves to an area away from others and begin disinfecting with supplied Betadine scrubs and other approved disinfectants, being careful to avoid contact with the eyes and/or other sensitive areas of the body. Any/all clothing (rash guards, shirts, etc.,) should also be removed and soaked for a minimum of 5 minutes in a disinfecting solution or as directed by a veterinarian.

## **12. Collections Net/RESPECT THE NET**

The net is the primary responsibility of Skipper Larry Fulford (“Catcher”), NMFS ‘Collector of Record’. The collection net measures 400’ in length x 18’ in depth, has a float-line at the surface and double lead line on the bottom.

- **Setting the Net** – After target animals are selected and confirmed by the CS/RCS, the CS gives the go-ahead signal to the “Catcher” to set the net and the Catcher determines precisely when to execute this instruction. Experienced photo-ID staff should be placed on chase boats or net boat and have them as boat skippers, if possible, to assist in preventing having too many animals in net and relaying this information to the CS. The following two permit conditions will be adhered to: 1) every effort will be made to limit capture-release activities to waters 6 feet (2 meters) deep or less in order to ensure the safety of the dolphins and capture team, and 2) every effort to capture no more than five dolphins at a time during a net set. In the event that more than five dolphins are captured, the additional animals must be immediately released unless the CS or veterinarian determines that doing so could have a negative impact on individual animals. Any persons on board the catch (net) boat must stand clear as the ‘Net Ball’ is thrown off the stern. All personnel must then stand clear as the net rapidly pays-out. Failure to do so can result in entanglement and cause severe injury or amputation. If entangled with the net, do not attempt to stop or hold fast. If you feel the net coming tight on any part of your body, let go immediately and call to the Skipper to ‘Stop’. Once the net is deployed, it is referred to as a compass by points (north, south, east and west).



- **Entering the Water – Do not enter the water unless you are designated as an experienced marine mammal handler.** Every effort will be made to set in shallow water (3-5’). If a ‘deep-water’ set occurs, the CS will direct experienced in-water staff to deploy and utilize special floatation mats to support both people and dolphins. While a buddy system might be useful in certain situations and should be encouraged, it should also be recognized that it is difficult to maintain this system in a capture setting because staff are constantly moving around quickly to respond to a highly dynamic set of circumstances.
- **Animals in the Net** – Once the net “Compass” is set, listen to the instructions of the CS (Chase 1). The CS will direct “chase boats” to strategically deploy and dispatch experienced personnel around the perimeter of the net. A chase boat will immediately go to any area where an animal hits the net and pulls the float line down. Preferably, animals will remain in the center of the compass, while additional ‘chase boat’ staff deployed along the float line. If necessary, in water net tenders can ‘splash the float line’ when animals approach their position to help avoid their charging or probing the net. This practice while used in some locations is usually not needed in the Indian River Lagoon and Charleston and will not be used in most cases. Keep ‘eyes-on’ any animals and note their number of position. Depending on circumstances, conditions and number of animals, attempts may be made by the Catcher and CS to maneuver the net so as to split, isolate or crowd “animal” to a “door” or predictable area. When an animal hits the net, efforts are made to secure the animal by grabbing the head/pectoral area first, while others then try to hold the animals mid section and fluke. Use caution if animals “roll in the net” and avoid entanglement. Allow the net to do its job and to pause for a few seconds to observe the situation before reacting. For deep water sets, the chase boats will grab the line and attach it to the boat ensuring that the animal can breathe until a navy mat is on-site and the animal can be disentangled.
- **Handling the Net – DO NOT approach the net or react to an animal in the net by yourself and never attempt to grab an animal by yourself or without the direction and assistance of an experienced marine mammal handler!** One person cannot effectively restrain a dolphin and will put themselves at risk if they attempt to do so. Please wait until there are several experienced handlers to assist. If you, or an animal, become entangled, if the net is caught on the bottom, or you are unable to keep your head (or the animal’s blowhole) safely above water, call for help immediately and relax. A chase/medical boat will deploy to any area where the float-line is being pulled under (bobbing). **Never lock your fingers in or around the net twine or allow yourself to become entangled in the net. If you feel the net mesh coming tight on any part of your body...LET GO IMMEDIATELY! Stay off the net line (corks) especially while the net is being pulled either into the catch boat or onto the beach.**
- **Animal in Distress** – If any animal exhibits signs of injury, extreme stress or shock call for a veterinarian. The vet will immediately assess and treat for shock, if necessary. Four special ‘Animal Emergency and Treatment’ kits are assigned to veterinarians and available for use if needed.
- **Cutting the Net** – The net will be cut with specially designed net knives to free a person or animal during an emergency or when directed by the CS or Catcher. Net knives are provided to key staff including the CS, Catcher, MSO and others as assigned. If an animal or person is

severely entangled in the net, attempt to gather slack in the net and alert the CS and/or MSO who will assess the situation and advise.

- **Pulling the Net** –After each net set, decisions will be made as animals are secured, held stationary and moved outside the net to the sampling platform. Listen carefully for instructions when you are called to help maneuver and/or secure points on the net compass. Pulling, cleaning and stacking the net can be done once all animals are safely restrained and secured. When it comes time to pull, clean and stack the net back aboard the catch boat you will be instructed to do so by the Dolphin Capturer.

### 13. FINAL DO'S and DON'Ts

Remember, common sense prevails. Use good judgment and remain alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.

- **Call LOUDLY if you are in DISTRESS or NEED HELP** – If you are hurt or need assistance make sure to call out to alert those around you that you need help.
- **No rings or things** – Bracelets, watches, necklaces and rings can cause injury to both people and animals. Remove and secure ALL such personal belongings and items BEFORE boarding each morning.
- **COMMANDS are 'NO or JUMP'** – The call for anyone to go overboard, for any reason, from any vessel is given ONLY by the boat skipper. To avoid ANY possible confusion during times of rapid deployment in the collection process, boat skippers will call “NO” to hold fast and “Jump” to indicate it is safe to go overboard. This helps eliminate the potential for confusing the commands “NO” and “GO”.
- **No Diving** – Under NO circumstances shall anyone dive into the water. Water visibility is poor with a varied hard to soft mud bottom and can pose dangerous hazards. Use a boat ladder or ease yourself gently overboard in order to avoid the risk of serious head, neck and/or spinal injury and/or suddenly frightening dolphins.
- **Minimize Talking** – Please refrain from excessive talking and noise while collection operations are underway. Do not distract boat skippers and keep a watchful eye, especially while boats are underway and while working in-water with restrained animals. Boat skippers, in-water animal care staff, and especially those in close proximity to the processing boat, should speak quietly and softly while collection processes are underway. Boat skippers also need to consider the underwater noise/pitch of propellers and the adverse effects that may have on dolphins that are being restrained nearby.
- **No Smoking** – Smoking is a fire hazard, offensive to others and risks contamination of samples in an open processing environment. A no-smoking rule will be in effect aboard all vessels, around fuel docks and in any/all areas that are in close proximity to others.
- **No Bare Feet / Wear Booties** – Anyone entering the water does so at their own risk. Hard-sole diving booties or other similar binding footwear are required. The varied bottom has certain hazards from clam shoals to broken glass, including venomous rays and skates. In this

environment, it is advisable to walk slowly and shuffle one's feet in order to avoid stepping on one of these creatures. If stung or injured, notify a supervisor or medical officer immediately. A stingray treatment kit consisting of hot water and a boot is on board. Also, in some areas jellyfish and sea-lice pose risk. People who are allergic to bee stings are at a higher risk and need to advise the CS, RCS and MSO if any such allergic reactions are possible.

- **No Cell Phones or Cameras** – No unauthorized use of cell phones or cameras will be allowed. Cell phones should be turned off during on-water operations and any/all images taken are subject to review and pre-approval of Dr. Bossart and NMFS.
- **Personal Comfort** – Rehydrate often. Prolonged exposure to the elements and the exhaustive work effort involved in the process of collections requires special considerations and personal caution. Use ample sunscreen (waterproof SPF 15 or higher) and protective clothing (hats/long sleeves, polarized sunglasses) to protect against sunburn and discomfort. Water coolers are placed on-board assigned vessels and everyone is encouraged to drink plenty of fluids. Long days in the hot sun are exhausting. STAY ALERT and get plenty of sleep.
- **Personal Responsibility** – At all times, participants are expected to exhibit responsible behavior and a professional attitude. As a representative of your respective institution or agency, participants are also representatives of the hosting organization(s). Due to the importance and inherent risks associated with Level A activities, participants are expected to get essential rest and nourishment.

**14. Animals in Distress** – In the event of any animal related emergency, follow the instructions of the veterinarian in charge and support directives of Supervisors and Senior Animal Care staff. Provide ample room for staff to respond and stand by to assist if called upon.

- **Animal Emergency / Emergency Release** – In the event that the primary veterinarian, assisting veterinarian or senior animal care staff deems necessary, any dolphin that is in distress must be immediately lifted from the sampling boat and returned to the water. If the condition does not improve, the primary veterinarian will make the call to either release the animal or further restrain for treatment. If the animal is released, a support (photo-ID) boat may be used to track and monitor the animal until normal behavior is observed and the animal deemed safe.
- **Animal Emergency / Treatment or Euthanasia** – In the event the primary veterinarian determines an animal would benefit from short-term care then that animal will be transferred to shore and taken to the nearest approved marine mammal treatment center. The RCS will coordinate transport logistics as directed by NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator. If the primary veterinarian deems it necessary to euthanize any animal that is suffering (due to injury or pre-existing condition) then the animal will be humanely euthanized by acceptable medical protocol, following notification to, and the approval of NMFS. The possibility of euthanasia raises the issue of having euthanasia solution, a class III drug, available quickly and in needed quantities. Since this might be difficult to obtain quickly if needed, arrangements should either be made to have the euthanasia drug on-site under the necessary restrictions (e.g., double lock and key storage or arrangements) made ahead of time.

**15. Media/Interference / Public Concern** – In response to media inquiries and expressed public concern we should inform the interested party that we are conducting scientific studies to help benefit the wild population of dolphins in the IRL and CHS regions and that we operate under a special permit from NMFS. Further inquiries should be directed to Drs. Bossart or Fair.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND ACCEPTANCE OF LEVEL A PARTICIPANT in DOLPHIN  
HERA PROJECT**

**BY MY SIGNATURE BELOW EXECUTED THIS \_\_\_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_,  
2004, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE CAREFULLY READ AND DO UNDERSTAND  
ALL OF THE ABOVE-STATED SAFTEY PROVISIONS OF THIS DOCUMENT AND THAT  
I KNOWINGLY AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO THESE HAZARDS, CONDITIONS AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES AS OF THE DATE INDICATED ABOVE.**

**PARTICIPANT:**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness**