TOPSIDE

NOAA Diving Program News - October 2008

Good news!

LCDR Doug Schleiger, recently retired from the NOAA Corps, has been recalled to Active Duty to work on the NDC staff. LCDR Schleiger brings a wide range of experiences and a fresh perspective to bear on the challenging issues that the NOAA Diving Program face today. He will be focused on the development of NOAA's own federal diving regulations with emphasis on researching and coordinating the process. This is a high-priority project that is in the NOAA diving community's best interest. NDC is very appreciative of his assignment to the team. Welcome aboard, sir!

New Diving Safety Officer

The NDP has created a new position titled, "Diving Safety Officer." The DSO will be responsible for managing all aspects of NOAA's diving safety and occupational health program including personnel training, maintenance of diving equipment and facilities, adherence to regulations and policies, and operational readiness. In September, NOS LODO Greg McFall was appointed Acting DSO. Steve Urick will be appointed Acting DSO in October until the position is permanently filled.

NDC Diving Medical Officer

CAPT Jane Powers is not only the NDC DMO, she is also the Director of Health Services for OMAO. As such she has been managing NOAA fleet medical concerns and developing new ship policies while concurrently serving the NDP on a full-time basis. Even though she provides outstanding service to the NOAA diving community, she can't continue to manage the tremendous workload of two positions by herself. To that end, NDC is seeking a new DMO. The position description includes reviewing physical exams and histories for diving fitness, developing and presenting training at NDC classes, evaluating potential diving injuries during classes, maintaining on-site presence during all training, acting as liaison to outside agencies on dive medical issues, initiating emergency hyperbaric treatment via phone to remote locations and working with the NOAA Dive Medical Review Board for case review and general diving issues. For more information or if you know of someone qualified that might be interested, please contact CAPT Powers.

NDC is developing a new Diving Medical Standards & Procedures Manual. All new NOAA medical forms have been created. One the manual is approved, official form numbers will be obtained and the complete package will be presented to the NOAA diving community as soon as possible.

A team of NOAA maritime archaeologists document the propeller of the 422 foot long Liberty Ship SS Quartette wrecked at Pearl and Hermes Atoll in 1952.

Credit: Tane Casserley (NOS/NMSP)

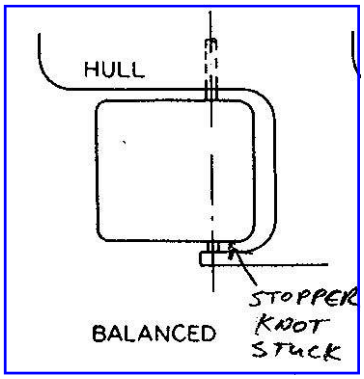
NDC held Working Diver and Divemaster classes last month. In both classes, all participants practiced line tending. During "shams" day, the Divemasters deployed tethered standby divers to rescue "unconscious" divers. In some cases, the standby divers, who were Working Diver students, were instructed not to find the victim, requiring Divemasters to conduct sweep searches using line-pull search signals. Divemasters staged their standby divers in different ways. On the first exercise, deployment times ranged from one and a half to three and a half minutes. On the next round, all standby divers were fully dressed out, tethered and ready to deploy immediately. Launch times averaged 40 seconds. In order to deploy a standby diver within 1 minute as required, it is important to practice and ensure your method works.

Here, NDC Instructor Bill Gordon teaches new Working Divers how to "fish" a tethered diver as Steve Urick coaches others in the water.

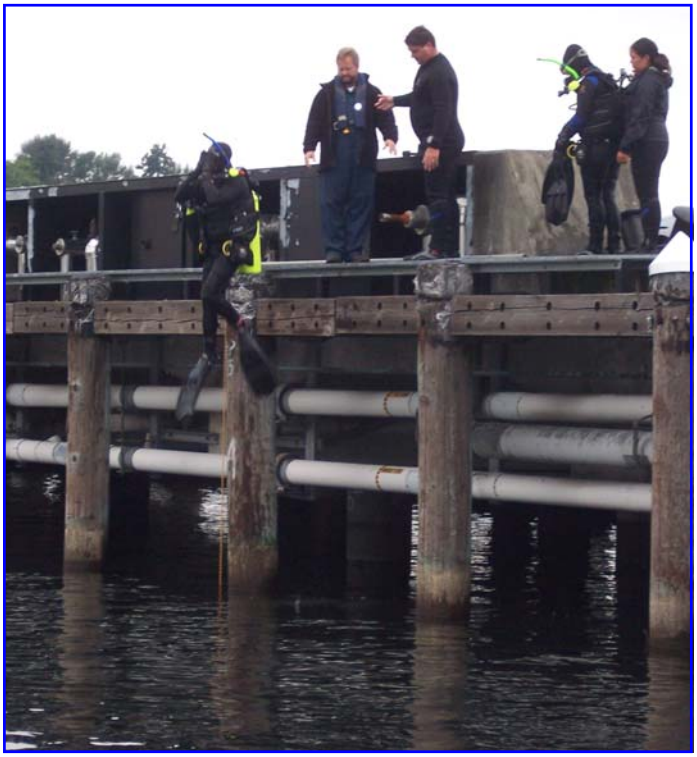
NOAA Ship *Delaware II*

On the 31st of July, the NOAA Ship /Delaware II /was conducting clam trawls approximately 25 NM South-east of Nantucket, MA. While retrieving the dredge, the 2 inch hawser (rope which takes the strain of the dredge on the bottom) went slack as it usually does when the wire from the main winch takes the strain of lifting it. However, this time the hawser got tangled in the dredge and underneath the ship. The dredge was retrieved and secured as was the trailing hawser line which led underneath the ship. From topside it could not be determined where exactly the hang-up was, whether it was the rudder or the ramp. We were certain that it had not fouled the ship's propeller due to the fact that we were in gear as we were hauling the dredge up and the line had not pulled tight. The Chief Bosun, Jon Forgione (Divemaster), decided to hook up the line to the gilson winch located on our A-frame to try to keep tension on it while we worked the ramp in and out. This attempt failed. We then turned our attention to the fact it might be stuck on the rudder, so we again tried to keep tension on it while we cycled the rudder. This attempt failed as well, however, it did get tighter as we move the rudder back and forth.
The only other options left were to cut the line and potentially have the trailing portion foul the propeller or perform dive ops. Captain Stephen Wagner (Divemaster), seeing calm conditions and very little current, decided the best option was to proceed with diving on the rudder. In addition to the small boat a trail line was set out, main engine and electronics were secured, dive plan was discussed in detail, ship dive safe plan was filled out, and standby divers were in place. Two divers went in and looked at the situation from the stern and determined that it would be best to go down the side of the vessel to get to the rudder because of the motion of the trawl ramp and low visibility (approx. 2 feet). Both divers descended and checked the rudder. What was found was that a knot in the hawser line had gotten stuck between the rudder and the skeg just forward of the pintle (see attached). The dive itself only took 5 minutes, but it took the effort of two divers to dislodge the knot. Using the ships divers to sort out this problem actually saved the ship from having to cut and re-splice the hawser back together as well as possible damage to the rudder.

~LT Earl Spencer/XO



High giant stride entry technique



During this month's Working Diver class, the students conducted a series of giant stride entries from the pier wearing the RASS. No divers experienced any difficulty with the RASS when entering from a higher level. All RASSs were attached in the NDC-recommended positions. NDC recommends, and has been teaching in the Seattle classes for over 10 years, a modified giant stride entry technique when the entry platform is greater than 6' from the surface. It is suggested to tuck your chin to chest, cover the regulator with both hands while holding the mask, and point your fins in mid-air so that you enter the water like a dart. Your right arm/elbow secures the RASS. The purpose of using both hands in this way is to prevent water from forcefully entering the second stage and potentially dislodging the diaphragm (this happened once in class). Tucking the chin and covering your face prevents mask dislodging and the possibility of the tank valve hitting your head. Pointing the fins lessens the impact of entry and lessens the likelihood of injury, particularly to the ankles.

New Working Divers

NDC congratulates the September 2008 Working Diver graduates! This was the first class to be trained in the use of the reserve air supply systems and line-tending techniques. Their feedback will be evaluated by NDC personnel. All divers preferred to keep the pony bottle in the bag at all times, finding it easier to manage.

Back row, L to R: LT Don Beacage, NOAA Ship *Ka'imimoana*; LT Abigail Higgins, NOAA Coast Survey Development Lab; ENS John Petersen, NOAA Ship *McArthur II*; ENS Kevin Adams, NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster*; ENS Ryan Wartick, NOAA Ship *Thomas Jefferson*; Steve Lonhart, NOS/ONMS/MBNMS; Second Row, L to R: ENS John Rossi, NOAA Ship *Ronald H. Brown*, Ann Mooney, NOS/NMSP/PMNM; Kim Woody, NOS/NCCOS/CCMA; Whitney Anderson, NOAA Ship *Rainier;* ENS Mark Andrews, NOAA Ship *Fairweather*.

New Divemasters

L to R: LT Lindsay Kurelja, NOAA Ship *Oregon II*; Melody Ovard, NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster*; Brian Degan, NOS/NCCOS/CCFHR; LT Mark Van Waes, NOS/HSPT; LTJG Loren Evory, NOAA Ship *Ronald H. Brown*

Training evaluations

One of NDC's primary purposes is training the NOAA diving community and the staff strives to provide top-quality instruction. Here are some comments from different individuals who just trained at NDC.

Working Divers

"Excellent!"

"Best course I've taken at any level on any topic from any organization ever. "

"This is the best training I have seen. All instructors are extremely well educated and top notch. I have felt safe and trust the people looking out for my safety."

"NOAA is extremely fortunate to have a crack squad of expert instructors teaching the Working Diver course. Not only are they profoundly knowledgeable in their field, they also have a passion for teaching. Well done!"

"This was a terrific course taught by expert instructors. I feel ready to strap on my tank and get to work. Thank you for a job well done."

"The effort and time each instructor put into this class is incredibly impressive and very appreciated. Thanks to each of you for a great learning experience."

"You all are doing a terrific job. The amount of effort put into the class really shows."

"Awesome instructors! Obviously a huge effort to put on this course and lots of prep work. Great job, NDC! Thanks!"

"Let us eat in the classroom."

Divemasters

"Outstanding."

"I liked the change in mindset from being an operational diver to a dive supervisor. The "sham" day was EXCELLENT!"

"The hands-on was great and so was the interaction with the Working Diver students."

"Excellent instruction. Lots of great information."

"What I liked best about the course was interacting with the Working Divers and hearing their comments about our leadership."

"What I liked least was … Death by PowerPoint. "

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NDC says Thank You! Dive Safe!