

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
HORACE M. ALBRIGHT TRAINING CENTER
Grand Canyon, Arizona

P&VP-76

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF SCUBA AND OTHER DIVING APPARATUS BY
NPS EMPLOYEES ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS

The following guidelines prescribe the use of self-contained underwater breathing apparatus and other diving equipment by personnel of the National Park Service:

GENERAL

Skin and SCUBA diving are becoming increasingly popular forms of water recreation. Many park lakes and rivers and coastal waters adjoining certain parks are now being used by divers for recreational purposes. Underwater nature trails have recently been added to our interpretive program. The National Park Service is now using SCUBA equipment to assist in carrying out fish management programs, marine and fresh water research, historical and archeological research, maintenance of boats and water use facilities, interpretation, and routine and emergency protection operations.

The use of any diving equipment can be hazardous. Safety will be the prime consideration in any diving operation conducted by the Service.

Parks having water use shall develop and keep current a Diving Safety Plan which should include: waters closed to swimming and SCUBA diving, special hazards, local policies and regulations, names of qualified diving personnel and instructors, diving and rescue equipment directories, instructions for the use of the nearest acceptable recompression chamber, and plans for underwater search and rescue operations.

GUIDELINES

The National Park Service shall:

1. Limit the use of SCUBA and other diving equipment by Service employees to open circuit type, using compressed air only. Pure oxygen, mixed gases or closed circuit equipment will not be used.
2. Limit the use of SCUBA and other diving equipment to those activities or projects specifically approved by the superintendent

upon submission of a plan of operation outlining objectives, working conditions, qualifications of employees involved, equipment, and special safety precautions to be taken. Questionable proposals will be cleared through the regional director and the Director.

3. Require employees using SCUBA or other diving equipment on official business to be fully qualified by training, experience, and physical condition to successfully meet the hazards that may be encountered.

Successful completion of the U.S. Navy SCUBA Diver Training or other Service-approved training program, or equivalent formal training from a recognized school will be considered evidence of an employee's qualifications for diving within these guidelines.

In lieu of formal training in a recognized school, a minimum of three years of SCUBA and/or other diving experience of a nature similar to that to be performed will be acceptable upon a showing of competency in SCUBA diving theory and practice.

Each employee, before being allowed to dive on official business, must have a memorandum of diving authority (see sample attached) signed by a diving examiner and approved by the regional director. Diving examiners will be designated by the regional director from those employees in the region who are qualified for formal training to serve in this capacity.

4. Conduct diving operations in pairs working as a unit under a buddy system, with each diver responsible for the other's safety.

- a. When visibility is good, each shall keep the other continuously in sight at short range.
- b. When visibility is poor, a short buddy line shall link the two. A lifeline and/or float line will be attached to each diver when appropriate.
- c. Under conditions of excellent visibility and where a lifeline is used, a qualified and equipped SCUBA diver may serve as the surface tender in lieu of a buddy operation so long as the diver does not exceed 30 feet in depth and the surface tender can keep the diver in clear visibility and signal range.

5. Provide a surface tender who is a fully qualified and equipped SCUBA diver for each working unit or buddy pair, except as hereafter noted:

This surface tender may operate from shore or from the deck of a boat or vessel as may be appropriate. He shall be so located as to remain in close proximity to the divers.

In operations not exceeding 10 feet in depth, the surface tender need not be qualified as a SCUBA diver, but shall be a strong swimmer, having a working knowledge of SCUBA, and have available such emergency equipment as is necessary for the safety of the divers.

6. Mark diving area with standard diver's flags to protect divers from passing boats.

7. Permit no employee to dive alone or unattended.

8. Designate a qualified diving supervisor on each operation who will be responsible for its planning, conduct and safety. His decisions shall be final. The diving supervisor will ascertain that all divers possess current authorization, are in good physical condition and psychologically adapted for the planned operation before they enter the water.

9. Use only SCUBA air tanks (approved by ICC regulations), valves, and regulators which are manufactured by established diving equipment companies for professional use.

10. Store, transport, maintain and operate SCUBA and other diving equipment and compressors in accordance with appropriate provisions of the U.S. Navy Diving Manual and the equipment manufacturer's instructions.

11. Take necessary steps to insure a pure air supply in tanks and from surface compressors.

12. Limit diving to depths and times that will not require decompression staging in accordance with the U.S. Navy Standard Air Decompression Tables and Repetitive Dive Tables (Tables 1-5, 1-6, 1-7, and 1-8) except as may be necessary for emergency rescue, in which case the Navy decompression tables will be adhered to. Dives shall not exceed 130 feet.

13. Require all divers to wear an inflatable life vest that can be manually and automatically inflated. Divers engaged in deep and difficult diving should be equipped with a knife, watch, depth gauge, compass, underwater light, etc.

14. Conduct SCUBA and other diving on a voluntary basis. No diver shall engage in any diving operation beyond his ability or contrary to his training.

15. Take such action as may be necessary and prudent to conduct rescue operations or make repairs to equipment under emergency conditions when immediate action must be taken to avoid loss of life. Under such emergency conditions the employee in immediate charge will see that all possible safety precautions are taken to avoid compounding the hazard.

16. Maintain diving charts (NPS Form 10-419) for every diving operation.

(Sample Authorization to Dive)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Date

In reply refer to:
P48-CR

Memorandum

To: Supervisory Park Ranger John Doe
Through: Superintendent, Park Area

From: Regional Director

Subject: Authorization to dive for the National Park Service

You are authorized to use self-contained underwater breathing apparatus or surface supplied underwater breathing apparatus incident to the performance of your official duties subject to prescribed Service policy and regulations governing the use of such equipment:

RESTRICTIONS

This authorization expires two years from date of issue.

REMARKS

Determined to be physically qualified for diving by
Dr. _____,

_____ date

Examined and found technically qualified and psychologically adapted for diving by Diving Examiner.

Sgd: _____

Diving Examiner

Approved: _____

Regional Director

cc:
Superintendent
Official Personnel Folder