

SAN DIEGO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

DIVE UNIT



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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1. Mission

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department (SDSD) Dive Unit mission is to serve San Diego County in search and or recovery operations involving victims, evidence, and other property while preserving evidence when applicable.

2. Purpose

- a) The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that all diving performed under the auspices of the SDSD Dive Unit is conducted in a manner that maximizes the protection of the divers from accidental injury or illness.
- b) This SDSD Dive Unit SOP's provide the development and implementation of guidelines and procedures that will enable the SDSD Dive Unit divers to safely meet the requirements of local environments and conditions. These diving guidelines shall include, but not be limited to:
 - i) Safety procedures for diving operations
 - ii) Responsibilities of the dive members
 - iii) Equipment use and maintenance procedures
 - iv) Emergency procedures
 - v) Training
- c) This document does not supersede but compliments the San Diego Sheriff Department's Policy and Procedures Manual (P&P) and the Reserve's Standard Operating Procedures. It is written to amplify and standardize the unique requirements for the SDSD Dive Unit.

3. Qualifications

a. General

- i) Each dive member should have the experience or training necessary to perform assigned tasks safely, efficiently and effectively.
- ii) Each diver should be trained, qualified and certified for the dive mission at hand.

b. Team Member Qualifications

PREREQUISITES: To be classified as an Entry Level / Operations Level Diver, individuals must meet the following MINIMUM criteria:

- i) Be certified as an Open Water Scuba Diver from a recognized National Scuba Training Agency.
- ii) Be current CPR / First Aid / O2 / AED certified
- iii) *Recommended:* Be certified as a Recreational Rescue Diver or Equivalent

- iv) *Recommended:* Completion of a Public Safety Diver (PSD) Basic Training Specialty or Program offered by or through a recognized national training agency.
- v) *Optional:* Be certified in Full Face Mask and Dry Suit Specialties

4. General Operations

a. San Diego Sheriff Designations Include:

- i) Citizen Volunteers (CV)
Can function in all Dive Unit activities and can function as squad leaders.
- ii) Sworn Members
Can function in all Dive Unit activities and can hold leadership ranks (Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant, etc.)

b. Diver Status

The SDSD Dive Unit members shall be classified into the following categories, unless the Dive Unit Leader deems otherwise.

- i) **Active Diver Status:** A diver who is currently meeting all training requirements as defined in this document.
- ii) **Inactive Diver Status (non-diver):** A diver who has not met the training requirements as defined in this document. This diver is not allowed to function as a diver during incidents but can assist at the operations level (non-diver). Divers who have successfully completed no less than 6 or more training dives in the past 12 months are eligible to return to active status. This diver can return to active status by correcting the previous year's training requirements.

c. Mission Manager

Mission Manager is the system the department uses to track and maintain the Dive members data. Once enrolled, each member is responsible for maintaining and updating their personal information, emergency contact, hours and miles used for the activity for each month. The minimum time requirement is listed in the Law Enforcement Reserve SOP under Section 2.17-Timekeeping. To calculate this time, it starts from when you're getting ready and until you return to your starting location or home. Time is measured in whole hours and any part of an hour is rounded up. The categories include, but are not limited to: meetings, trainings, missions, range, community events and administration. The hours and miles need to be entered into the system before the end of each month to be counted.

5. Requirements

a. Uniform Requirements

Uniforms are at the member's expense and follow the Department P&P.

Uniforms specific for the Dive Unit:

- i) Department and Unit approved pants, shirts, jackets and hats
- ii) Black polo shirt with Dive Unit logo for missions and PR details
- iii) Black riggers belt
- iv) Black boots
- v) Each member will be issued two Dive Unit T-Shirts for trainings and field operations
- vi) Additional equipment may be issued by the department, but it is the individual's responsibility to maintain it

b. Dive Gear Requirements

i. Unit Equipment:

All Dive Unit equipment issued shall be inspected annually by the unit leader or designee in conjunction with the department's annual inspection report.

The SDSO Dive Unit leader or designee is responsible for ensuring all Dive Unit equipment is inspected, tested and maintained in accordance with manufacturer guidelines in conjunction with the department's annual inspection report.

ii. Member Equipment:

Dive Unit members are responsible for ensuring all their personal equipment is inspected tested and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer guidelines. Each member is required annually to show proof to the unit leader or designee that their equipment has been maintained according to manufacturer guidelines in conjunction with the department's annual inspection report.

iii. Minimum Equipment, Divers:

- (1) Buoyancy Compensation Device (BCD) with power and manual inflator,
- (2) Regulator and alternate air source
 - (a) *Recommended - 7ft hose on the primary regulator*
 - (b) *Optional - Full Face Mask (with backup alternate air source and mask)*
- (3) Submersible pressure gauge (SPG)
- (4) 2 cutting tools (knife/shears)
- (5) Primary breathing gas cylinder (Tank)
- (6) Mask, fins and snorkel
- (7) Removable weights (worn or integrated)
- (8) Suitable exposure suit (wet suit or dry suit), gloves and hood
- (9) Recording depth gauge

- (10) Watch or bottom timer
- (11) 2 Dive lights
- (12) *Recommended - Diver-carried reserve breathing air consisting of a Pony Cylinder minimum size cylinder of 13 cubic feet*

c. Training Requirements

- i) Training is performed in a safe manner and focused on providing the Dive member with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform the mission of the Dive Unit in accordance to the accepted guidelines of the Public Safety Diver PADI manual.
- ii) Each diver must successfully complete one (1) basic skills pool evaluation and six (6) open-water training dives annually. New divers joining the Team mid-year shall complete one open-water training dive per every two months remaining in the calendar year.
- iii) Training data will be accumulated monthly.
- iv) Training Schedule (*typical*):
 - (1) Trainings are held on the 3rd Saturday of the month (unless there is a schedule conflict with the training facilities and enough notice has been provided)
 - (2) Unit meetings/classroom training are the Wednesday before the training Saturday
 - (3) Trainings typically build upon the prior month, so member's need to attend as many of the trainings as possible to keep their skills as a Dive Unit sharp and their status as an active diver

6. Personnel

a. Dive Unit Leader

The Dive Unit Leader will be responsible for the operations, planning and overall management of the Dive Unit in performing the follow duties:

- i) Organize the Unit member trainings, call-outs and other events
- ii) Activates the Unit for service requests or call-outs
- iii) Coordinates with the Dive Incident Supervisor (DIS) in providing what resources are available and at what capacity to conduct the mission
- iv) Provides input to the DIS for the risk/benefit assessment for pre-dive briefs
- v) Leads the Unit Pre-Mission brief
- vi) Receives all necessary documentation from the members to create a final "After Action" report for the mission
- vii) The Dive Unit Leader or his designee is responsible for maintaining accurate and up to date training files for each member

b. The Dive Incident Supervisor (DIS)

The DIS will be responsible for the safety and security of all members of the Dive Unit while at the dive scene. The DIS is responsible for the following tasks at the scene:

- i) Performs the risk/benefit assessment as to whether the Unit proceeds or not with a search and recovery
- ii) Assigning roles (Scribe, Divers, Dive Tender, Safety Officer)
- iii) Communicates or appoints a member of the Dive Unit to brief the, "Incident Commander" in charge, and/or requesting agency about the Dive Unit member's actions
- iv) Leads the Pre-Dive and Post-Dive Briefs
- v) Participates in the overall Mission Debrief

c. Safety Officer

The Safety Officer is responsible for the enforcement of safety procedures to insure the smooth safe performance of the Dive Unit to the completion of its mission and may include the following duties:

- i) The Unit members and divers functioning in their capacity
- ii) The overall safety of the scene the Unit members are functioning in
- iii) Status of local hospitals and decompression chambers in the event of a dive emergency
- iv) Identify a Landing Zone for the air ambulance and or ASTREA
- v) Acquire the conditions of the search area: bottom conditions, water conditions, etc...
- vi) Insure all non-diving personnel are wearing a personal flotation device whenever they are within twenty-five feet of the water's edge or performing boat operations.

d. Scribe

The Scribe will be responsible for all the required documentation at the scene to include, but not limited to:

- i) Take notes at the Pre-Mission brief on:
 - (1) Type of mission
 - (2) Who requested the Dive Unit?
 - (3) A complete description of the object being searched for
 - (4) The results of the risk/benefit assessment, and the justification for the results.
 - (5) Type of search pattern planned and used
 - (6) The task assignments of each member
- ii) Record any significant events, with times, during the mission.
- iii) Obtain from each Unit member on scene their completed T-Card

- iv) Obtain from each diver, before they enter the water:
 - (1) Air pressures
 - (2) Entry times
 - (3) Diver assignment (Primary, Backup and Safety)
- v) Obtain from each diver, upon exiting the water:
 - (1) Remaining air pressure
 - (2) Water temperature
 - (3) Maximum depth
 - (4) Bottom composition
 - (5) Exit time
- vi) Collect any utilized documentation from all Dive Unit members, to be included in the Scribe's report
- vii) Provide a copy of all submitted documentation to the Dive Unit Leader to be included in the "After Action" report
- viii) The scribe will also interface with the "On Scene Deputy" in charge, and/or requesting agency regarding the time requirement of any documentation or forms needed from the Dive Unit

e. Dive Tender

The Dive Tender is the divers' support person responsible for the safety and support of the divers while they are performing their tasks. This is to include, but not limited to all surface support, while they are under the water, when returning to the surface, and until they are safely out of their role as divers. The Dive tender will also be responsible for communications between the divers and the surface. The communications systems may vary depending on the operations and available systems used.

f. Primary Diver

The Primary Diver must be an active diver status and a qualified diver able and capable of performing the underwater activities relating to the dive mission.

g. Backup Diver

The Backup Diver must be an active diver status and a qualified diver able and capable of performing the underwater activities relating to the dive mission and should be fully dressed and ready to assist the Primary Diver.

h. Safety Diver

The Safety Diver must be an active diver status and a qualified diver able and capable of performing the underwater activities relating to the dive mission and with the level of experience and training to assist in the event of a diver emergency and work as a primary diver when necessary. The safety diver should be mostly dressed and have their equipment at hand.

7. Dive Operations

a. Safety Procedures for All Diving Operations

i. Before Diving Operations are Commenced

- (1) Conduct a risk/benefit field assessment to identify the risks and determine the benefit of conducting the dive at each site.
- (2) Develop an emergency action plan including transportation of an injured diver to the nearest operational hyperbaric chamber, or closest appropriate emergency medical facility.
- (3) Develop a safety plan for all surface and dive operations prior to any operations being initiated.
- (4) Develop a Dive Action Plan (DAP) for the mission
- (5) The “diver-down” flag shall be prominently displayed during all dive operations unless currents or lack of overhead boat traffic dictate none is needed.
- (6) Ensure Emergency Oxygen and First Aid are on site.

ii. The Dive Shall be Terminated When:

The ultimate responsibility for safety rests with the individual diver and it is the diver’s responsibility and duty to refuse to dive or terminate a dive if, in their judgment, conditions are unsafe, unfavorable, or if diving would violate the precepts of their level of certification or training or for any other reason that the diver deems reasonable. The dive member will notify the DIS or Dive Unit Leader immediately of their concerns.

b. Activation

The Dive Unit operates on a mission basis and does not self-deploy. The SDSD’s (Reserve Coordinator) will activate the Dive Unit by communicating with the Dive Unit Leader. The Dive Unit will be notified and alerted by means of the tools available (Mission Manager, text, email, etc...) of the activation and each Unit member is responsible to respond with their availability as soon as possible or within the hour to their squad leader and or the Dive Unit Leader, depending on the instructions given.

c. First Dive Member on Scene Responsibilities

If possible, all responding Dive members will meet at a designated site, prior to arriving “On Scene” to arrive as an organized Unit. If this is not possible, the first Dive member to arrive on the scene has the following responsibilities.

- i) Assume the role of the DIS until a higher-ranking member arrives and assumes that role.
- ii) Assign other unit members to assist gathering information as they arrive.
- iii) Initiate a Dive Unit muster of the Dive members present, and their assigned roles.

- iv) Begin gathering information about the incident and coordinate with the Incident Commander in charge, and/or requesting agency of the scene.

d. Pre-Mission Brief

The Dive Unit Leader or DIS will conduct the pre-mission brief. The brief will consist of the following information:

- i) Conduct the risk/benefit assessment
- ii) Type of mission: evidence, body recovery or other
- iii) Location or area of the search
- iv) Is the scene a crime scene?
- v) Safety information including:
 - (1) Any known hazards within the body of water and area of the scene
 - (2) A medical brief from the on-scene medical personnel
 - (3) The status of the hyperbaric chambers in the area
 - (4) The location of a landing zone for the air ambulance and or ASTREA
 - (5) Results of the communications check
- vi) Any other pertinent information concerning the scene
- vii) Assignment of roles to responding team members

e. Pre-Dive Brief

The DIS will conduct the pre-dive brief. The brief will consist of the following minimum requirements:

- i) The results of the pre-mission brief risk/benefit assessment, safety and communications
- ii) A description of the object being searched for and what search pattern is being used
- iii) Point last seen or focused area to search
- iv) If any, a brief from the Dive member who interviewed the witness(es)
- v) Possibility of biological hazards
- vi) Conditions of the body of water to be searched, including any known hazards
- vii) The Dive Action Plan (DAP)
- viii) Any contingency to the DAP
- ix) The emergency action plan as defined in the PADI rescue manual restated by the divers prior to entry

f. Mission Debrief

The Dive Unit Leader or DIS will conduct the mission debrief, which will include the following:

- i) Safety concerns
- ii) Current condition of all personnel, including divers and non-diver unit members
- iii) Situation report: to include the disposition of the mission

- iv) Initiate a round-robin discussion of the dive mission: questions, comments, concerns and what could have been done better; any lessons learned.
- v) Secure the mission and the Dive Unit.

g. Recovery Procedures

i. Search Patterns

The DIS or lead agency of the scene will determine the search pattern or patterns to be used on the search. The Safety of the Divers, the type of object(s) sought, the condition of the water, and type of entry will all be factors in determining the search pattern or patterns to be used. Since there are numerous types of search patterns that can be used, the pattern selected should be from ones the Dive Unit has been trained on or familiar with based on the conditions listed above and meets the objective of finding the object(s) being sought in a safe manner.

ii. Human Remains

All human remains recovery will be done with dignity and respect. All effort to collect the remains needs to be conducted in a safe manner but special care must be taken not to alter the condition of the body.

- (1) If possible, document and photograph the victim.
- (2) All human remains will be recovered via the Unit's underwater body bag while in the water. If the condition of the body must be altered in any way, a full explanation of why and how shall verbally be explained to the medical examiner personnel.

iii. Weapons

- (1) All weapons scenes will be treated as crime scenes. Safety will be paramount in this type of recovery operation.
- (2) All weapons must be considered ARMED, LOADED and READY TO FIRE until rendered "safe" after recovery.
- (3) The Incident Commander or lead agency on scene will manage the handling of the weapon(s) once recovered.
- (4) If possible, document and photograph the weapon(s).
- (5) When feasible and appropriate for evidence preservation, all weapon(s) will be placed into a rigid or semi-rigid sealed container. The diver(s) will fill the container with water from the depth and location of where the weapon was found and seal prior to bringing to the surface.
- (6) Once the weapon is on the surface and can be safely rendered safe, coordination with the recovery diver and the "On Scene Deputy" in charge or lead agency on scene will manage the handling of the weapon(s) to make it safe for transport and to maintain chain of custody.

iv. Vehicle Recovery

All vehicle recovery scenes will be treated as crime scenes. Safety will be paramount in this type of recovery operation. The procedures for recovering a vehicle will be done in accordance with the certification and training the Unit has received.

v. Aircraft Recovery

All aircraft recover scenes will be treated as crime scenes. Safety will be paramount in this type of recovery operation. The procedures for recovering an aircraft will be done in accordance with the certification and training the Unit has received.

vi. Explosive Ordinance

The Dive Unit is **NOT** an Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Unit. If the Dive Unit is requested to assist in the search for underwater explosive ordinance, the Dive Unit will **ONLY** search and mark the location and retreat from the area to allow a trained EOD unit to proceed.

8. Documentation Procedures

a. General

All documentation required by the department will be conducted in accordance with SDSD's P&P, except for the following Dive Unit specific reports.

b. Dive Unit Specific Reports

- i) All Dive missions should have the following documentation completed.
 - (1) Dive log: Log lists only Diver information
 - (2) Dive Unit Muster: Logs all on-site Dive Unit members
 - (3) Summary of the Dive Action Plan (DAP)
 - (4) Report of Dive/After action report