



*The Florida State University*  
Diving Control Board

## **EXPOSURE CONTROL GUIDELINES FOR DIVING OPERATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The following are considered mandatory requirements as of April 22, 2021. Additional measures may be required based upon specific characteristics of the planned operations, environmental conditions, current community public health situation, or further guidance from the University.

### **General Guidelines**

- All dive team members must complete COVID-19 PCR testing and will not be able to join a dive team until they are cleared by obtaining negative test results.
- Eligibility remains in place for a maximum of seven (7) days following negative test results.
- Divers may choose to provide documentation for receiving the COVID-19 vaccination in order to be exempt from the testing requirement beginning no earlier than 2 weeks after completing a full vaccination series (i.e., 2nd dose of a two-shot series). Divers who choose this option will not be required to test for up to 90 days after vaccination, unless they have COVID-19 related symptoms.
- During the period of field research, divers must limit exposure to others outside of the group involved in the research.
- Valid documentation for vaccination must be on file with the Diving Safety Officer. Those that do not choose to be vaccinated may instead meet the requirement for testing and must confirm that they have been cleared. Individuals are not required to provide test results.
- Facial coverings must be used at all times when two or more people are present in the same area and interaction among personnel is possible.
- Social distancing should be maintained during all surface activities including vehicular and vessel transport.
- The applications of social units and/or a quarantine process will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

### **Personnel Guidelines**

- In the interest of the dive team, it is expected that any diver who feels ill or has reasonable cause to believe they have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus will exclude her/himself from diving operations.
- If a diver has reasonable cause to believe they have been exposed to Corona SARS-CoV-2, they should quarantine for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- If the exposed individual has maintained careful daily monitoring for symptoms and has remained symptom-free for 10 days since exposure, they may end quarantine AFTER completion of Day 10, and receiving a negative PCR test collected on Day 6 or later after exposure but must continue to monitor their symptoms. This shorter period of quarantine would be acceptable only if advised by local public health authorities.
- If a diver has symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should consult with a healthcare professional to determine the optimal timing of testing and must self-isolate until they have been symptom free for 10 days. At the end of the 10-day period, the diver should consider a medical evaluation to determine if additional testing is needed to return to diving.

- If a diver has tested positive for COVID-19 they must self-isolate according to current CDC guidelines. At the end of the isolation period as determined by the Department of Health, the diver should consider a medical evaluation to determine if additional testing is needed to return to diving.
- A diver who tests positive and is cleared to return to diving may omit testing procedures for a period of 90 days from the date of the positive test as long as they remain asymptomatic. If the diver becomes symptomatic again, a medical evaluation should be considered.
- Because COVID-19 testing only provides clearance for a point of time, there is an inherent risk in relying solely on testing as a means to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. During the period of diving, divers must refrain from unnecessary risks of exposure including avoiding crowded places and gatherings where it is difficult to maintain social distancing and/or where people are not wearing masks.
- To limit the potential spread of COVID-19 among active divers, dive teams and auxiliary personnel should be kept to a minimum (on a single dive trip and from trip to trip for a particular research project).

### **Dive Briefings and Equipment Checks**

- Primary dive team operational planning and briefing should be conducted prior to departing for the dive site.
- On site discussions and prep should be minimized to essential items.
- Each diver should only handle and test their own equipment.
- In place of traditional buddy checks, each diver should perform functional testing and demonstrate operation of his/her equipment while observed by the buddy.
- All divers must take care not to transfer saliva from breathing equipment to other persons or surfaces.

### **Rescue Guidelines**

- If air sharing is required, refrain from sharing a single second stage unless to refrain would result in severe injury or loss of life.
- Diver assist, rescues, and first aid must be approached with extra safety precautions in mind.
- Diver rescue training must be conducted without non-essential sharing of equipment or person to person contact.

### **Equipment**

- Dive equipment and any personal or scientific auxiliary equipment used should be dedicated to an individual diver for the duration of the diving operation.
- All dive equipment and vehicles and vessels used should be properly disinfected before and after use.
- Hand sanitizing provisions should be provided by the lead diver and made available at the dive site.
- Each diver is responsible for disinfecting his/her own equipment. All regulator second stages and BC oral inflators must:
  - receive an initial freshwater rinse, then be immersed in a CDC-approved bleach solution or other EPA-approved disinfectant after return to shore, and
  - remaining wetted for at least 5 minutes, and then rinsed before drying.
- Equipment used by one diver will not be used by a different diver without an intervening period of at least 7 days and a re-disinfection prior to use.
- O2 kits, first aid supplies, and any other gear that may have been contaminated should be disinfected or safely disposed after use.

**Dive Logging Procedures**

- Upon completion of a day's operations, the Lead Diver must communicate a log of the day's dive to the DSO, including any breaches of exposure protocols.