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Chapter 6.5 Underwater Operations Safety and Health

This could be you . . .

A scuba diver was working upside-down for about 45 minutes when he noted a slight chest pain. The diver was treated for medistanal emphysema and returned to diving after 2 weeks.

During a free-dive training exercise, a dive instructor suffered from shallow water blackout. A dive student retrieved the instructor from the pool bottom. Surface observers successfully performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation on the dive instructor.

6.5.1. Applicability of this chapter

You are required to follow this chapter if you operate or work with neutral buoyancy facilities, plan open water training, or use other non-open-water facilities.

6.5.2. What this chapter covers

6.5.2.1 This chapter covers dive operations for open and non-open-water diving. It includes:

- a. Underwater testing and training.
- b. Dive standards.
- c. Requirements for divers, equipment, and breathing gases.
- d. General operating procedures.

6.5.3. Open and non-open-water diving

For the purpose of this chapter, non-open-water diving is conducted in water that is in a manmade enclosure and is treated with chemicals.

6.5.4. Steps to follow when using a neutral buoyancy facility

6.5.4.1 Test requesters or operators shall:

- a. Follow Chapter 6.8, "Space Systems and Test Safety," for training and testing operations in a JSC neutral buoyancy facility (NBF).
- b. Follow the requirements in JPR 8715.2, "JSC Safety Standard for Underwater Operations."
- c. Develop a dive plan with the following minimum content:

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- (1) Purpose of the test.
- (2) Test objectives.
- (3) Scope of the test.
- (4) Test requirements.
- (5) Safety and medical planning provisions.
- (6) Any known medical issues.
- (7) Any special precautions or safety considerations.
- (8) Method of testing.
- (9) Other items possibly required by the NBF.
- (10) The NBF's critical lift procedures.

The NBF may have more requirements than those listed here.

6.5.5. Requirements for open water operations

Test requesters involved with human open-water testing or training shall make their management, the Safety and Test Operations Division, and the Occupational Health Branch aware of their intentions.

6.5.6. Standards for open water operations

6.5.6.1 Employees involved in open water operations shall:

- a. Follow 29 CFR 1910, Subpart T, "Commercial Diving Operations."
- b. Develop alternate standards if operations involve unique equipment and methods not addressed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). These standards shall be:
 - (1) Developed by the responsible line management.
 - (2) Based on consensus standards.
 - (3) Approved as described in Chapter 1.3, "Written Safety and Health Program."

6.5.7. Using the "buddy system"

6.5.7.1 Divers shall use the "buddy system." Never dive alone unless all of the following are true:

- a. There is an emergency and someone's life is in danger.
- b. You volunteer for the rescue. No one may force you.
- c. You are in direct visual contact with someone on the surface or are tethered.

6.5.8. Medical requirements for dive team members during a test

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6.5.8.1 Dive team members shall have a medical examination as required by JPR 8715.2 and under the following conditions:

- a. Before diving.
- b. If injured or ill and have to be hospitalized for more than 24 hours.
- c. At the attending doctor's discretion.

6.5.9. Training for dive team members

6.5.9.1 Dive team members shall be certified as described in Chapter 5.8, "Hazardous Operations: Safe Practices and Certification," and JPR 8715.2 . Formal training shall also include the following:

- a. The use of the tools, equipment, and systems involved.
- b. Techniques and procedures of the assigned diving modes, including the buddy system concept and open water communication.
- c. Diving operations, including diving-related physics and physiology.
- d. Emergency procedures, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid for lifeguards only.

6.5.10. Minimum requirements for breathing gases and diving equipment

Breathing gases and equipment used in NBFs shall meet the minimum requirements of Chapter 6.12, "Safety and Health Requirements for Ground-Based Breathing Gases and Breathing Gas Systems." Document and correct all discrepancies found in the equipment before using it on any more dives.

6.5.11. Electrical equipment for underwater use

6.5.11.1 Electrical equipment used underwater shall meet the following:

- a. Minimum electrical requirements contained in JPR 8715.2.
- b. Install listed ground fault circuit interrupters in the branch circuit supplying underwater lighting fixtures operating at more than 15 volts AC so there is no shock hazard during re-lamping.
- c. Areas around the pool subject to saturation with water or other liquids shall be considered "wet area locations" and protected with listed ground fault circuit interrupters in the branch circuits.

6.5.12. General operating procedures

6.5.12.1 Employees who oversee any diving operations shall have a "safe practices manual" available to each dive team member at the open water dive location. The manual shall include standards, general information, requirements, and:

- a. Specific procedures and checklists for each diving operation. See paragraph 6.5.14 below for minimum requirements.
- b. Responsibilities of the dive team members and support personnel.
- c. Equipment procedures and checklists.

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d. General emergency procedures, including rescue techniques and medical treatment.

6.5.13. What the general operating procedures need to cover for each dive phase

a. The pre-dive phase shall include:

- (1) Planning the dive.
- (2) Assessing the safety of the dive.
- (3) Identifying and inspecting equipment and supplies.

b. The dive phase shall include:

- (1) Entering and exiting the water.
- (2) Communications between divers and surface personnel.
- (3) Dive profiles and limits.
- (4) Individual and crew responsibilities.
- (5) Decompression tables as appropriate.
- (6) Tools and equipment.
- (7) Use of hazardous materials.
- (8) Dive termination under normal and emergency conditions.
- (9) Use of support and rescue equipment.

c. The post-dive phase shall include:

- (1) Checks on physical conditions of the divers.
- (2) Other precautions necessary following the dive.
- (3) Preparation of records of the dive.
- (4) Records of equipment malfunctions.
- (5) If required, assessment of recompression capability and decompression procedure.

6.5.14. Pre-dive briefing

6.5.14.1 Employess who dive shall have a diver and crew briefing by a person familiar with the safety requirements and operational aspects of the dive before entering the water. The briefing shall include a review of the following:

- a. The applicable portions of the safe practices manual.
- b. The specific operating procedures and individual diver responsibilities.
- c. Dive profiles and operational limits.
- d. The buddy system (no one dives alone), assignment of pairs, and communications.
- e. Emergency and rescue procedures and responsible personnel.

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6.5.15. Records for underwater safety

6.5.15.1 Underwater facilities shall keep the following records, make copies available for employees to review, and protect them under the Privacy Act of 1974:

- a. Records, reports, and other documents pertinent to the safety and health of employees in open water operations. Prepare and maintain the records under an established schedule that includes at least the requirements in OSHA 29 CFR 1910.440, "Record Keeping Requirements."
- b. Breathing air records, such as sampling and analysis results.
- c. Records of all maintenance on the diving equipment and support apparatus.
- d. Records of all materials used in an oxygen-enriched environment if enriched gas mixtures are used.

6.5.16. Responsibilities for underwater safety

- a. If you are a *line manager*, you are responsible for making sure the requirements in this JPR and applicable OSHA regulations are met.
- b. The *Safety and Test Operations Division* is responsible for:
 - (1) Making sure human testing, training, or preparations follow the requirements in this JPR, applicable OSHA regulations, and approved procedures.
 - (2) Monitoring all suited subject testing or training. The Safety and Test Operations Division may decide to monitor other testing or training.
 - (3) Auditing JSC NBFs yearly for compliance with this chapter and JPR 8715.2, based on current activities, critical areas, and significant risks.
- c. The *Space and Clinical Operations Division* is responsible for:
 - (1) Monitoring all human testing or training based on the requirements of JPR 8715.2.
 - (2) Making sure the people involved in open water operations meet the physical requirements to perform their duties.