DIVE EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

STANDBY DIVER:

A standby diver is a qualified diver whose role is to provide assistance to the diver or divers in the water in an emergency. The standby diver has responsibilities identical to those of the diver actually carrying out the work.

The standby diver is also responsible for the following:

- Being available at all times to enter the water and lend immediate assistance to the diver
- Being positioned adjacent to the diving control position and in communication with the supervisor and diver
- Ensuring the standby dive equipment is available immediately

The following emergencies could involve a rescue by the standby diver:

- Loss of air (if the diver cannot fix the problem immediately)
- Lost communications (if the communication has stopped from the diver, not responding to line signals)
- Entangled diver (if the diver cannot free him/herself from the entanglement)
- Injured/unconscious diver (if the diver reports an injury that requires assistance or if the diver is not responding and no sign of breathing evident the standby diver must be deployed to assist diver to the surface ensuring the head is tilted to assist in breathing)

ASSESSING A PROBLEM

Regardless of how the rescuer becomes aware that a diver is in distress or whether the emergency occurs on the surface or under water, the first step is a rapid, but thorough assessment of the situation.

- Location and distance to the victim
- Ability to establish and maintain visual contact
- Additional assistance

As the victim is approached, the rescuer should try determine the cause of the problem
-entanglement

-nausea

-decompression sickness

-embolism

-contact with poisonous marine life

-equipment failure

It is important to be familiar with the victims dive kit so as to not mistakenly release the bcd or harness instead of the weight belt. When releasing the belt ensure it will fall free from the rescuer and victim.

Of primary importance is the state of the victim.
If unconscious and underwater, the victim must be brought to the surface as quickly as possible.
If conscious, rescuer must assess the victims mental state and then proceed in a manner that does not increase the victims pain, induce panic, or complicate existing injuries or the rescue process.
Finally the rescuer must assess the victims buoyancy, if not positively buoyant then act establish immediately.

When attempting any of the following procedures, the diver should be careful not to become entrapped by the victim. The first concern of rescuers when they are seized by a victim should be their own safety.

VICTIM SUBMERGED AND UNCONSCIOUS:

An unconscious, non breathing victim submerged or on the surface is in imminent danger of death. Virtually all the rescuers efforts must be directed at establishing and maintaining artificial resuscitation. This can’t be achieved underwater so rescuer must get the victim to the surface in a controlled buoyant ascent.

Upon approach to the victim, the rescuer must release weight belt and may even need to release their own. The rescuer must not be more buoyant than the victim. The victim must then be placed in left side do-si-do position with the head tilted back and brought to the surface. The rescuer should hold the regulator in the victims mouth.

CONVULSIONS IN THE WATER

A convulsion itself rarely causes injury, but the secondary consequences for a diver can be disastrous. If a full face mask is being used, it should be possible for the diver to breathe. The risk in a half mask is the diver spitting out the regulator and drowning. Also the rapid ascent could follow in a panic state. Once the victim is at the surface use oxygen and arrange transport to a hyperbaric facility.
TOWING A VICTIM IN THE WATER

After the victim is on the surface, the rescuer should check immediately that his/her face is out of the water, remove the mask if needed and check the airway is clear. Towing a victim should not be attempted if the victim is struggling or panicking. The rescuer if able to tow should make sure the victim has positive buoyancy and use a towing technique that allows him/her to observe the victim.

REMOVING A VICTIM FROM THE WATER

This may be the most difficult part of the rescue. Any equipment should be removed before exiting the water. Victims requiring CPR should be placed on a flat hard deck as soon as possible. A rope can be used under the arms of the victim or if on the vessel use the spinal board.

VICTIM SUBMERGED AND CONSCIOUS

Follow previous steps regarding safe ascent and positive buoyancy once at surface

Summary of standby diver drill

-standby diver is at the appropriate state of readiness
-dressing safely and effectively
-entry to water is safe
-followed distressed divers lifeline
-checked for danger/assessed nature of emergency
-checked for response/rendered assistance
-replaced demand valve if appropriate
-did not purge demand valve or full faced flushed
-do-si-do position
-ditched weight belt or established positive buoyancy
-signaled distress on the lifeline or voice communications
- controlled ascent to the surface
- support head/ neck extension
- signaled distress on the surface
- inflate BCDs
- swam diver to exit point
- completed effective EAR in water
- removed divers equipment in water
- assisted diver out of the water
- removed own equipment and exited water

**EMERGENCY FREE ASCENT PROCEDURES**

- drop any tools or objects being held in hands
- abandon the weight belt

- If the SCUBA or SSBA kit has become entangled and must be abandoned, actuate the quick release buckles on the waist, chest, shoulder and crotch straps. Slip an arm out of one shoulder strap and roll the kit off the other arm. Ensure that the hoses don't wrap around and constrict the neck

- If the reason for the emergency ascent is a loss of air, drop all tools immediately and inflate to surface immediately. Do not drop the scuba kit unless it is necessary

- exhale continuously during ascent to allow expanding air in the lungs to escape freely