



National Park Service  
US Department of the Interior

*National Park Service*

**DIVING MANAGEMENT**

**REFERENCE MANUAL - 4**

**2019**

Law Enforcement, Security, and  
Emergency Services

**RM-4**

# Reference Manual -4

## Diving Safety and Operations Manual

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Louis Rowe

Acting Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection

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### 1.1 Introduction

- A. The National Park Service (NPS) manages many areas that require underwater diving operations and utilizes diving as a tool to conduct a wide variety of management functions. These operations are essential to the management and use of recreational, natural, and cultural resources, as well as resource and visitor protection.
- B. NPS dive operations are conducted for many purposes, including those related to science, public service / safety, and maintenance and infrastructure. It is therefore necessary to provide standards and guidance to park superintendents and program managers, and NPS divers in order to standardize safe diving practices. This document, *Diving Management*, Reference Manual 4 (RM-4), and the NPS *Diving Safety and Operations Manual*, Field Manual 4 (FM-4) provides those standards and guidance. Together these documents (RM-4 and FM-4) supply a uniform approach to polices, standards, and procedures to be followed in order to achieve the desired service-wide goal of conducting safe diving operations.
  - i. RM-4 addresses information related to applicable standards, authorities, scope, implementation, operational control, and administrative procedures.
  - ii. FM-4 addresses information related to NPS diver training and certification, diving operations, equipment, and support materials (appendices) specific to the NPS Dive Program. It also provides a standard approach to commonly encountered NPS diving operations.

### 1.2 Applicable Standards

- A. All dives performed as part of employment are regulated by OSHA Commercial Diving Regulations, 29 CFR Part 1910 Subpart T. These standards include certain exemptions which are set out in 29 CFR 1910.401(a). NPS diving operations that do not meet the criteria for these exemptions are managed as commercial dives.
- B. NPS Dive Classifications and Authorities:
  - i. Maintenance Diving – Will be conducted in accordance with 29 CFR Part 1910, Subpart T, and community standards for OSHA compliant commercial dives (i.e. the current Association of Dive Contractor [ADC] standards) as reviewed and approved by the NPS National Dive Control Board.
  - ii. Public Safety Diving – Is exempt under 29 CFR 1910.401(a)(2)(ii) and will be conducted in accordance with community standards for Public Safety Diving as reviewed and approved by the NPS National Dive Control Board.
  - iii. Scientific Diving – Is exempt under 29 CFR 1910.401(a)(2)(iv), and will be conducted in accordance with 29 CFR Part 1910, Subpart T Appendix B, and with community standards for Scientific Diving (i.e. the current American Academy of

Underwater Sciences [AAUS] standards) as reviewed and approved by the NPS National Dive Control Board.

### 1.3 Scope

- A. This policy (RM-4 and FM-4) covers management of and safe diving practices for Park Service divers, Park Service dive operations, and mixed agency/organizational dive operations.
- B. Recreational diving within park areas is beyond the scope of this policy. This use is covered by NPS *Management Policies*, Chapter 8.2 and regulations applicable to recreational use in 36 CFR, Part 1, cover this use.
- C. Concessions or commercial use authorizations (CUA) involving dive operations are beyond the scope of this policy. Visitor-oriented dive operations, such as SCUBA charters or instruction within a park area, may be allowed under those conditions set forth in guidance documents, 36 CFR 5.3 (or other relevant sections), the 1998 Concessions Policy Act, and other applicable authorities. The Park Dive Officer (PDO) and/or Regional Dive Officer (RDO) will be consulted for specific diving use and conditions to be included in the contract, license, or permit regarding identification of hazardous conditions and/or sensitive resources issues.
- D. Commercial diving operations that involve private salvage, marine construction, industrial inspection, or private sector commercial diving done to support concessionaire or NPS operations and infrastructure and that are required to be conducted under permit issued by the Superintendent per authority granted in 36 CFR 5.3 are beyond the scope of this policy. The PDO and/or RDO will be consulted for specific diving use and conditions to be included in the permit regarding identification of hazardous conditions and/or sensitive resources issues.
- E. Non-NPS divers who are operating independently within NPS waters on a Scientific Research and Collecting Permit are beyond the scope of this document. The PDO and/or RDO will be consulted for specific diving use and conditions to be included in the permit regarding identification of hazardous conditions and/or sensitive resources issues.

### 1.4 Requirements

- A. All NPS diving activity will be conducted in accordance with 29 CFR Part 1910, Subpart T, 485 DM 27, Director's Order 4 (DO4), this document (RM-4), and Field Manual 4 (FM-4), which will collectively be referred to as NPS diving policy and standards.
- B. To establish/maintain a Dive Program within an NPS Park/Program:
  - i. The Superintendent must appoint a Park Dive Officer (PDO). The PDO will meet the requirements of FM-4.
  - ii. On an annual basis, at a minimum, the PDO will coordinate the production of a Program Dive Supplement (see FM-4) which has been reviewed by the Regional Dive Officer (RDO) and approved by Park/Program leadership.

### 1.5 Procedures for Change

- A. This RM-4 will be reviewed, modified as necessary, and issued by signature of the Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection. The National Diving Control Board (NDCB) will make recommendations for change as necessary.
- B. Field Manual 4 – Diving Safety and Operations Field Manual (FM-4) will be

- reviewed periodically with changes issued by the NDCB.
- i. Changes in FM-4 that revise the conduct or management of NPS diving operations will be compared to applicable community standards prior to implementation by the NDCB.

#### 1.6 Record of Change

A record of change of RM/FM-4 shall be distributed electronically to all NPS units with dive programs as changes are implemented.

#### 1.7 Implementation

- A. All NPS diving is managed under a diving safety manual and Diving Safety Control Board model as described in 29 CFR 1910.401(a)(iv).
- B. The NDCB as defined in RM-4 will develop, maintain, approve, and issue a field manual (FM-4 Diving Safety and Operations Field Manual).
- C. The responsibility for implementing, funding, and maintaining program accountability lies with the Director, Regional Directors, and individual Park Superintendents, as advised by the NDCB. Each program manager must continuously evaluate the scope and consequences of the program, the capabilities of local diving affiliates, workload, and the associated costs. When a superintendent decides to implement a diving program, he/she is mandated to manage it according to RM-4.

Chapter 2 - Operational Control

- 2.1 Organizational Levels and Functions
  - 2.1.1 Director and Deputy Director
  - 2.1.2 Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection
  - 2.1.3 Chief, Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Services
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  - 2.1.5 National Diving Control Board (NDCB)
  - 2.1.6 Dive Program Manager
  - 2.1.7 Regional Dive Officer (RDO)
  - 2.1.8 Dive Safety Officer (DSO)
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- 2.2 Diver Certification and Continuing Education
- 2.3 Dive Program Reviews
- 2.4 Incident/Accident Reporting, Investigation and Review
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  - 2.4.3 Incident/Accident Review
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2.1 Organizational Levels and Functions

2.1.1 Director and Deputy Director

The line authority for the NPS Dive Program is established through formal delegations from the Secretary of the Interior, the Director, and the Deputy Director for Operations. They also have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the NPS Dive Program meets all Department and OSHA standards.

2.1.2 Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection

The Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection, is responsible for signature and release of RM-4, and review, approval/denial, and release of changes to RM-4 put forward for consideration by the National Dive Control Board (NDCB). The Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection, is also responsible for providing effective review and oversight of the NPS Dive Program.

2.1.3 Chief, Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Services

The Chief, Division of Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Services is responsible for ensuring that the approved dive policy, procedures, and standards are fully implemented within the NPS.

2.1.4 Park Superintendent or NPS Program Manager

The Park Superintendent or NPS Program Manager has overall responsibility for management of park operations, including management of the dive program. The Park Superintendent or NPS Program Manager exercises control of the park dive program through appointment and oversight of the Park Dive Officer. The Park Superintendent or

NPS Program Manager has responsibility for ensuring that dive programs are managed in full compliance with directives, policies, and law.

#### 2.1.5 National Diving Control Board (NDCB)

##### A. Composition

- i. The NDCB will be made up of a majority of Active Divers as referenced in FM-4. In order to allow NPS Scientific Diving to comply with the Guidelines for Scientific Diving in 29 CFR Part 1910, Subpart T, Appendix B, the NDCB will consist of a majority of active scientific divers. To ensure the safety of all of the varied classifications of diving performed by the Park Service, and overseen by the NDCB, all diving classifications conducted by NPS will be represented within the NDCB membership.
- ii. NPS adheres to the scientific diving community standard (AAUS) and OSHA interpretation for defining a scientific diver: no particular academic credential is required to be defined as a scientific diver. An NPS diver meeting the training requirements listed in FM-4, and who performs scientific diving tasks on a scientific diving operation qualifies as a scientific diver, or scientific diver in training.

##### B. Members

- i. Regional Dive Officers
- ii. Dive Program Manager (*ex officio*, non-voting)
- iii. Chief of Risk Management, or designee
- iv. Associate Director, Cultural Resources, or designee
- v. Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, or designee
- vi. Associate Director, Park Planning, Facilities, and Lands, or designee
- vii. A rotating at-large member selected from the ranks of active NPS divers
- viii. Dive Safety Officer (*ex officio*, non-voting)

##### C. Officers

- i. The NDCB will have a Chair and a Vice Chair, who will be RDOs.
- ii. These officers will serve in two (2)-year elected terms.

##### D. Meetings

- i. The NDCB will meet annually or more often when necessary.
- ii. A quorum will consist of five voting board members with a minimum of three RDOs and two other members of the board, or their designees.

##### E. Functions

The NDCB:

- i. Develops, in conjunction with the Dive Safety Officer (DSO), training and safety standards, and dive policy to be implemented nationally and locally.
- ii. Advises NPS management on RM-4 dive policy and suggests modifications.
- iii. Issues written interpretation of RM-4 and FM-4 dive policy as needed for safe and effective operations, or where questions related to field implementation exist.
- iv. Approves and monitors NPS diving programs and projects. The NDCB may delegate review and approval of standard operating procedure diving projects to the regional and/or local level.
- v. Reviews NPS Diving Programs with regard to compliance to RM-4, FM-4, and safe diving related practices on an as needed basis.
- vi. Develops technical manuals.
- vii. Develops/maintains a diving information management system.
- viii. At least annually, the NDCB:
  1. Develops, reviews, updates, and modifies FM-4 for field implementation.

2. Reviews NPS divers with regard to depth and other relevant certifications/requirements, program compliance or safety issues
3. As necessary takes disciplinary or administrative action for unsafe NPS Diver practices or compliance issues related to NPS dive standards and policies.
  - a. Disciplinary or administrative actions include: revocation/restriction of NPS Blue Card, required training/retraining, or similar actions.
  - b. Where these diving administrative and/or disciplinary actions have Human Resources (HR) implications for the individual, remediation or mitigation will be done in consultation with the employee's supervisor and in accordance with established NPS HR policies, but in no case will dive safety be compromised.
4. Reviews DSO audits of NPS Diving Programs with regard to compliance to NPS dive standards and policies and safe diving related practices.
5. As necessary takes administrative and/or disciplinary action for unsafe NPS Diving Programs or diving related practices; or Program compliance issues related to NPS dive standards and policies.
  - a. Administrative and/or disciplinary actions include: Program Stand-down/Restriction, or similar actions
- ix. Reviews NPS Diving Incidents and Near Misses, modifies diving standards accordingly, and disseminates lessons learned.
- x. Develops/maintains liaison with other groups.
- xi. Adjudicates appeals related to NPS Diving from areas or regions, or divers.
- xii. Approves NPS dive instruction personnel.
- xiii. Works with the Dive Program Manager and others to secure funding in support of the NPS National Dive Program.
- xiv. Establishes criteria for equipment selection and use.
- xv. Approves new equipment or techniques.
- xvi. Conducts dive program reviews on request from PDOs, RDOs, Superintendents/Program Managers, or as needed.

#### 2.1.6 Dive Program Manager

- A. The Deputy Chief of Emergency Services (WASO) is the NPS Dive Program Manager, and will provide leadership and direction to the NPS NDCB in the development of the program's Director's Order and Reference Manual.
- B. This individual secures funding for support of the NPS National Dive Program, and works with the NDCB to represent NPS to external organizations.

#### 2.1.7 Regional Dive Officer (RDO)

- A. The RDO is an NPS diver who will be appointed in writing by the Regional Director of NPS Regions containing Dive Programs. This individual plans, directs, develops, coordinates, and advises on all phases of the diving program within the region. In doing so, the RDO serves as a technical advisor to the Regional Director, or their designee. For programs deemed National in scope, the designation of the RDO is designated to the NDCB to select the individual active within the NPS Dive Program best qualified to serve in this capacity. The NDCB is authorized to assign temporary RDO oversight authority to a Region where the RDO position is vacant; such assignments will be to a currently serving RDO. It is required that each RDO have successfully completed NPS Dive Leadership Training (See FM-4). The RDO will:

- i. Annually review park dive programs including Program Dive Supplement (See FM-4), RM/FM-4/OSHA compliance, diver certification review, incident review, and other matters relevant to the safe and efficient operation and management of diving within the region.
  - ii. Audit NPS Diving Programs within their Region with regard to compliance to FM-4 and safe diving related practices on an as needed basis.
  - iii. Develop regional diving practices in line with current policy as required.
  - iv. Reviews and audits record keeping procedures for all diving programs, personnel, and equipment in the region.
  - v. Certify Divers for NPS Blue Card. (See FM-4)
  - vi. Collaborate on Service-wide dive training with the NPS DSO, other RDOs and cooperating agencies.
  - vii. Prioritizes and selects, as necessary, those divers from their region who will attend Service-wide dive training.
  - viii. Act as the regional reference for large scale emergency response operations with the need for diving resources to identify diving capabilities and personnel qualified to assist.
  - ix. Suspend Regional diving programs and/or diving operations that are deemed unsafe or out of compliance with NPS diving policy or practices.
    - x. Review and transmit significant regional diving information to the NDCB.
    - xi. Provide annual summaries of regional diving activities to the NDCB.
    - xii. Serve as a member of formal review boards convened for accidents/unsafe incidents involving NPS divers.
  - xiii. Assure park diver qualifications are entered into the Diving Management System (DMS).
  - xiv. Act as subject matter expert, where appropriate, to assist PDO in matters of policy, equipment and other forms of expertise.
  - xv. Review and approve dive program reciprocity agreements with governmental agencies, academia or other organizations. Programs must demonstrate an active program adhering to Scientific, or Public Safety community standards and OSHA compliant dives.
  - xvi. Designate Dive Examiners (DE).
  - xvii. Provide park managers information on specialty dive situations.
  - xviii. Serve as a member of the NDCB.
  - xix. Additional duties and responsibilities as assigned by the NDCB.
- B. In situations where the same individual holds the positions of PDO and RDO, review of information and decisions on areas where there is a conflict of interest, or appearance of a conflict of interest, will be made by the NDCB Chair or Vice-Chair. Examples of conflict of interest include: review of a Program Dive Supplement, appeals for Blue Card revocation for divers under the individual's purview as PDO, etc.

#### 2.1.8 Dive Safety Officer (DSO)

- A. The DSO is an NPS diver, WASO position, who is field-located, and supervised by the Deputy Chief of Emergency Services (WASO). This individual, under the direction of the NDCB, plans and manages a professional, comprehensive, and complex dive safety and training program, and implements multiple aspects of the dive safety program. It is required that the DSO possesses an active nationally recognized SCUBA Instructor credential.
- B. The DSO:

- i. Audits NPS Diving Programs at least once every three years for compliance with the NPS dive standards and policies and safe diving related practices.
- ii. Implements training and safety standards developed by the NDCB at both a national and local unit scope.
- iii. Develops short and long-range plans for supporting dive safety programs including training requirements, policy compliance, program reviews, and equipment standards.
- iv. Plans, coordinates, and conducts training and development workshops, to ensure divers maintain required skills and competencies.
- v. Works closely with the NDCB to ensure compliance with agency and departmental policy in support of field diving operations.
- vi. Works in conjunction with the RDOs to analyze collected data to determine whether the dive program is meeting long-term goals and objectives.
- vii. Maintains awareness of technological developments in diving science and related disciplines.
- viii. Coordinates program activities with various Federal, State, and local government entities/agencies in support of park dive operations.
- ix. Reviews and/or revises annually, written agreements concerning dive management.
- x. Serves on various professional committees devoted to policy and procedural development.
- xi. Evaluates new brands or models of advanced diver life support (and other equipment as designated by the NDCB), documents results, and makes recommendations to the NDCB for approval prior to implementation.
- xii. Exercises emergency authority to prevent or stop imminent danger situations (i.e., unsafe conditions or practices that could be reasonably expected to cause death or serious physical harm).
- xiii. Participates on Serious Accident Investigations (SAI) as a team member or subject matter expert, and serves on Boards of Review for NPS Diving Incidents not rising to the level of a SAI.
- xiv. Act as the national reference for large scale emergency response operations with the need for diving resources to identify diving capabilities and personnel qualified to assist.

#### 2.1.9 Park Dive Officer (PDO)

- A. In areas that have diving programs, the Superintendent or Program Manager shall be responsible for its management. The manager shall appoint in writing an NPS employee as PDO to fulfill area obligations in keeping diving records, planning, training, etc. Experience and leadership ability should play an important part in the selection of the PDO. The individual shall be an NPS Diver and will successfully complete NPS Diving Leadership training within two years of appointment. The PDO performance related to DOI and NPS diving policy is subject to review by the RDO, the DSO, and/or NDCB. Failure to comply with DOI or RM/FM-4 standards may result in a letter of non-compliance to the Superintendent or Program Manager from the RDO and/or NDCB.
- B. The functions of the PDO will be defined by the NDCB in FM-4.

#### 2.2 Diver Certification and Continuing Education

- A. The Blue Card certification gives an NPS diver authorization to perform diving at a

- specified level based on training, depth certification and mode of diving while acting within their scope of employment.
- B. Recreational dive certifications do not convey NPS Diver certification. NPS Diver certifications and continuing educational requirements are to serve NPS purposes and are independent of recreational training requirements.
  - C. NPS Diver certifications are defined by the NDCB and are approved by the RDO upon recommendation of the PDO.
  - D. NPS Diver certifications are reviewed/accepted/rejected by the NDCB annually.
  - E. Use of federal funds is authorized for initial NPS Diver certifications, recertification, and continuing education.
  - F. NPS Divers must complete certification and continuing educational requirements established by the NDCB outlined in FM-4.

### 2.3 Dive Program Reviews

- A. If the need arises, a Superintendent or Program Manager may initiate an internal review of their Dive Program. The PDO, with possible assistance from the RDO, will lead the review.
- B. If the need arises, a Superintendent or Program Manager may initiate an external review of their Dive Program. This review can be conducted by the RDO, DSO, NDCB, or NDCB designee. The formal request for an external review should be sent through the RDO along with a statement of need for the review.
- C. At a minimum, all Dive Programs will be audited by the DSO or designee every three (3) years or less, as provided in section 2.1.8 (B)(i). This process is further defined by the NDCB and outlined in FM-4.

### 2.4 Incident/Accident Reporting, Investigation and Review

#### 2.4.1 General Incident/Accident Reporting and Recordkeeping Requirements

- A. All NPS dive incidents shall be reported to the NDCB and appropriate supervisory authorities per the requirements of this section and in accordance with 29 CFR part 1904 – Recording and Reporting Occupational Injuries and Illnesses.
- B. All on duty dive-related incidents are subject to the reporting and recordkeeping requirements specified in NPS Reference Manual 50B – Occupational Safety and Health Program (RM-50B). The purpose of this requirement is to ensure appropriate documentation for OSHA recordkeeping purposes and workers compensation claims. The following types of injuries and occupational illness are considered recordable and in all cases must be reported via the DOI Safety Management Information System (SMIS) at <http://www.smis.doi.gov>:
  - i. Medical treatment beyond first-aid,
  - ii. Loss of consciousness, and
  - iii. Injuries/illnesses requiring days away from work, restricted work activity, or job transfer
  - iv. Incidents that result in property damage, or operating loss of \$2,500 or more.
- C. In addition to SMIS reporting requirements, dive incidents requiring recompression treatment, or resulting in moderate or serious injury, or death shall be reported to the NDCB.
- D. If pressure-related injuries are suspected, or if symptoms are evident, the following additional information shall be recorded and retained by the Park where the incident occurred, with the record of the dive, for a period of 5 years:

- i. Complete Incident Report
- ii. Written descriptive report to include:
  1. Name, address, phone numbers of the principal parties involved
  2. Summary statements from all involved personnel
  3. Summary of experience of divers involved
  4. Location, description of dive site, and conditions that led up to the incident
  5. Description of symptoms, including depth and time of onset
  6. Description and results of treatment
  7. Disposition of case
  8. Recommendations to avoid repetition of incident

#### 2.4.2 Incident/Accident Investigation

- A. Dive incidents will be investigated and reported in accordance with procedures established by the NPS NDCB. Investigative reports will specify the circumstances of the incident and the extent of any injuries or illnesses.
- B. Dive incidents involving NPS employees, or other Federal, State, or local agency employees under NPS supervision/jurisdiction, and/or contractors and volunteers directly supervised by NPS, that result in any of the following are considered to be serious accidents subject to the Serious Accident Investigation (SAI) and reporting requirements of NPS RM-50B:
  - i. One or more work-related fatalities, or imminently fatal injuries or illnesses;
  - ii. Hospitalization of three or more employees from a single occurrence;
  - iii. Property damage under Departmental/NPS control, and/or operating loss of \$500,000 or more; and/or consequences that the NPS Designated Agency Safety and Health Official (DASHO) or the Regional Designated Safety and Health Official (RDSHO) judges to warrant investigation under serious accident investigation procedures.
- C. Serious accidents require immediate notification of the Superintendent/Program Manager and the appropriate Associate Regional Director for Operations (or equivalent management official), the NPS Emergency Incident Coordination Center (EICC), and the NPS DASHO. For work-related fatalities and hospitalization of three or more persons overnight, the nearest OSHA Area Office (800-321-6742) must be notified within 8 hours.
- D. In situations where an incident triggers the requirements for an agency-level or regional SAI:
  - i. The NPS DSO will be included in the SAI Team as an NPS Dive Subject Matter Expert. In the event there is a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, with the DSO serving on the SAI Team, a member of the NDCB not directly affiliated with the incident will serve in this capacity.
  - ii. Subject matter expert(s) recommended by the NDCB will be included in the SAI Team as appropriate.
  - iii. A member of the NDCB not directly affiliated with the incident will be a member of the SAI Board of Review representing the national program manager or as an ad hoc member.
- E. In addition to standard SMIS reporting requirements, the PDO must report all serious diving related injuries to their RDO within 24 hours. Upon receipt of a serious diving related injury notification, the RDO will notify the NDCB. Serious diving related injuries are defined as: near drowning, decompression sickness, gas embolism, oxygen toxicity, lung overexpansion, or injuries requiring hospitalization. Documentation of this incident using the Diving Incident Report Form (See Appendices in FM-4) must be submitted to

the RDO via the NPS Dive Management System or hard/electronic copy within 10 days of incident. In addition, a Dive Incident Review Board as defined in FM-4 will be convened within 20 days of the incident and its findings must be distributed to the RDO within 30 days. The RDO will submit the report with their own causal analysis and recommendation for prevention of future injuries to the chair of the NDCB within 45 days of the incident. This review and examination process does not necessarily replace the SAI process and is not superseded by it; NDCB review of diving incidents and accidents is independent of other required accident reviews.

- F. In incident reporting and review situations where there is a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, the NDCB will delegate authority/responsibility for the implementation of the dive incident investigation.

### 2.4.3 Incident/Accident Review

- A. At the minimum, all dive incidents will be reviewed by the responsible PDO, RDO, and DSO.
- B. Incidents with the potential for injury that occur during diving operations will be reviewed by the PDO with the Dive Team and other involved parties, and treated as learning opportunities to increase overall program safety. A record of these near miss incidents will be documented by the PDO to aid in identifying areas for improvement in training or operational procedures and forwarded to the NDCB through the RDO for review, potential standards modification, and dissemination. These near misses should be fully and openly shared and negative consequences for involved employees should be minimized, whenever possible and prudent, to facilitate open and honest discussions and sharing of lessons learned.
- C. The NDCB shall review the results of serious accident investigations and serious diving related injury reports to determine any necessary changes to NPS diving policies and safety practices.

### 2.5 Deviation from Standards and Policies

- A. Deviations are defined as acts, regardless of reason, in which policy, operations, procedures, or standards have been ignored or violated.
- B. In general, deviations from NPS Dive policy, operations, procedures or standards are not permitted. Any proposed deviations will be submitted in writing to the NDCB for review and appropriate action.
- C. While deviation from standards and policies may be justified under emergency situations, the act of violating NPS Dive Policy may be considered a serious infraction which could result in suspension/revocation of diving privileges at the individual or Park/Program level.
- D. In response to a deviation from standards or policies, the NDCB is authorized to suspend or revoke individual or Park/Program diving privileges, or take no action if the review determines the violation was reasonable and justified.
- E. Criteria for written report on deviations from standards and policies are detailed in FM-4.

Chapter 3 - Administrative Procedures

- 3.1 [Medical Examination](#)
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3.1 Medical Examination

- A. Every diver shall undergo a diving medical examination, preferably from a physician familiar with diving physiology, before beginning diving, unless an equivalent initial medical evaluation has been given within the preceding 12 months. Medical examinations are required every three years until age 60 and every two years thereafter unless a more frequent interval is required by a licensed physician.
- B. Following a diving medical exam and clearance to dive by the examining physician, divers are medically cleared for diving.
- C. The Department of the Interior (DOI) Standard Medical History and Examination Form shall be used as the NPS standard. (See Appendices in FM-4)
- D. The NPS Medical Standards Program (MSP) located in the Division of Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Services provides medical standards management to employees in designated positions such as diving. This process is established by Director's Order/Reference Manual-57 (DO/RM-57), the *National Park Service Occupational Medical Standards Guidelines*.
- E. The MSP is the designated site for records management and storage of Medical Examination Forms and associated medical documents related to the NPS Dive Program. Divers shall ensure that a copy of their medical examination and any relevant or supporting materials are sent to the MSP Program Manager at WASO. Only a copy of the Medical Clearance Form should be kept at the Park or Program level. All materials associated with the actual medical examination are governed under the Healthcare Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The HIPAA Privacy Rule establishes standards to protect individuals' medical records and other personal health information.
- F. After each illness or injury requiring hospitalization of more than 24 hours, or after an episode of unconsciousness related to diving activity, or after treatment in a hyperbaric chamber following a diving accident or other serious illness, certified divers shall submit to a medical interview or examination appropriate to the nature and extent of the injury or illness, as determined by the examining physician before resuming diving activities. This necessity will be determined by the PDO or RDO. The PDO and RDO will be informed of all such incidents.
- G. The cost of all required medical examinations will be paid for by the government for employees.
- H. For Medical Examination Requirements see FM-4

3.2 Hazardous Duty / Environmental Differential Pay

- A. Any dive completed during official duty is subject to premium pay (hazardous duty dive) under the following conditions (5 CFR 550 or 532) as determined by the Park Dive Officer:
  - i. At a depth of 20 feet or more below the surface.
  - ii. Visibility is restricted.
  - iii. In rapidly flowing or cold water.
  - iv. Vertical access to the surface is restricted by ice, rock, decompression or, other structure.
  - v. Testing or working with hardware that presents special hazards.

### 3.3 Physical Fitness

- A. SCUBA diving is physically demanding. It is imperative that both divers and park managers consciously recognize the need for a continual, aggressive exercise program that exceeds basic health maintenance standards. NPS is responsible for ensuring that adequate fitness levels are established and met. NPS diving policy and standards requires that divers successfully complete both medical examinations and an annual skills refresher that includes a timed swim (See FM-4).
- B. Section 7901 (a) of Title 5 of the United States Code provides the following authority: “The head of each agency of the government of the United States may establish, within the limits of appropriations available, a health service program to promote and maintain the physical and mental fitness of employees under his direction. . .” Blue Card holders are permitted 3 hours per week of government time to help maintain a conditioning level sufficient to pass the physical fitness and health examinations. This does not mean that a diver or DIT has to swim to maintain this level of conditioning. A variety of other exercises, including jogging, cross country skiing, cycling, walking, weight training, etc., are acceptable as conditioning purposes for swimming. The critical point is to maintain sufficient conditioning to provide maximum safety for the individual.
- C. The Annual Skills Refresher requires a diver, wearing mask, fins, and snorkel, to swim 900 yards in 18 minutes. This section of the refresher will be considered the Physical Fitness Test for Diving. Ideally, the testing should be conducted just prior to the primary dive season. There is nothing to preclude divers from voluntarily testing themselves more often.
- D. There are special individual physiological circumstances when diving shall not be undertaken or when special precautions are needed. Pregnant divers may participate as divers in the diving program with clearance from a physician. This is particularly important in the first trimester when environmental influences can most affect the fetus. For physiological reasons, the obese or heavy-set diver should use special caution. Nitrogen is five times more soluble in fatty tissue than in muscle and, therefore, presents an increased risk of decompression sickness. Reduced no-decompression limits for the obese and heavy-set diver should be considered.

### 3.4 Diving Reciprocity

- A. NPS recognizes dive program reciprocity with federal agencies with established diving programs where formal agreements are established or as approved by the NDCB.
- B. Reciprocity with non-federal agencies with established diving programs is permitted when established under formal agreement.
- C. Additional information related to reciprocity of divers from federal and non-federal agencies is located in FM-4

### 3.5 Specialized Diving Authorizations

#### 3.5.1 Volunteers in Parks (VIP)

- A. The use of VIPs for NPS diving operations is approved. The Volunteers in Parks guideline (RM-7) must be referred to for specifics prior to diving.
- B. VIP divers will meet the same standards as other NPS divers.

#### 3.5.2 Temporary Authorization to Dive

Non-NPS divers whose participation is beneficial to the NPS may be given temporary permission to dive for specific projects or events in accordance with standards established by the NDCB in FM-4.

#### 3.5.3 Special Circumstances

When it is deemed to be in the interest and benefit of NPS or a specific NPS Park/Program, dignitaries and/or official visitors who are not NPS divers may be introduced to NPS underwater resources using SCUBA by NPS personnel trained and qualified to conduct and directly supervise these individuals in the specific environment. Under these special circumstances dives may be conducted in accordance with standards established by the NDCB in FM-4.

### 3.6 Dive Equipment

- A. Purchase of diving equipment is the responsibility of the government. The advice of the RDO or PDO should be sought. Because of the critical nature of diving, it is essential that equipment meet OSHA and industry standards. Budgetary considerations should be secondary to safety and quality.
- B. Introduction of new brands or models of diver life support, or physiological monitoring equipment will be evaluated by the DSO with the results documented, and recommendations made by the DSO to the NDCB for approval prior to implementation. DSO evaluation methods may include:
  - i. Use of outside contractors/consultants,
  - ii. Field testing by the DSO and/or designees within the NPS Dive Program,
  - iii. Review of testing/evaluations conducted by other agencies or organizations independent of the manufacturer, or
  - iv. Combination of these methods.
- C. Divers may use personally-owned equipment if it is approved by either the PDO or RDO and it meets the criteria established by RM-50B, Occupational Safety and Health Program.
- D. Government equipment may be used on off-duty time for skills maintenance.
- E. The diver is accountable for all assigned equipment.
- F. The PDO is responsible for ensuring that all diving equipment with a required maintenance cycle is performed and that the maintenance is logged. Equipment service logs will be maintained in Park/Program dive files or on the DMS (as appropriate by online availability)