



National Park Service
US Department of the Interior

National Park Service

DIVING MANAGEMENT

REFERENCE MANUAL - 4

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Chapter 1 Authorities, Scope, and Implementation

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1.1 Introduction

- A. The National Park Service (NPS) manages many areas requiring 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 maintenance and infrastructure resource, and visitor protection.
- B. NPS dive operations are conducted for scientific (natural and cultural resource management), public service/safety, and Park maintenance and infrastructure purposes. It is therefore necessary to provide standards and guidance to Park Superintendents (or equivalent), and NPS divers for purposes of standardization of 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/FM-4) supply a uniform approach to polices, standards, and procedures to be followed to achieve the desired service-wide goal of conducting safe diving operations.
 - i. RM-4 addresses information related to 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 and 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 as set out in 29 CFR 1910.401(a). NPS diving operations not meeting the criteria for 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. current Association of Dive Contractor [ADC] standards) as reviewed and approved by the NPS National Dive Control Board (NDCB).
 - 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 NDCB.
 - 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. current American Academy of

Underwater Sciences [AAUS] standards) as reviewed and approved by the NPS NDCB.

1.3 Scope

- A. This policy (RM 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. NPS *Management Policies*, Chapter 8.2, and statutory authorities are provided to the Superintendent, or equivalent, to control and manage recreational diving in 36 CFR, Part 1.
- 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 and/or permit regarding identification of hazardous conditions and/or sensitive resources issues.
- D. Commercial diving operations involving private salvage, marine construction, industrial inspection, or private sector commercial diving done to support concessionaire or NPS operations and infrastructure which are required to be conducted under permit issued by the Superintendent, or equivalent, 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), RM-4, and 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 or equivalent must appoint a 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 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 implementation, funding, and program accountability lies with the Director, Regional Directors, and individual Park Superintendents or equivalent, 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 associated costs. When a Superintendent or equivalent decides to implement a diving program, he/she is mandated to manage it according to RM-4.

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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 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, Office of Risk Management

The Chief, Office of Risk Management is responsible for ensuring approved dive policy, procedures and standards are fully implemented within the NPS.

2.1.4 Park Superintendent or Equivalent

The Park Superintendent or equivalent has overall responsibility for management of park operations, including management of the dive program. The Park Superintendent or equivalent exercises control of the park dive program through appointment and oversight of the Park Dive Officer. The Park Superintendent or equivalent 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. 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 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, Visitor and Resource Protection, or designee
- v. Associate Director, Cultural Resources, or designee
- vi. Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, or designee
- vii. Associate Director, Park Planning, Facilities, and Lands, or designee
- viii. Rotating At-Large Member selected by majority vote of the NDCB from the ranks of Active NPS Divers by a procedure and term established by the NDCB
- ix. 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 2 year elected terms.

D. Meetings

- i. The NDCB will meet annually or more often when necessary.
- ii. A quorum will consist of six voting board members with a minimum of three RDOs and three 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 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 regarding compliance to the RM/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 regarding depth and other relevant authorizations/certifications/requirements, and 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 regarding compliance with 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, 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 upon request from PDOs, RDOs, and Superintendents or equivalent, or as determined by the NDCB.

2.1.6 Dive Program Manager

- A. The Occupational Safety and Health Branch Chief, Office of Risk Management 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, an NPS diver who has successfully completed NPS Dive Leadership Training ([See FM-4](#)), will be appointed in writing by the Regional Director of NPS Regions with 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 and reports 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. 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 regarding compliance with 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. Works with PDOs to assure diver qualifications and documentation 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. Concur with designation of Dive Examiners (DE) within their Region.
 - 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. RDOs may not award certifications or authorizations for themselves or programs where there is a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest. In these situations, the review of qualifications and support materials and awarding of certifications and/or authorizations will be conducted by another RDO designated by the NDCB. 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; dive mode, dive task, breathing gas, and depth authorizations; etc.

2.1.8 Dive Safety Officer (DSO)

- A. The DSO is an NPS diver, WASO position, supervised by the Occupational Safety and Health Branch Chief. This individual, in conjunction with the NDCB, develops training and safety standards, and dive policy to be implemented nationally and 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 and divers for compliance with the NPS dive standards and policies and safe diving related practices.
- ii. Implements training and safety standards developed and/or approved 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 develop and 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. Exercise's 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.
- xv. Represents the NPS Dive Program within the Agency, the Department, and with other Federal, State, Local, and private entities.

2.1.9 Park Dive Officer (PDO)

- A. In areas having diving programs, the Superintendent or equivalent 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. The PDO serves as a technical advisor and reports to the Superintendent or equivalent, or their designee. Experience and leadership ability should play an important part in the selection of the PDO. Individuals appointed as PDO must have successfully completed NPS Dive Leadership Training or must successfully complete this training within two years of their 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 equivalent from the RDO and/or NDCB.

- B. 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 is the NPS diver's evidence of NPS authorization to perform diving at a specified level based on training, depth authorization and mode of diving, etc. 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. At a minimum, RDOs will annually review the Program Dive Supplements of Parks/Programs within their Region for RM/FM-4 and OSHA compliance and safe and efficient operation and management of diving. At a minimum, RDOs will annually review individual diver Blue Card records of all non-Retired NPS divers in their Region for policy compliance and correct diver status, making appropriate Status adjustments, and report their findings to the NDCB.
- B. If the need arises, a Superintendent or equivalent may initiate an internal review of their Dive Program. The PDO, with possible assistance from the RDO or DSO, will lead the review.
- C. If the need arises, a Superintendent or equivalent 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 or DSO along with a statement of need for the review.
- D. At a minimum, the DSO or designee will complete a site visit review of NPS Dive Programs at a rate of three to four programs per year until all programs have been addressed and then repeat the cycle. The goals of the site visit cycle will be defined/approved by the NDCB. A written report of the review will be provided to the NDCB and Park/Program management. Follow up on identified issues is the responsibility of the assigned RDO.

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, dive time, and time of symptom 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 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
 - iv. 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 or equivalent and the appropriate Associate Regional Director for Operations (or equivalent management official), the NPS Emergency Incident Coordination Center (EICC), and the NPS DASHO. The nearest OSHA Area Office (800-321-6742) must be notified within 8 hours of work-related fatalities, and within 24 hours for in-patient hospitalization of one or more employees, amputations, and loss of an eye.
- 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 and the NPS DSO within 24 hours. In the event there is a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest involving the reporting of the incident to the RDO (i.e. the RDO is the subject of the incident, etc.), notification will be expanded to include an RDO from another NPS Region and this RDO will assume the lead on information collection and reporting efforts defined in this paragraph. 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 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/Near Miss Reviews

- A. At the minimum, all dive incidents, diving related accidents, and near misses will be reviewed by the responsible PDO, RDO, and DSO.
- B. Near misses are defined as situations with the potential for injury to occur during diving operations. Near misses will be entered into Safety Management Information System (SMIS) and documented via NDCB requirements. Near misses 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 and DSO 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. Request for variance to RM-4 will be routed through the NDCB for review and recommendation, with approval or denial by ADVRP. Request for variance to FM-4 will be routed through the NDCB for review and approval or denial.
- 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.

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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 Office of Risk Management will identify and/or provide secure storage for NPS diver medical records. Procedures for the transmission of diver medical records will be defined in FM-4.
- E. Diver medical records shall be preserved and maintained for at least the duration of employment plus thirty (30) years, except that the following types of records need not be retained for any specific period:
 - i. Health insurance claims records maintained separately from the employer's medical program and its records,
 - ii. First aid records (not including medical histories) of one-time treatment and subsequent observation of minor scratches, cuts, burns, splinters, and the like which do not involve medical treatment, loss of consciousness, restriction of work or motion, or transfer to another job, if made on-site by a non-physician and if maintained separately from the employer's medical program and its records, and
 - iii. The medical records of employees who have worked for less than (1) year for the employer need not be retained beyond the term of employment if they are provided to the employee upon the termination of employment.
- F. After each illness, injury, or procedure 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, illness, or procedure, 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 must 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 or less. This section of the refresher will be considered the Physical Fitness Test for Diving and will be witnessed for successful completion. 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. Divers experiencing physiological circumstances of concern between approved dive medical examinations should obtain medical advice from their attending physician or medical advisor with hyperbaric expertise prior to participating in diving activities. Examples of physiological circumstances of concern include, but are not limited to pregnancy, recent injury, use of new prescription drugs, etc.

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 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. The NDCB will define the training and qualification requirements for individuals authorized to conduct special circumstance dives and maintain a list of these individuals. 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 PDO, RDO or DSO 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. Completion of an “Off-Duty Equipment User Agreement and Liability Release” is required. The NDCB will establish additional policies and procedures for off-duty dive equipment use.
 - 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)