



University of Hawai'i Diving Safety Program

UHDSP COVID19 ADVISORY #1: NON-ESSENTIAL DIVING STAND-DOWN

In consideration of the impending impacts of the COVID19 Pandemic on UH scientific diving research and education projects, the UH Diving Control Board is ordering a general stand-down of non-essential diving activity under University auspices until further notice. It is anticipated that as the Pandemic progresses, assuring exposure protection of UH divers from COVID19 infection in the field will become increasingly difficult to impossible. As all divers know from experience, diving and its surrounding activities are messy, wet undertakings, commonly requiring close personal contact in a highly variable environment. For these reasons, the DCB finds diving activity (including skin diving work) is an area of special concern for COVID19 exposures.

In compliance with CDC, UH, and State of Hawaii directives, and with consideration of the special potential exposure conditions posed by diving and associated auxiliary activity, the DCB on March 20, 2020 approved the following, effective immediately for diving activity under UH auspices:

TRAINING ACTIVITY:

- All practical, face-to-face UH diver training is suspended until further notice. This covers all training or proficiency dives, pool swim and dive evaluations, open water skill evaluations, or dives conducted to extend depth ratings or specialized endorsements and lab courses and field schools.
- This suspension also covers emergency responder training such as the DAN DFA-Pro course.
- These suspensions are in effect at least until April 15, by which time a determination will be made whether to rescind, modify or extend them.
- Academic training such as SDQC lectures and eLearning may continue via remote learning platforms. Participants should contact their UDC or Liv Wheeler, UHDSP Training Coordinator for more information.
- Provisions will be developed to extend "grace periods" for divers whose status is impacted by lack of required dive activity or expiring emergency response training.

RESEARCH DIVE ACTIVITY:

- Project proposal approval applications and dive plan approval applications may continue to be submitted per standard procedures. However,
- No new dive plans or projects will be approved to start prior to April 15. This suspension is in effect until April 15, by which time a determination will be made whether to rescind, modify or extend it.
- Effective immediately, a suspension of diving extending through Sunday, March 22 is ordered for all existing approved dive plans.
 - The DCB will be working with guidance from UH Leadership to fairly and equitably identify specific instances where a delay or cessation of diving would unalterably harm the University's research mission, and where limited short-term activity might be allowed under special circumstances to mitigate these impacts. More information on this point will be provided in coming days. However,
 - PI's and Lead Divers are advised to develop contingency plans to wind down most projects in short order to a stasis point, after which little or no diving might be approved for an extended period.

I want to assure you that the DCB, the UHDSP Staff and I very much appreciate the hardship these decisions will place on many of you, our students and investigators. These are in fact issues being addressed in a similar manner by our peer institutions within AAUS, as well as our Federal partner agencies such as NOAA, NASA, and USEPA. In all instances, the overriding consideration will always be the health and safety of our divers and our community. For discussion of specific concerns, Please feel free to talk to your DCB representative, Unit Diving Coordinator, Liv Wheeler, or me.

Aloha,

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