

NOAA DIVING PROGRAM SAFETY BULLETIN:

ATTENTION ALL DIVERS: A drysuit safety stand down is now in place.

Background: The NOAA Diving Center (NDC) recently had two incidents where the black plastic insert (Figure 1.) in new SiTech valves broke when the valves were attached and tested with the associated low pressure inflator hose. This caused the valves to fail and the divers were unable to add air to the drysuits. Lisa Glover, the Standard Equipment Program (SEP) technician is a certified SiTech valve technician. As a result of the failures she conducted inspections on other SiTech valves available at NDC across all brands of SEP drysuits. NDC found that drysuits with the same drysuit valve configuration had varying degrees of damage to the black plastic insert within the brass stem of the drysuit valve. This leads NDC to question the integrity of the drysuit valve.

Action: We are in communication with SiTech regarding the material failure and SiTech is providing replacement valve stems configured without the black plastic insert. Once received, we will notify all divers and arrange for units to send valves to NDC where staff will install the new valve stems according to manufacturer specifications and then return drysuit valves to the respective diving units.

All divers will inspect their drysuit valve and identify the valve stem configuration. If the black plastic insert is visible, do not use that valve. Do not attempt any field repairs or replacements. NDC will provide a valve replacement in accordance with manufacturer specifications and timing based on your mission essential requirements.



Figure 1.

Some drysuits may have a different style and manufacturer of valve with the two-hole configuration and completely hollow (no black plastic insert) configurations (Figure 2.). Valves with these stem configurations are still authorized for use. If you have any questions, please reach out to SEP.NDC@noaa.gov or call Lisa Glover directly.



Figure 2.