

## SAFETY TALK - July 2006



### **What is the impact of solo diving on safety?**

From 1998 – 2005 the BSAC Annual Incident Report recorded 3198 incidents, of which 40 involved solo diving. Of these 40, 19 involved a fatality – that is 48% of solo diving incidents involved a fatality. Of incidents where more than one diver was involved (ie non solo), 118 fatalities were recorded – that is 3.7% of non-solo diving incidents involved a fatality. These data suggest that for a diving incident, the fatality rate is more than 10 times higher if solo diving is taking place. Furthermore, these 19 solo incidents represented 13% of all fatalities (total 137) during the period 1998-2005. This was significantly higher than expected if solo diving had no adverse effect on the outcomes of an incident. The figures from the international organisation, Divers Alert Network (DAN), showed a similar trend – 1 in 5 fatalities involve a diver who enters the water alone. Again the proportion of fatalities was much higher in incidents involving solo diving than were found in incidents involving more than one diver.

**Mike Rowley (NDC Technical Chief Examiner)**

## Solo Diving

### **“Plan to conduct all or part of a dive without a buddy”**

The subject of solo diving is one that is frequently raised within the BSAC and in answer to a specific request at the Diving Officers Conference 2004, the NDO, Clare Peddie, initiated a review of BSAC's guidance on the subject of solo diving. The full report from the NDC working group will shortly be published in the NDC E-Bulletin. However, the key finding of this report is:

- ? BSAC currently takes the view that based on evidence from available statistics and risk assessment, the increased risk attendant to allowing planned solo diving is unacceptable

#### Personal self sufficiency

One of the key findings from the NDC consideration of the topic of solo diving is that there are significant lessons that can be learned from the need to develop, train for and regularly practice with appropriate equipment set ups and the skills to use them. Such strategies will help ease the stress of situations of both an individual who encounters a problem and their buddy who may have less involvement in resolving the problem.

#### Buddy separation

There are defined procedures for what to do following accidental or unplanned buddy separation under water. There appears however, through reported incidents and even a public advocacy of the procedure for buddy pairs to either deliberately separate under water or if doing so inadvertently make a conscious decision to carry on with the dive and not attempt to rejoin with the buddy until the end of the dive. In recent years there have been significant numbers of serious and frequently fatal incidents where this has occurred and a telling comment from the 2005 Diving Incident Report by Brian Cumming says "...every year we report a number of incidents where an attentive buddy has clearly saved another's life by taking the appropriate remedial actions."

Buddy diving is an established and proven system in sport diving. It allows not only for safer diving through the mutual support that a competent buddy can provide but also allows the buddy pair to recount and share their experiences.

Think SAFE – Dive SAFE

Jim Watson

BSAC Safety and Development manager

For more detail and information please visit [www.bsac.org/safety](http://www.bsac.org/safety)