



Smithsonian
Institution

SMITHSONIAN DIRECTIVE 120

November 3, 2006

SCIENTIFIC DIVING POLICY

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Purpose

This directive establishes current policies for scientific diving conducted under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Under Secretary for Science (USS), the Smithsonian Scientific Diving Control Board (SDCB), the Smithsonian Scientific Diving Officer (SDO), and the individual scientific diver.

All Smithsonian Institution (SI) units and organizations are directed to comply with the regulations and procedures contained in the *SI Scientific Diving Safety Manual*, Fourth Edition, 2004, which is available online at www.si.edu/dive. Because there are potential hazards and inherent risk involved in diving activities, Smithsonian scientific diving will be conducted in a manner that promotes protection of scientific divers from accidental injury and/or illness, and that minimizes liability exposure for the Institution. Fulfillment of the purposes will be consistent with the furtherance of both research and safety.

Definitions

Scientific diving is diving performed by individuals as a necessary part of a scientific, research, or educational activity, in conjunction with a project or study under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution.

Definitions
(continued)

For the purposes of this directive, **Smithsonian auspices** include any scientific diving activity in which the Institution is connected because of:

1. ownership of any equipment used;
 2. locations selected;
 3. project sponsorship; or
 4. relationship with the individuals concerned, regardless of whether or not they are SI employees
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Background

The Smithsonian Institution *Scientific Diving Safety Manual* provides procedures for implementation and technical guidance, and contains detailed information about the following:

- General Policy
- Diving Regulations
- Scientific Diver Training Requirements
- Diving Equipment
- Other Diving Technology
- Medical Standards
- Definition of Terms

The SI *Scientific Diving Safety Manual* is a living document that is periodically updated by the SDCB to reflect current changes in regulatory guidance and safety standards.

Policy

This directive establishes policy to ensure that all scientific diving conducted under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution is performed in a manner consistent with applicable regulations and prevailing accepted practices and procedures for scientific diving in the United States.

Diver certification, diving criteria and procedures, and all safety standards promulgated by the SDCB shall follow the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and guidelines for scientific diving.

Roles and Responsibilities

As the senior-level supervisor with ultimate authority over the Smithsonian's Scientific Diving Program (SDP), the **Under Secretary for Science** is responsible for the following activities:

- providing administrative oversight of, and policy approval for, matters relating to the SDP and the SDCB;
- ensuring that effective and adequate support is provided for the SDCB to conduct its official responsibilities;
- appointing a full-time SDO, based on the recommendation of the SDCB, who reports to the USS; and
- ensuring that the performance plans of SDCB members in units within the USS's purview reflect their SDCB duties during their tenure on the SDCB

As the Smithsonian's formally constituted body in charge of diving policy, operations, and diver certifications, the **SDCB** responsibilities include:

- overseeing and administering the SDP with the USS;
- approving and monitoring diving projects through the SDO;
- reviewing and revising this directive, as well as ensuring compliance with the policies it contains;
- acting as a board of investigation to study the cause of all diving accidents and safety violations;
- taking disciplinary action for unsafe diving activities, including suspension of scientific diving programs, projects, or certifications of divers;
- acting as a board of inquiry, as necessary, to consider scientific diver-related problems and their solutions;
- establishing criteria for equipment selection, use, and maintenance; and
- meeting at least annually to review the efficacy and status of diving programs and procedures

As the SDCB- and USS-designated individual accountable for all operational, diving, and safety matters, the **SDO** is responsible for the following:

Roles and Responsibilities
(continued)

- directing the SDP, including:
 - planning, management, and budget;
 - conduct of training and certification activities;
 - approval of dive plans, operations, and diving certification;
 - supervision of diving medical procedures;
 - supervision of SI Diving Officers (DOs) and scientific divers; and
 - enforcement of compliance with scientific diving policies and procedures;
- serving as a voting SDCB member and Smithsonian official representing the SDP to external constituencies;
- reporting to the USS and SDCB;
- maintaining scientific diver certification and instructor qualification to teach scientific diving and specialty courses;
- submitting an annual evaluation report on each DO to his or her supervisor; and
- submitting an annual SDCB membership roster to USS

As the personnel in charge of overseeing scientific diving activities for their individual SI research units, the **DOs** have full accountability and responsibility to the SDO in all operational, diving, and safety matters, as follows:

- ensuring that the diving activities of their units comply with the policies and procedures described in the *Scientific Diving Safety Manual*;
- maintaining the diver certification records and dive logs of all SI scientific divers (and those diving under the auspices of the Smithsonian) for their research unit;
- performing diver training courses and check-out dives on behalf of the SDO;
- performing or documenting equipment maintenance and purchases as specified by the SDP standardized equipment program;
- suspending diving operations or scientific divers they consider unsafe, and reporting such action to the SDO;

Roles and Responsibilities
(continued)

- reviewing submitted dive plans for final approval by the SDO;
 - maintaining current scientific diver certifications; and
 - submitting reports to the SDO, in a timely fashion, on the status of diving activities and diver certifications
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Authorities

The Smithsonian is not a federal executive branch agency, but the policy of the Institution is to be guided by the principles of OSHA in managing its Scientific Diving Program. Accordingly, both this directive and the *Scientific Diving Safety Manual* draw on the regulations and guidelines established for the scientific diving exemption from OSHA commercial diving standards: 29 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) 1910 — Subpart T, and the *Federal Register* (FR) 47(228): 53357–53365, Nov. 26, 1982; and FR 50(6): 1046–1050, Jan. 9, 1985.

Adherence to the SDP standards has proven both feasible and effective in protecting the health and safety of SI scientific divers since 1990.

Applicability

SD 120 is applicable to all scientific divers working under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution, regardless of whether they are SI employees or not. All scientific divers are required to give their full and continuing adherence to the SDP policies and regulations described in this directive and the SI *Scientific Diving Safety Manual*.

Inquiries

Anyone with questions regarding this directive should ask a Smithsonian Scientific Diving Officer (SDO) or consult the Smithsonian *Scientific Diving Safety Manual* at <http://www.si.edu/dive> for more information.

CANCELLATION:

SD 120, February 23, 1993

INQUIRIES:

OUSS-Scientific Diving Officer; or

Smithsonian *Scientific Diving Safety Manual* at www.si.edu/dive

RETENTION:

Indefinite. Subject to review for currency 24 months from date of issue