

Recommendations Concerning the Use of Surface Marker Buoys

Surface marker buoys (SMBs) can be used in many diving scenarios; they can be used to warn boats of the presence of divers or to maintain communication with the surface support team. SMBs remain at the surface for the duration of a dive; the diver controls the line leading to the SMB using a reel. It is recommended that SMBs clearly indicate that there are divers below, and they should ideally include the international Flag 'A' as part of their design.

A Delayed Surface Marker Buoy (DSMB) can be useful in some situations as an alternative to an SMB. The DSMB is initially carried underwater by the diver in a deflated state, then at some stage towards the end of the dive, the diver deploys the DSMB while still underwater, using a reel to feed out a line. This line can then be used as an ascent aid, and the buoy can show the support team the location of the divers.

DSMBs can also be used to indicate an emergency situation. Some divers carry two DSMBs of different appearance, with one being used routinely, and the other only being deployed to indicate an emergency.

The following procedures are recommended for the use of Delayed Surface Marker Buoys (DSMBs). These procedures should be thoroughly discussed with and understood by all team members prior to undertaking any dives. This includes all divers and members of the surface party and boat skipper.

- Divers using surface marker buoys should clearly label buoys with the full name of their owners. Avoid nicknames as these may not be known to the dive marshal. If using the delayed surface marker buoy for decompression the buoy should be clearly marked with the words "Decompression" in addition to the diver's name. To avoid confusion it is recommended that the colour of a single DSMB should be orange or red but not yellow.
- When carrying two DSMBs on a dive, the general European consensus is that an orange or red buoy is deployed under normal diving conditions. In an emergency, or when assistance is required, a yellow buoy should be deployed.
- When using a yellow buoy clearly mark on the buoy the word "**Emergency**" together with the diver's name. Once a yellow buoy is seen the support team and or boat can then initiate the standard emergency protocols depending on the situation.
- When deploying a DSMB from depth, the diver should not attach the reel to their person as they may be carried up by the device if the reel jams. Great care should be taken to avoid entanglement in the line.

(Note for divers travelling internationally: the general European protocols for using orange and yellow buoys differ from the general consensus in North America where the use of yellow and orange DSMBs are reversed, eg orange is the emergency colour).