

Scottish Sub Aqua Club

In the event of a fatality in the Branch

Introduced 15 December, 2011



Accidents do happen, unfortunately. Needless to say, they can have devastating effects on members directly (and indirectly) involved. Due to the nature of the consequences, fatalities have to be treated in a different way to “incidents”, however serious.

Your responsibilities as BDO are threefold:

- To support those involved, for the good of all concerned
- To notify ScotSAC of the event at the earliest opportunity.
- To assist in gathering accounts of the incident from **all** parties present.

Whilst this may seem very low down in the list of “things to be done”, we have a duty to report fatal accidents to our insurers, in case any claim might arise from the incident. The ScotSAC insurers are on our side – but they need to be supplied with a full account of what happened.

Based on past experience, the more information that can be gathered as soon as possible after the event, the clearer the picture seems to be. A devastating event is naturally very upsetting for those involved, but you should try to obtain these statements as soon as is realistically possible.

Incident Report Forms are downloadable from our website.

You should encourage all who were present at the incident to fill in a report, separately – even if it is to say that nothing was observed; this will allow, for example, a picture of “who was where at the time” to be established for future reference.

It may well be that the police will take away dive kit for technical examination; it would be advantageous if any other “hard” evidence was secured by the BDO or his/her representative. In particular, any dive slate used, and risk assessment written down should be kept (if necessary, photographed) for examination; such details should also be sent to HQ.

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When first reporting the incident to HQ, you should cover the “when”, “where” and “who” aspects:

- Date and time of incident
- Site of incident
- Branch(es) involved
- Name, age, and next of kin of the victim
- Your contact name and number, for liaising regarding further details in due course.

This will allow HQ to set in motion a planned sequence of notifications to all relevant parties (the Board, the NDC and our insurers).

What happens next?

- You can be expected to be contacted by someone appointed by the Board to oversee the investigation of the incident.
- Our insurers may well require additional information, and may contact you to arrange a meeting with you or others involved. Our insurers have a fine track record of supporting members who have found themselves in similar situations; they have also acted in the best interests of ScotSAC - hence, co-operation would be much appreciated in the interests of all concerned.
- You can also expect to be contacted by your Regional (and/or the National) Coach to offer guidance and support.
- It is ScotSAC policy that any Instructor involved in a serious incident will have their Instructor status automatically suspended pending inquiries into that incident. It must be stressed that this is done without prejudice to any outcome, and does not suggest blame - it is, in fact, standard practice in many organisations. If an Instructor is involved in the

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incident, they will receive a letter detailing this suspension of status, spelling out in detail why this is done; you, as BDO, will also receive a letter from HQ explaining the situation.

A fatal accident involving a diver is often, unfortunately, considered “newsworthy”; you or others in the Branch may find reporters contacting you, asking for details of the incident; please do not say anything to them - merely refer any such requests to HQ, who will handle them. You should also encourage others involved to do the same.