

Frequently Asked Questions – Buddy Breathing (Shared) Ascents

Q Please define precisely what constitutes a ‘Shared Ascent’ as opposed to an ‘Assisted Ascent’

A ‘Shared Ascent’ is where two divers ascend whilst buddy breathing from the same regulator. An ‘Assisted Ascent’ is where two divers ascend whilst breathing from separate regulators.

Q Why is this being changed again? Wasn’t there a vote a couple of years ago to get rid of shared ascents?

A In June 2006, the buddy breathing (shared) ascent was temporarily suspended from the training schedule pending ratification at the Diving Officers conference in November of that year. The vote at the DOs conference to remove the skill did not meet the two-thirds majority required by the former Constitution, and as a result, the training was re-instated. The new Byelaws now remove the requirement for a vote at the DO conference and for recommendations to be made directly to the Board.

The Board and NDC believe that buddy breathing (shared) ascents are still a viable means of an emergency ascent for those trained in that skill. However, diving equipment has evolved and progressed over recent years, and since the buddy breathing ascent was added to the training schedule the use of Alternative Air Sources has increased to the point where it is now the norm to use one. As a result, the Board and NDC believe that the buddy breathing (shared) ascent is now no longer essential in the training of new divers/Members.

Q Why has it taken so long for this proposal to be re-presented?

A The Board and NDC has been aware of the strength of feeling towards this particular skill for sometime. In order to ensure that a balanced and comprehensive proposal is presented to the Board, the NDC must ensure that proper consideration is given to all possible alternatives before coming to a conclusion.

Q Why is SSAC making the carrying of an alternative air source (or equivalent) mandatory for all Members?

A SSAC has for some time, strongly recommended that all divers carry an alternative air source (or equivalent) whilst diving – this ensures that in the event of an out of air situation, both divers in the buddy pair have access to an air source.

As the buddy breathing (shared) ascent is now being removed from the training schedule, we must ensure that diving carried out under SSAC regulations meets the minimum safety requirements and all divers are suitably equipped for emergencies. Therefore, the carrying of an alternative air source will become one of SSAC’s minimum safety requirements.

Q What constitutes an Alternative Air Source (or equivalent)?

A An alternative air source in its most basic form consists of an additional second stage regulator attached to the diver’s first stage. This may be referred to as an Octopus regulator. Equivalent alternatives may include;

- o An Air II/AutoAir – a type of inflation device for a BCD which also allows the diver to breath from their cylinder
- o A Pony Bottle with separate first and second stage regulators
- o A twin set configuration with separate first and second stage regulators.

Q When must I have an Alternative Air Source (or equivalent) in place?

A An alternative air source (or equivalent) will be mandatory for all Members from the AGM in spring 2009. This provides time for Members to make any required changes to their equipment. In the meantime, the Board and NDC would like to encourage all Members to obtain an alternative air source as soon as practicable prior to that date. An AAS has already been required for Sport and Master Diver trainees for many years.

Q How much is an Alternative Air Source likely to cost me?

A A second stage regulator is the minimum requirement that you would need. Depending on the type/brand of regulator purchased, a brand new regulator will cost from £60.00.

Q What happens if I do not acquire an Alternative Air Source (or equivalent)?

A SSAC believes that all Members will understand the reasons why Alternative Air Sources are being made mandatory, and will rely on Members own endeavours to ensure that they obtain this additional item of equipment within the stated timescale.

As per existing SSAC regulations, Branch diving practices will continue to remain under the control of the Branch Diving Officer, and it will be his/her responsibility to ensure that dives are carried out in accordance with SSAC regulations.

Q I’ve never been trained in the use of an Alternative Air Source (or equivalent). What should I do?

A If you have never received training in the use of an Alternative Air Source, or have not completed the Assisted Ascents please consult with your Branch Diving Officer or Regional Coach in the first instance or to receive training.

Q What is a Risk Assessment and how do I carry one out?

A A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, on a dive site, could cause harm to anyone, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. This is an important step that should be undertaken before each dive. A risk assessment helps you to focus on the risks that matter on a dive site – the ones with potential to cause real harm. Some examples would be, entry/exit hazards, the skill set of divers on site and the dive conditions and ensuring all divers have adequate air content, including reserve for the planned dive.

There are many different methods that can be used to carry out a risk assessment and the SSAC Health and Safety manual provides information on some of these methods. Alternatively, you could discuss this with your Branch Diving Officer or Regional Coach.

Q What will happen at the next AGM?

A At the next SSAC AGM, the Membership will be asked to ratify this change, the outcome of which will result in the skill either being re-instated or permanently removed. Under our new Byelaws, a simple majority will be required for change to be ratified.

Q Are Sport Diver trainees able to purchase pony bottles / twinsets for their Assisted Ascent training?

DRAFT FOR NDC CONSIDERATION

- A Although pony bottles and twin-sets are an accepted alternative to an Octopus, whilst in training the Board and NDC recommends that Sport Diver trainees keep to the more simpler equipment configurations.

