

Hiring Divers: The Basics (Infosheet ODR-1)

So, you've decided to hire a diving company to carry out some work for you. There is some important information you should know before the work gets underway. The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* places duties on those who contract for services and the new *Occupational Diving Regulations* set specific health and safety standards for occupational diving in Nova Scotia.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEOPLE HIRING DIVERS

While the direct employer of the divers carrying out the work likely has the most control over the health and safety of the divers, people who hire divers also have responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. These include:

- informing the diving company of any potential hazards at the worksite (ie. any intakes or exhausts, water control structures that will need to be disabled and locked out before diving takes place)
- ensuring the work of the divers and your employees is coordinated (ie. making sure diving work is complete and all divers and equipment are out of the area before resuming operations, or removing a lock-out)
- telling the diving company any information you have that could affect the health and safety of the divers
- taking reasonable precautions to ensure the dive site is free of hazards (ie. in a marina or harbour, notify boat users that diving operations will be taking place and to be aware of any dive area markers, bouys, etc.)

NOVA SCOTIA OCCUPATIONAL DIVING REGULATIONS

On May 1, 2006, new Occupational Diving Regulations will be effective in Nova Scotia. These regulations set minimum health and safety standards for occupational diving (diving for payment or compensation) that all diving companies must follow. As someone hiring diving services, you should make sure the following basic requirements are met before permitting a diving company to start work on your site.

Dive Planning

A written dive plan must be prepared for each dive carried out. You should ask to see it before work begins.

Minimum Crew

The minimum crew is three persons, including the diver, at the dive site whenever a diver is in the water. No diving is to take place if there are fewer than three persons present. You should ask any diving companies you are considering hiring how many crew members they will assign to the job. Any company suggesting fewer than three crew members on-site would be breaking the law and should not be considered further.

Diver Competence

The dive supervisor and divers must have the diving knowledge and experience to carry out the proposed job as well as have knowledge of, and follow, the regulations. You should ask any diving companies you are considering hiring:

- whether the divers and crew meet the competence requirements of the regulations
- for proof of training
- what their experience is in doing the type of work you need done
- for references (from similar jobs if possible) or for copies of their recent Diving Supervisor Records (which the Regulations require be kept). These records will show the types of jobs they have done and any problems they have come across.

SCUBA PROHIBITIONS

The use of SCUBA equipment is banned or restricted for some more hazardous work. This includes:

- welding, burning or cutting;
- high-pressure jetting or using other tools
- handling explosives;
- hoisting and dredging;
- working in a contaminated environment;
- diving while attached to a moving boat;
- working in or near underwater intakes or exhausts or water control structures;
- entering pipes or confined spaces;
- using enriched air as a breathing mixture
- diving below 40 metres (130 feet).

If you are considering using SCUBA divers for any of these activities, you should review the *Occupational Diving Regulations* to determine the precise rules that apply. Or, you can call the Occupational Health and Safety Division at the number below.

MORE INFORMATION

The *Occupational Diving Regulations* are available from the Department of Environment and Labour. For copies of the regulations or any other material contact:

Information Specialist
Occupational Health and Safety Division
902-424-5400 or toll free 1-800-952-2687 (1-800-9LABOUR)

If you have any questions or require further information please contact:

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