



Codes of Practice

General operating guidelines for recreational
scuba diving and related activities.

January 2005

Preamble

The SCUBA Divers Federation of Victoria (SDFV) is an affiliation of (non-commercial) recreational SCUBA diving clubs and the peak body representing the interests and community values of recreational divers throughout Victoria. It is the charter of the SDFV to advocate and promote safe and responsible practices within the sphere of recreational SCUBA diving.

Purpose

The SDFV Codes of Practice have been established to provide consistent, informative and practical guidelines in relation to diving safety and operational behaviour of dive clubs in the Federation. The codes have been developed on the premise of self-regulation and relate to general requirements of organisational and operational behaviour, with specific emphasis on diver safety.

Scope

The Codes of Practice are envisaged to be voluntary, and would apply to all member dive clubs, associations and associates of the SDFV carrying out recreational diving operations. The Code would not apply to commercial operations. In the case of SDFV affiliates undertaking diving activities through a commercial enterprise, the requirements of the commercial operator are assumed to take precedence.

It is acknowledged that many member clubs have existing practices and procedures that may be time-honoured and go to the core spirit of the club. The intention of the SDFV Codes of Practice is to integrate, as far as possible, the fundamentally generic functionality of recreational diving practices into a common document for the benefit and safety of the sport.

The SDFV Codes of Practice covered in this document are:-

- A1. Code of Practice for recreational diving (general)
- A2. Code of Practice for recreational diving within the channels of Port Phillip.
- A3. *Code of Practice for conducting recreational diving within Marine Parks.***
- A4. Code of Practice for boat launch and retrieval at Tidal River (Wilson's Prom).
- A5. *Code of Practice for the recreational fishing of Rock Lobster (using scuba equipment).***
- EG1. Example club Code of Practice for drift diving

** These codes are in draft form awaiting completion of the appropriate marine park management plans, and recreational fishing regulation changes

A1. Code of Practice for recreational diving (general).

Guiding Principle

SDFV clubs provide safe and rewarding diving experiences within an inherent ethos of community and common welfare.

Preamble

SDFV clubs exist for the purpose of providing rewarding and enjoyable diving experiences for people with a common interest in recreational SCUBA diving. SDFV clubs operate on a competency-basis from the broad range of general skills and the continuum of diving experience and expertise inherent in the memberships. Recreational clubs establish safe diving practices from a non-commercial perspective.

Individuals and organisations operating under the SDFV Code of Practice for Recreational Diving:-

In relation to general processes:-

- have documented operational policies and guidelines.
- have organisational structures where individual roles and responsibilities are identified.
- have adequate information paths and communication procedures.
- provide authorised written instructions where appropriate.
- can demonstrate a currency of processes, including review mechanisms.

In relation to dive planning and organisation:-

- ensure dive activities are planned.
- have an identifiable dive organiser responsible for planning a given diving activity.
- have an identifiable dive leader responsible for the overall conduct of the actual dive (may be the diver organiser).
- Satisfy all regulatory requirements in relation to planning the dive (*i.e.* permits)
- adequately communicate expectations and requirements of participants in the dive.
- have suitable and appropriate emergency procedures, including incident reporting.

In relation to diver qualifications:-

- require all divers are certified to AS4005.1, or equivalent, as the *minimum* level of diver training.
- require specialist qualifications where mandated (*i.e.* cave diving).
- encourage continuing diver education, as appropriate.

In relation to diving:-

- have operational processes to gauge diver competency.
- have operational processes to align diver competency with dive-site conditions.
- have a sound means for assigning dive buddies.
- adhere to the buddy system.
- always display a dive flag to mark divers in the water.
- have a means to account for all divers (i.e. dive manifest).

In relation to boating and boat operations:-

- ensure boat operators to be appropriately licensed.
- require boat operators adhere to boating regulations.
- require boat operators to have operable safety equipment.
- require boat operators observe location-specific requirements or practices.
- ensure boat operators conduct diving activities only when it is safe to do so.
- have a suitable diver recall system, and emergency boat procedures.
- generally require that boats remain in the vicinity of the divers

In relation to diving equipment:-

- adequately maintains Club equipment.
- refrain from the use of equipment known to be unserviceable, outside mandatory test certification, or otherwise which may compromise Club safety.
- actively promote regular servicing of personal dive equipment.
- require and ensure that equipment is operated by competent operators.
- ensure that any documentation or instructions in the use of community (Club) equipment are up-to-date.
- provide opportunities for the training and skills transfer in the use of community (Club) equipment.

In relation to Environment:-

- respect the environment while undertaking diving activities, and act responsibly and sensibly in relation to interaction with the environment.
- refrain from unnecessary damage of underwater structures and habitats
- require fishers to be licenced, and comply with fishing regulations and codes of practice.

A2. Code of Practice for recreational diving within the channels of Port Phillip

Guiding Principle

Diving activities within the vicinity of the channels of Port Phillip will not impede shipping and will not risk the safety of recreational divers.

Preamble

There are areas of Port Phillip Bay that provide very rewarding diving experiences which are also subject to shipping operations. Conducting diving activities in areas subject to ship traffic may be hazardous to both small craft and divers. Shared use of the waterways relies on a sensible approach to diving in the channels.

Individuals and organisations conducting dive activities under the SDFV Code of Practice for recreational diving within the channel of Port Phillip:-

- will not anchor within the confines of a defined shipping channel.
- will not impede shipping.
- will not commence if a ship is observed approaching the dive site. ¹
- will attempt to determine shipping arrivals by one of the following means:-
 - by contacting Lonsdale lighthouse VHF radio Ch12
 - by contacting commercial dive charter operators on Ch74 VHF.
 - by monitoring commercial dive charter operators traffic on Ch74 VHF.
 - Contact Coast Guard Queenscliff or Melbourne, on 27.880 Mhz, or Ch16 VHF, who can be asked to ascertain shipping traffic details.
- will not leave any dive boat unattended.
- will ensure that person/s attending to the dive boat be a licensed boat operator, have experience of the dive area and local conditions, and be competent in diver retrieval,
- will have an appropriate level of diver experience in conducting dives in the channels (and mentor less experienced divers).
- will have an appropriate diver-recall system. (It is recommended to use 3 short revs of the boat motor to recall divers in the event of approaching ships. Alternatively 3 tugs on drift line if being used).
- will, in the situation of the imminent approach of a ship and unable to recover divers, alert the ship as to location and situation, via:-
 - VHF radio Ch16, directly with the ship, or via Lonsdale lighthouse.
 - Coast Guard Queenscliff or Melbourne on 27.880 Mhz or Ch16.
- will operate in accordance other SDFV Codes of Practice, as appropriate (e.g. Code of Practice for recreational diving (general)).

¹ · Clubs may want to expand on this or formalise its meaning within their own codes/procedures: “will not commence within 1 hour of the expected arrival of a ship”.

A4. Code of Practice for boat launch and retrieval at Tidal River (Wilsons Promontory).

Guiding Principle

SDFV Clubs perform boat launches and retrievals at Tidal River at Wilsons Promontory in a prescribed manner designed for minimal impact on the beach and other beach users.

Preamble

Recreational diving at Wilsons Promontory often involves boat access to the water via the beach at Tidal River. The Tidal River beach is popular, and boat launches and retrievals involve interaction with, and the good will of, other beach users. SDFV Clubs conduct boat-launches and retrievals in ways acceptable to park management that minimises impacts to the beach and respect the needs of others.

Individuals and organisations conducting dive activities under the SDFV Code of Practice for boat launch and retrieval at Tidal River:-

- will observe park regulations.
- will observe vehicle speed limits on the beach.
- will use the designated boat launch and retrieval area, unless directed by park management to do otherwise.
- will only use equipment deemed in a serviceable conditions.
- will ensure members of the general public are well clear of beach towing operations.
- will proceed with operations only when deemed safe to do so.
- will only use rope (or non-elastic winch extension straps) for towing/pulling purposes.
- will use means to protect individuals from damage from towing rope snapping under tension. (eg: wet towel on middle of rope)
- Will avoid causing a visible congregation of cars on the beach (tow trailers away as soon as possible)

EG1. Example club Code of Practice for drift diving

Guiding Principle

Drift Diving activities (especially within the vicinity of the channels of Port Phillip) will not impede shipping and will not risk the safety of recreational divers.

Preamble

There are areas of Port Phillip Bay that provide very rewarding diving experiences which are also subject to shipping operations and fast tidal flow. Conducting diving activities in areas subject to ship traffic may be hazardous to both small craft and divers. Shared use of the waterways relies on a sensible approach to diving in the channels.

Club members conducting drift dive activities under this Code of Practice for drift diving:-

- will follow the SDFV Code of Practice for recreational diving within the channels of Port Phillip
- will not commence if a ship is observed approaching the dive site.
- will not leave any dive boat unattended.
- will ensure that person/s attending to the dive boat be a licensed boat operator, have experience of the dive area and local conditions, and be competent in diver retrieval,
- will have an appropriate level of diver experience in conducting drift dives
- will use a drift line to identify location of divers (a rope with a surface buoy)
- will have no more than three lines in the water at once (preferably no more than 2)
- will have an appropriate diver-recall system. It is recommended to use:
 - 3 tugs on the rope (or other agreed line signal).
 - 3 short revs of the boat motor to recall divers in the event of approaching ships
- will, in the situation of the imminent approach of a ship and unable to recover divers, alert the ship as to location and situation, via:-
 - VHF radio Ch16, directly with the ship, or via Lonsdale lighthouse.
 - Coast Guard Queenscliff or Melbourne on 27.880 Mhz or Ch16.
- will operate in accordance with other SDFV Codes of Practice, as appropriate (e.g. Code of Practice for recreational diving (general)).