

SEADRAGONS DIVE GROUP

Dive Organiser's Manual

Standards

If you have been appointed as a dive organiser you will already be an experienced diver who is trained in dive planning. The dive can be run pretty much in the way you think reasonably safe and appropriate in the circumstances.

You will already know about the safe diving practices that have been prescribed by your training agency and they do not need to be repeated here.

To avoid arguments about which standard is preferred on a subject, Seadragons adopt BSAC dive standards, so if you need more information see www.bsac.com.

The Aim of this Manual

This manual is design to provide additional guidance about the Seadragons' usual method of organising dives.

Why dive with a Seadragons?

Primarily, we want people to have fun (including you).

People have the option of simply going with a charter operator, or diving with a few friends. For a combination of reasons some people prefer to dive in a fun, safe and social group like Seadragons.

The dive you run on behalf of the Seadragons will have an important bearing on how much we all enjoy it, how long they will keep diving, and whether the Seadragons prospers in the long term.

1. Making everyone feel included in the dive, especially the quiet ones, newer members, and the ones that need time to organize themselves and their gear. You will find that where you take people and what they see is likely to be less important to them than the fact that they felt like an accepted part of the group and could relax and enjoy themselves. At the end of the day they might only be underwater for 40 minutes, but they will be in close contact with you and other Seadragons divers for the whole day.

2. Thinking of the comfort of others, especially whether the least capable person in the group will be able to enjoy the day if you make a particular decision. Sometimes we have to do the hard yards to get to a special site, but also consider the comfort and capabilities of all the divers. Remember that if someone has a problem like a bad back, they probably won't tell you until it's too late, so back off the throttle in rough weather if you can. If you are not sure that a new person will be able to handle the conditions, take them to a safer site.

3. Making people feel safe. This means both being safe and appearing to be safe. People coming out of courses may be distressed if we deviate from the practices they observed on their course. In particular, a good briefing inspires confidence, so don't dispense with it even if the dive seems simple. The experienced divers will complain

about being mothered, but they will forget the recall signal and other important details when it counts if not reminded.

How to Organise a Scheduled Seadragons Dive

Tell the Seadragons office bearers (or your local representative if you are an affiliated group or branch) that you are interested in organizing a dive to a particular site. They will pencil in the date you nominate and you should then liaise with them to publish details of the dive.

Email and Facebook are very useful tools in organizing dives and should be used to keep everyone up to date on developments such as the weather, or available places.

The Seadragons office bearers don't expect a big advertising production, but we want all the members with suitable skills to have the opportunity to hear about a dive vacancy at least twice if possible.

A bit of site information is also needed to sell the dive and prepare people for any issues. If it isn't suitable for beginners, say so.

With Tasmania being such a windy place, you may prefer to decide the date and place at the last minute. Warn people what you are doing, invite them to tell you which day they are free, and set out the type of dive, e.g. "a shallow easy dive in the SE on Saturday or Sunday, maybe Iron Pot or Nine Pin Point depending on the weather".

What is a Seadragon's dive and what isn't.

If you would like to take advantage of the Seadragon's equipment, mailing list, liability cover or gear, you need to get a Seadragon's officer to approve it and make it "official". The liability cover won't work unless you do, and the liability exceptions in the law will only cover members of the association acting in accordance with the rules of the association.

Don't expect a big email back saying "approved", if you notify the Seadragon's officers of the dive details in time for them to respond, you can assume it is approved unless we say otherwise.

You may also want to send out an email or Facebook message inviting selected friends who are Seadragons members to a dive on the spur of the moment. If it isn't generally advertised for all members, or approved, this has to be a private dive.

Although we can't stop a private boat owner putting conditions on the use of their boat, Seadragons' dives need to be genuinely open to all members with suitable skills, generally on a 'first come, first served basis'.

This may be a problem because boat space may be limited and its usual to talk to your friends about your upcoming dive plans. If the dive is filled up before it is advertised, it is more likely to be a private dive not a Seadragons dive, and you are generally not entitled to use the Seadragons name, liability cover or equipment.

Unsuitable dive or unsuitable divers?

Usually, the advertisement of the dive should already have specified the experience level you think is appropriate for the dive. But, if you have 2 people wanting to go on a deep dive, but 8 wanting a shallow dive you may need to rethink your plans. We should be attempting to ensure that there is a balance of dives suitable for all members. Have a chat with the Dive Officer if you want some dive planning suggestions.

If someone challenges a decision to exclude them from a dive on safety grounds, you can refer the decision to the President and/or Dive Officer for a second opinion if this helps to settle the matter, but generally speaking the dive organiser's word is law.

Reserve List

Another exception to the 'first come first served' rule is when a dive has fairly recently been run to the same location (say in the last 4 months) and a person who missed out due to lack of places asked to be put on a "reserve list". Reserve list divers get preference in the allocation of places next time, provided that they alert you to this fact within a reasonable period of the dive being first advertised.

Non-Divers and Non-Members

If your wife, children, mate or parent wants to come along, we can try to accommodate this with the approval of the private boat owner. Non-diving spectators can be very useful as a lookouts during dives, if they are well-briefed on boat handling and emergency procedures. They will need to be asked nicely to remain alert through a long dive. Unfortunately, boat spaces are often very limited and sometimes non-divers can't be accommodated.

Any diver who is not a member of the Seadragons has to be qualified to dive and must sign the membership form including the medical form and risk warning which is on the back of our membership form. This is essential for liability reasons. Check the form and if in doubt, refuse participation in the dive.

Who do you need on a dive?

You will need to find someone to provide, drive and tow a boat. This often restricts your options so sort it out first.

You will also need to man the boat throughout the dive day, so you may want to find a non-diving lookout, or organize 'shifts' of divers, with one pair providing lookout cover for the other buddy pair.

A lookout should be familiar with the radio (at least emergency procedures), starting the motor, pulling an anchor, and how to safely retrieve divers.

At the dive site

Refer to your training manual for dive planning tips.

Some form of dive briefing is needed on Seadragons dives. Even when you are diving with your friends who have dived the spot before, you need to discuss with them the basic outline of the dive plan. It can be very informal in these cases.

If anyone is on the dive who hasn't dived the area before, or you do not know them well, we suggest that you make a more detailed and structured briefing.

If anyone is new, make them aware of our usual arrangements, eg, payments, so there are no surprises later. It would be advisable to buddy them with an experienced member who is likely to keep an eye on them. People of similar interests usually like to be buddied together, eg, two photographers.

Seadragons Recall Procedure

Bunches of three loud revs of the outboard motor over the diver is the Seadragons recall procedure. You can also tug four times on a surface marker buoy line. These recall

procedures must not be used unless it is an emergency, or you will encourage everyone to ignore the signals.

During the dive

HAVE FUN and be safe.

Trouble

A certain amount of 'to and fro' about dive plans is to be expected, but your decisions are final as far as the Seadragons office bearers are concerned, particularly when it comes to matters of safety.

If anyone creates problems, or seems to experience difficulties on a dive, try to sort it out as best you can on the day, and then bring it to the attention of the Seadragons office bearers.

If anything goes wrong with the boat or hire gear, similarly remember to report it to the Seadragons office bearers.

Private Boats

People are encouraged to bring their own boats to Seadragons dives. The owner of the boat must still agree to follow your safety instructions. Other than that they can run their own boat as they please.

A private boat owner is likely to ask for, and should be offered, reimbursement for fuel expenses (boat and extra towing costs). This can be a simple split among the divers using the boat, or at an agreed rate. This applies even if they were asked to bring their boat but it was not needed on the day due to late cancellations. Generally, people will give you a fairly accurate account of their fuel expenses. Divers need to be warned to bring cash, and that they are not to leave the site until this is sorted out.

Members need to be particularly respectful of the private boat owners property and should be careful about scratching boats with tanks, or otherwise interfering with the private boat owner's enjoyment of their craft.

A private owner can bring whomever they like out in their boat, but any diver who attends a dive follows the same safety rules as every other diver.