

## Sea Urchin Diver Seminar Summary\* February 6, 2004

A meeting was hosted by SafetyNet to discuss issues in the Sea Urchin diver industry with a view to informing researchers who want to conduct research in the area. SafetyNet partners were invited to send representatives. Represented at the meeting were Dept of Labour, Dept of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Workplace Health Safety and Compensation Commission, Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union, and a representative from the recreational diving community. Researchers affiliated with SafetyNet participated to hear about the issues in the industry, and also to offer some information about the industry in British Columbia.

### **Diving in NL: Perceptions of Risk, Diver Safety**

- There is a perception in the diving community that diving is a relatively safe activity.
- It is recognized that diving accidents and near-miss incidents are under-reported, which adds to the perception that it is safe.

### **Recent changes to regulations in NL and effects on divers**

- SUD industry began in 1994-95 and was unregulated up to 2004.
- New CSA regulations were recently brought in by government in an effort to make the industry safer for workers.
- There is resistance to these regulations because of overall costs associated with training, medical examinations, being away from home to take training and, above all, new regulations regarding size of crew.
- The main problem relates to the costs associated with having to pay for a fully equipped and qualified diver to remain on board and monitor working divers
- Some regulations are being accepted, such as the need to have a medical examination.

### **Comparison with industry in British Columbia**

- Differences in diving equipment used: in NL most SUDs use scuba gear, in B.C. most use hookah system, or surface supply, which is more reliable
- In B.C. SUDs covered under WCB; CSA regulations brought in after WCB inspected SUD and concerns were raised
- In B.C. SUDs attend training such as 6-week SUD School, but in NL most divers have only recreational training. In B.C. training is seen as way to professionalize and increase your chances at gainful employment
- B.C. has CSA standard regulations, but these are modified so that, under certain conditions an extra, standby diver is not required (divers in water can act as rescue for each other if trained, swimming freely and close by with constant visual or audio communication, good weather, good visibility, etc.) Dive supervisor makes this decision.
- Main SU species in B.C. is red, in N.L. it is green

### **Discussion points:**

- **Why CSA standards?** Dept. of Labour attempted to draft own regulations, but Chief Medical Officer recommended using CSA standards after SUD fatality.
- **Resistance to training:** The cost is high but the government has offered to pay 80-90% of the cost for workers who are EI eligible through the Labor Market Development Agreement. SUDs have still resisted training – not one Newfoundland SUD has taken CSA course at Marine Institute. Why? SUDs feel that if the composition of crew issue is not resolved there is no point in addressing other regulations. Most will comply if crew issue addressed.
- **Hand Cooling:** Is hand cooling an issue for SUDs in NL? Yes. Most divers here use thick neoprene gloves; there is a new type which has a ring system matched to the suit, but if it's punctured, it floods the body; there is also a hot water system, which works well but is expensive.

- **Surface Supply Advantages:** helps prevent drowning by allowing some extra time to call for help; eliminates need for large numbers of gas cylinders; can stay down longer
- **How to convince operators to follow regulations:** one approach would be to remind license holders that one fatal accident can put operator out of business

#### **Suggestions for Research**

- compare injuries and deaths per number of divers in the SUD industry, injuries, in NL and B.C.
- explore the possibility and implications of moving back from CSA standards in NL for safety in the SUD industry, taking unique NL issues into account
- carry out comparison of regulatory frameworks across provinces and jurisdictions
- compare skills from industry training courses vs. skills of trained rescue diver
- study experienced divers and their practices

#### **Added note: Related CSA Standards listed under “Diving and Pressurized Environments”**

*Z180.1 Compressed Breathing Air and Systems*

*Z275.1 Hyperbaric Facilities*

*Z275.2 Occupational Safety Code for Diving Operations*

*Z275.3 Occupational Safety Code for Construction Work in Compressed Air*

*Z275.4 Competency Standard for Diving Operations*

**(for more information see [www.csa.ca](http://www.csa.ca))**

**\* This summary was drafted by SafetyNet staff for the purposes of sharing information about Sea Urchin Diving health and safety issues. These are not official minutes from the meeting.**