

Blackwater Diving Procedures/Rules of Engagement (ROE)

Preface

- We define a “Blackwater” dive as any night dive conducted over a bottom that exceeds a depth of 40m (130ft), using recreational equipment and limits. Similarly, a “Bonfire” dive is conducted under the same ROE as below, but is over a bottom of 40m (130’) or shallower
- Blackwater diving is very exciting and fun. The types of creatures we encounter are otherworldly and often unlike anything we see on the reef. The major difference between blackwater and other night diving is the lack of natural references for orientation. We have a lighted downline and that’s pretty much it. Thus, loss of situational awareness is a real hazard we need to mitigate via having the right equipment and following these procedures diligently
- These procedures apply to the blackwater group created by Steve Wolborsky on Guam, and apply to all blackwater and bonfire dives conducted by the group

Equipment (in addition to normal dive gear)

- Dive computer is mandatory
- Dives can be on air or enriched air
- Two (2) separate lights or torches, fully charged or with fresh batteries installed. Strobes with focus lights count toward this requirement
- Lighted downline, readily visible from the surface
- Operationally check all equipment before showing at the boat/dive site

Pre-dive

- Each dive will have a designated leader. The dive leader will brief all participants on procedures and contingencies
- Dive leader will prebrief and coordinate all aspects of the dive with the boat captain, to include abort and recall procedures
- Divers will maintain strict buddy discipline. Buddy teams will prebrief all procedures before the dive to include signaling
- Dive leader will prepare and deploy the downline, and enter the water first. Dive leader will readjust any lights, as necessary, as he/she descends

Dive

- All dives will be untethered, i.e., neither downline nor divers will be tethered to the boat
- The boat captain will keep the boat within visual range of the downline at all times
- As a priority, all buddy teams will stay within the downline light zone
- Absolute maximum depth is 30m (100ft), desired maximum is 18m (60ft). Brief excursions below 60ft are acceptable, as long as the dive team promptly returns to 60ft or shallower
- 90 min maximum dive duration based on entry of dive leader. Dive leader will signal aurally and visually when the time has expired and all divers will begin their ascent
- Only one diver in a buddy pair shoots at a time. The non-shooting diver spots for subjects and monitors dive parameters. "UP means up," no arguing
- All dives will be planned and executed as no deco dives.. If a diver inadvertently enters deco, they will clear their obligation before ending their dive. Any diver who locks out their computer due to failing to meet a deco obligation will be subject to suspension from the group, depending on the circumstances
- Safety stop at 5m (15ft) and 3 min for all dives. Divers may complete this requirement by shooting at 6m (20ft) or shallower for at least 3 min
- Under normal circumstances, all divers will ascend along the downline and stay in a group until the boat driver signals ready for pickup
- The dive leader will get onboard last and will assist the boat crew with redeploying the downline

Contingencies

- Lost visual contact with downline. Make a slow ascent and carefully surface, shining lights upward. If you can see the downline at the surface, you can carefully swim toward it until you can clearly see it underwater, then descend and continue the dive. If you cannot see the downline, signal the boat for a pickup. Once onboard, do not re-enter the water
- Lost buddy procedures. Search for 1 minute underwater. If no joy, ascend slowly along the downline and rejoin at the float. Once you rejoin, you may descend and continue the dive if allowable time remains. If you cannot rejoin, signal the boat and end the dive

- Other emergencies. Ascend as a buddy team and work the issue underwater and at the surface. If you can fully resolve the issue, you may continue the dive. If not, signal the boat and end the dive
- Diver recall. Boat captain will bang on a metal object 3x, wait 3 sec, and repeat the pattern until all divers surface. Divers hearing the recall will immediately make a slow ascent to the surface unless meeting an emergency deco obligation. In the latter case, ascend as soon as the obligation is complete

I AGREE WITH THESE PROCEDURES AND WILL FOLLOW THEM TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY WHEN DIVING WITH THE BLACKWATER GROUP.

SIGNATURE

NAME

DATE