

The Diving Medical Advisory Committee

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DMAC Statement on Requirement for Air Diving to 50 msw in Commercial Diver Training

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The risk associated with air diving increases with depth and duration regardless of decompression table used. As safety standards in commercial diving have improved, the safe duration of working time at 50 msw has reduced to the extent that it has become difficult to conduct effective operations at this depth and other methodology including saturation is extensively used for operations in this depth range. At intermediate depths the use of nitrox is in common use to reduce the risk of decompression illness.

Decompression illness associated with deep air dives in training, both in water and in chamber, occurs regularly but the present air diver training requires that trainee divers conduct a number of dives deeper than 30 msw to a maximum of 50 msw in training when many will never be required to experience this level of risk again.

DMAC members recommend that the training requirements be reviewed to restrict trainee divers' exposure to such deep high risk dives in order to make diver training as 'safe as is reasonably practicable'.

DMAC accepts that there are circumstances where surface supplied diving operations to 50 msw are appropriate, but considers that such operations should be conducted by experienced divers with additional training in the techniques to be used. Such additional training might include the use of alternative breathing mixtures including nitrox and trimix.

DMAC also accepts that military organisations have special requirements which may justify acceptance of risk levels higher than those appropriate in commercial practice.

DMAC, the independent body comprising diving medical specialists from across Europe, seeks to provide advice about medical and certain safety aspects of commercial diving.