



COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR OSU SCIENTIFIC DIVING OPERATIONS

Introduction

The risk of COVID-19 transmission adds to the list of known scientific diving hazards that must be mitigated for. Agencies and institutions involved in scientific diving have promulgated COVID-19 best practices, including the American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS) and Diver's Alert Network (DAN). Oregon State University (OSU) has also mandated COVID-19 management steps for various operations and activities. This document has a References section, and links to the current COVID-19 recommendations of these organizations are listed there.

The intent of this document is to establish general COVID-19 guidelines to be implemented by the individual divers, with overall onsite execution being the responsibility of the Lead Diver. For dives occurring from small boats, COVID-19 strategies for small boat operations can be accessed through the OSU Small Boat Program.

These guidelines should be appended to each OSU Dive Plan until such time as the DCB deems them unnecessary and should be supplemented by any project-specific COVID-19 steps as determined by the DSO during the dive plan approval process.

OSU scientific diving operations are conducted according to national standards created to enhance participant safety and reduce risk of injury or fatality. These standards will not be diluted through COVID-19 mitigation, and requirements for diving authorization prior to beginning field work are still in place.

Approvals

Dive plan approval will now require an accompanying OSU Research Resumption Plan approved at the appropriate College or Unit level. The Research Resumption Plan is completed by the PI and describes the general COVID-19 mitigation steps associated with the project, and College-level approval indicates that these steps are in accordance with current OSU COVID-19 policy.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Participant Screening

All participants must complete the OSU Diving COVID-19 Pre-Departure Screening (which is derived from OSU COVID-19 screening policies). Participants with a positive response in any field must have their participation vetted by the DSO. The Lead Diver will be responsible for engaging with the participants and ensuring that they have self-screened in advance of the start of activities. Any participant failing any of the screening criteria during the course of a project must immediately notify the Lead Diver and have their continued participation vetted by the DSO.

Distancing

All reasonable efforts should be made to maintain the minimum 6ft. of personal distance per CDC recommendations. Gear loading/unloading, dive briefs/debriefs, and gear assembly are examples of activities that can be creatively planned to maximize spacing of participants. When at the surface, divers should keep masks and regulator or snorkel in place and minimize conversation unless needed for operational reasons.

Facial Coverings

All reasonable efforts should be made to wear face coverings when working in enclosed areas, or when working closely outdoors. Fabric face coverings are ineffective when wet, so alternate coverings such as face shields and the provision for spare face coverings onsite should be considered. In general individuals will be responsible for providing their own face coverings including spares unless otherwise indicated in the dive plan or Research Resumption Plan.



**Oregon State
University**

Scientific Diving and Small Boat Safety Program- Research Office

Oregon State University, A312 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon
97331-2140

Office 541-737-6893; Cell 541-740-4577; Fax 541-737-9041

<http://research.oregonstate.edu/diving> email: kevin.buch@oregonstate.edu

Disinfection

Provisions for the onsite disinfection of hands, equipment, and surfaces must be made. Adequate and appropriate (DAN, CDC) supplies for all the phases of the project must be available. Personal disinfection of hands and scuba unit will be the responsibility of the individual participants. Divers should minimize handling of the gear of other divers. Hand sanitizations should be performed after handling of equipment during loading/unloading. The Lead Diver and vessel Operator will be responsible for directing disinfection of other gear and surfaces as mentioned in the individual dive plans.

Equipment

When possible, divers will be asked to use their own personal gear, and divers will make all efforts to handle only their gear rigs during loading/unloading and limit handling of the gear of other divers. Gear rigs being issued by the Academic Dive Center will be appropriately cleaned and placed in individual gear bags for pick up and return by the individual divers. Primary and alternate second stages, snorkel mouthpieces, and BCD inflator assembly/mouthpieces should be disinfected onsite at the end of diving in preparation for handling during unloading and transport of gear. The DSO/ADSO will be responsible for the cleaning and disinfection of dive and field gear associated with the Academic Dive Center.

Divers relying on an 'AIR II' or similar alternate should add a conventional 'octopus' alternate to avoid donating the primary second stage in the event of an air-sharing event.

Field Procedures

Briefings/debriefings should be conducted within the aforementioned guidelines for face coverings and distancing, but the ability to hear and be heard are the priority during these critical activities.

Divers should perform "self" pre-dive buddy checks (each diver calls out check item and observes their buddy self-check that item) with appropriate distancing when possible. Facial coverings should be in place to the greatest degree possible up to donning of the face mask.

In the event a tender is needed, facial coverings should be in place and frequent hand sanitizations should take place.

Divers should be self-sufficient regarding food and water needs for the dive day.

Emergency Procedures

In an emergency it is imperative that divers act in accordance with their training in order to prevent drowning, decompression sickness, or lung overexpansion injuries. A diver should prioritize care of the victim in order to prevent a diver fatality.

Unconscious divers should be extracted to the surface per established procedures. Once on the surface, the rescuer's mask and regulator should be used for as long as is practical.

First Aid and CPR should be done with standard PPE protocols employing gloves and CPR barriers. All rescuers should employ facial coverings during their response to the greatest degree possible. Prioritizing CPR, Oxygen Administration, First Aid, and AED use where appropriate, is the immediate concern.

Efforts should be made to equip O2 kits with MTVs or provisions made for BVMs to be available. Per established standards, rescuer hands and emergency gear should be appropriately cleaned and disinfected post-rescue.



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REFERENCES

AAUS COVID-19 Resources

https://aaus.org/AAUS/COVID-19-19_Resources.aspx

Divers Alert Network

<https://www.diversalertnetwork.org/COVID-19-19/>

Oregon State University

<https://COVID-19.oregonstate.edu/>

Scientific Boating Safety Association COVID-19 Resources

https://scientificboating.org/?page_id=1695



OSU DIVING & BOATING COVID-19 SELF CHECK QUESTIONNAIRE

Prior to reporting to the dive location or vessel each time, please conduct a self-check to screen for possible COVID-19 symptoms.

Do you currently have or have had these symptoms in the last 14 days?

- Fever or chills----- Yes / No
- Cough----- Yes / No
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing----- Yes / No
- Fatigue----- Yes / No
- Muscle or body aches----- Yes / No
- Headache----- Yes / No
- New loss of taste or smell----- Yes / No
- Sore throat-----Yes / No
- Congestion or runny nose----- Yes / No
- Nausea or vomiting----- Yes / No
- Diarrhea -----Yes / No

Other important questions:

- Is your body temperature above 100F/38C without the use of medication to reduce temperature?
Yes / No
- Have you been in contact with anyone with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection?
Yes / No
- Have you recently traveled outside of Oregon? Yes / No
- Have you recently traveled internationally? Yes / No



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If you answer “Yes” to any of these questions, please contact your Supervisor prior to reporting to the work location.

If you are symptomatic, please stay home and contact your primary care provider for further assessment.

For general information on COVID-19 in Oregon, call 211. You can also call Benton County Health Department information line at 541-766-6120 between 8am and 5pm (check your local county website for information if you live outside of Benton County). If you are having a medical emergency, call 911.

We can all help stop COVID-19 from spreading. Always wear a face covering when in enclosed public or common areas. Wash your hands frequently and cover your cough. Stay home if you are sick.

Further guidance can be found on the OSU COVID-19 Resources and Updates webpage at: <https://COVID-19.oregonstate.edu/>