

COVID-19 Planning Guide for Scientific Diving

Updated – June 3, 2020

Effective June 1, 2020, UCSD entered the “Orange” phase for approved research activities in accordance to [UCSD’s Guidelines for Research Ramp-Up](#).

Dive plans will be considered following submission to the DSO the projects phase “Orange” Research Continuity Framework and Social Distancing and Sanitation Protocol approved by the PI’s Section Head and the Scripps Deputy Director for Research (or appropriate designee from other UCSD department).

Additional considerations intended to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 for approved scientific diving activities must include the following guidelines.

Institutional Review and Approvals:

- Departmental Leadership review of current Research Continuity Framework and Social Distancing and Sanitation Protocols.
- Scientific Diving Program review and approval of an approved Research Continuity Framework and a new Scientific Dive Plan (submitted via Webdiver) including these COVID-19 considerations. All pre-COVID approved dive plans are void. Any approved diving operations must be conducted according to standards detailed in the [Scripps Oceanography/UC San Diego Manual for Diving Safety](#) and must implement the additional considerations outlined in this document.
- Travel must be consistent with current [UC San Diego policy](#) and registered via UC Away (see <https://ehs.ucop.edu/away/#/trip/detail>).

General Safety Practices:

- All personnel must complete a [COVID-19 symptom screening](#) before beginning work on-site each day. Those with symptoms should not enter the workplace or field research site.
- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet, whenever feasible.
- Keep from touching face (specifically eyes, mouth, and nose); follow CDC guidance to [Prevent Getting Sick](#).
- Wear a face covering in common areas, while in proximity to others; follow local public health requirements.
- Wash hands with soap and water frequently for at least 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer (>60% alcohol) when soap and water is not available.
- Cover coughs and sneezes; cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Dispose of tissues and wash your hands immediately.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and all shared equipment (door handles, light switches, cylinder valves, oxygen and first aid equipment, etc.) with a disinfecting product listed on the [EPA List N](#) prior to, during, and following any operation.

Diving Equipment Considerations:

- Equipment disinfection must be consistent with recommendations from Diver Alert Network (<https://www.diversalertnetwork.org/emailview/landing/coronavirus/gearDisinfection/index.html>) and the EPA (<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-04/documents/epa-diving-safety-manual-2016.pdf>).
- Birch Aquarium at Scripps is using [3M HB Quat Disinfectant Cleaner Concentrate](#) and the Scientific Diving Program is using [Simple Green d Pro 5](#) according to a written protocol to disinfect critical diving equipment.
- All equipment that might come into contact with a diver’s nose, eyes, and mouth (masks, snorkels, regulators, BCD power inflators) must be soaked in an approved disinfectant solution for at least 10 minutes followed by a thorough fresh water rinse prior to first use and after each diving day. Care must be taken to prevent any contamination associated with rinsing and storing equipment.
- Alternate 2nd stage regulators affixed to a BCD’s power inflator and use of “long hose” alternate 2nd stage configurations are not permitted as any air-sharing scenario would require a donor to provide a regulator from

their mouth directly to that of a recipient diver. Traditional “Octo” 2nd stages are required. Please contact Ashleigh Palinkas (apalinkas@ucsd.edu) to confirm an appropriate configuration.

Pre-Operation & Briefing:

- Each team member will not participate should they feel ill or have reasonable cause to believe they have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Team members should have dedicated diving equipment, PFD's, PPE, provisions, and supplies, if feasible, to minimize sharing.
- Team members have the right to refuse participation without fear of penalty if s/he feels the conditions are unsafe.
- Dive teams and auxiliary personnel must be kept to a minimum and should generally not exceed two divers and one topside assistant or vessel operator.
- Pre-dive briefings should be made prior to departing for the dive site such that there is ample opportunity to define roles and responsibilities of each dive team member in an environment that facilitates Social Distancing practices (+6').
- Buddy and equipment checks must be conducted individually and visually and verbally confirmed as a team maintaining strict Social Distancing practices (+6').
- Small boating operations in support of scientific diving activities must adhere to SIO's most current COVID-19 guidelines ([SIO_UCSD_COVID19_SmallBoatGuidance_05_12_2020.pdf](#)).

Transportation:

- Meet at the worksite (each crewmember should have their own vehicle).
- Depending upon the history of the vehicle, all common areas should be disinfected with a disinfecting product listed on the [EPA List N](#) prior to and following use.
- When fueling vehicles and/or making service stops, use disinfecting wipes on handles or buttons before you touch them; or single-use towels as a barrier, and use hand sanitizer (>60% alcohol) prior to re-entering your vehicle.

Provisions:

- Each participant should be responsible for their own field provisions for the day.
- Water, food, snacks, etc. should all be prepared and brought from home, if possible.
- Each team member should have at least two gallons of drinking water available per workday.
- If coolers are required for provisions, each team member should have their own assigned cooler.
- Stops to make purchases in the field should be kept to a minimum in order to lessen contact with the public.
- For overnight trips, ensure lodging is available to maintain social distancing.