

Public Safety Program Standards and Procedures



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General Training Standards

Overview

Governing Standard and Standards Waiver

Statements, written or oral, that are not processed in accordance with SSI Training Standards will not be considered the official position of SSI. The online English-metric version of the SSI Training and Training Center Standards are the default global standards.

Waivers from Standards

All waivers for deviations to the SSI Training Standards must be requested and approved in writing by the responsible SSI Service Center. The request must explain why the waiver is needed, and what will be done to ensure the quality of SSI training.

SSI Training Standards are updated annually; if a waiver for deviation is approved, it expires with the new Standards year.

Overview

How To Use These Standards

All SSI Training Centers and SSI Professionals are accountable for following all general and program-specific training standards when conducting SSI-approved programs.

For the purpose of these standards, an SSI Professional is defined as a person holding any professional-level rating with SSI, or any staff member of an SSI Training Center.

For the purpose of these standards, an SSI Training Center is defined as any business that conducts SSI training, including but not limited to: Dive Centers, Dive Resorts, Dive Schools, Swim Centers, etc.

General Training Standards

These standards apply to all SSI programs unless otherwise specified in program-specific training standards.

Minimum Instructor Rating

Any active status SSI Professional with the minimum applicable instructor rating or higher may conduct training as specified in the program-specific standard.

Recommendations, Notes, and Examples

These Training Standards include recommendations, notes, and examples.

- RECOMMENDATIONS provide additional suggestions whenever student needs and abilities, environmental conditions or equipment make it possible to enhance the experience of the training activity.
- NOTES and EXAMPLES help clarify a specific standard or recommendation.

Government Laws

If applicable, local, state and federal laws, bylaws and codes of practice supersede SSI Standards. SSI Training Centers and SSI Professionals are required to be familiar with these laws, and inform the responsible SSI Service Center, in writing, in the event of a conflict.

SSI Flexibility Rule

Students participating in SSI programs must complete all training requirements as set forth in the current SSI Training Standards and the applicable instructor manual. SSI Professionals must follow 100% of the SSI Total Teaching System; including all academic, pool/confined water, and open water requirements as outlined in the program-specific instructor manual.

The SSI Flexibility Rule also means that SSI Professionals can develop their own teaching style and program schedules including; the order and number of classroom and pool/confined water sessions, and the order of skills in the pool/confined water sessions and open water training dives.

SSI Professionals are NOT allowed to add skills that SSI does not endorse. Teaching additional skills or skills that “challenge” your students violates SSI Training Standards and can make you liable in the case of an incident. If you have any questions about the SSI Flexibility Rule and what skills are or are not allowed, please contact the responsible SSI Service Center for guidance or interpretation.

Example | Skills like ditching and recovering the scuba unit, breathing directly from the cylinder valve, and any ascents without the regulator in the mouth and/or the breathing gas turned off are not endorsed by SSI, and must NOT be taught during SSI training programs.

Example | Students are not required to complete pool/confined water skills while wearing wetsuits. However, to prepare students for the open water, SSI Professionals may elect to have an additional pool/confined-water training session for students to practice skills while wearing a wetsuit.

Example | If environmental conditions and student ability permit, SSI Professionals may evaluate any and all required skills during any open water training dive. All required open water training dives must still be completed for all SSI programs.

Exceeding Standards

SSI Professionals may exceed standards, may provide more detailed coverage of the materials, and may provide additional in-water training sessions. Incorporating newer techniques and equipment is encouraged. Any specific knowledge and skills changes must be approved by the responsible SSI Service Center prior to incorporating the changes.

Overview

Program Definitions

Certification Program

A digital certification card must be issued once a student completes all requirements of a specific SSI certification program.

SSI issues this verification upon receipt of the SSI Professional's and SSI Training Center's confirmation of satisfactory completion of all program requirements by the student, as documented in the student's training record and logbook.

Administration

Participation Criteria

Age

The minimum age to begin any SSI public safety program is 18 years old.

The student or candidate may register for a program at any point, but they may not begin any SSI training prior to reaching the minimum age requirement.

Experience Prerequisites

The minimum experience prerequisites are listed in the individual program's training standards.

Water Fitness Evaluation

Some SSI programs have required water skills and stamina evaluations. The specific program training standards will specify whether these evaluations must be successfully completed prior to any in-water training, prior to any open water training or prior to certification.

Administration

Privacy Forms and Training Records

Completion Requirements

Training with an SSI Training Center

Training Records and required documentation are only valid for training conducted with the initiating SSI Training Center. If the student or candidate affiliates with another SSI Training Center, they must complete the required documentation for the new training center as well.

Duration of Validity

Some documentation is valid for the duration of the student/candidate's training with a single SSI Training Center.

Other forms must be completed for individual training programs as outlined below.

Training Record Components

Each student or candidate must complete the required components of the SSI Training Record prior to participating in any SSI training program.

Prior to Training

Prior to beginning training, they must complete the:

Registration Form

- Permanently valid

Privacy Policy Form

- Permanently valid unless the student requests to withdraw their consent
- SSI recommends that all SSI Training Centers have individuals complete the SSI Privacy Policy form when they register for a MySSI account or affiliate their existing MySSI account to the training center

SSI Public Safety Diving (PSD) Responsible Diver Code

- Must be re-affirmed prior to starting any new training program in a different category
- Permanently valid within a category (scuba, freediving, XR, public safety), and is re-affirmed by signing a completion record for any program in the same category

SSI Public Safety Diving (PSD) | Assumption of Risk, Liability Release, & Hold Harmless Agreement (where required)

- Valid for one (1) year from the date of signing

Note | Signing an Assumption of Risk, Liability Release, & Hold Harmless Agreement is contradictory to liability regulations in some countries of the world.

Example | The Assumption of Risk, Liability Release, & Hold Harmless Agreement is not valid in the European Union, so students should not be forced to sign it.

Prior to In-Water Training

Prior to beginning any in-water training, they must complete the:

Diver Medical Participant Questionnaire

- Valid for one (1) year from the date of signing
- Must be updated if their medical condition changes
- If required by the Medical Participant Questionnaire, a signed Physician's Approval to Dive must be obtained prior to in-water training

Physician's Approval to Dive (when required)

- Valid for one (1) year from the date of signing

Prior to Certification

Prior to receiving their certification or recognition card, they must complete the:

Program-specific Completion Record

- Must be completed for each training program

Professional Program Candidates

Prior to beginning training, candidates participating in SSI professional training programs must also complete the:

SSI Professional Agreement

- Permanently valid

Candidates participating in professional level training must have digital copies of the following documents uploaded into MySSI before the final certification(s) can be issued:

- RSTC Medical Participant Questionnaire signed by a physician within one (1) year
- Proof of CPR training within two (2) years
- Proof of First Aid training within two (2) years
- Proof of Oxygen First Aid training within (2) years

Exceptions

Candidates for the following programs are not required to upload these documents:

- Specialty Instructor | excluding React Right Instructor candidates
- Online Upgrade candidates

Administration

Medical History

Medical Participant Questionnaire

Each student must complete the SSI Diver Medical Participant Questionnaire, or submit a valid medical statement, prior to any in-water activity.

If the Medical Participant Questionnaire or the appearance/behavior of the student indicate any condition contrary to participation in any in-water activities, the student is required to provide the Physician's Approval to Dive form, signed by a licensed medical practitioner and based on a medical examination, prior to any in-water activity.

Medical Participant Questionnaires and the Physician's Approval to Dive form, or valid medical statements, are valid for 12 months from the date they are signed. Students may participate in multiple SSI training programs within the 12 months without completing another form.

If the student becomes ill or injured within the 12 months, they must complete a new Medical Participant Questionnaire prior to any in-water activities, following the protocol outlined above.

Professional Program Candidates

Each candidate participating in professional-level training must provide to the responsible SSI Service Center a Medical Participant Questionnaire and Physician's Approval to Dive form—or valid medical statement approved and signed by a licensed medical practitioner—based on a diving medical examination dated within one (1) year of the training completion date. These documents must be uploaded by the candidate via MySSI for approval.

Active status SSI Professionals are required to notify SSI if they develop a medical condition that interferes with their teaching ability. They must submit a new Medical Participant Questionnaire to the responsible SSI Service Center (by uploading the form into their MySSI account) to maintain their active status.

Administration

SSI Materials

Student Materials

Each student must be issued the appropriate Digital Training Kit (if available) for every program they are participating in.

Professional Materials

The SSI Training Standards, SSI Professional Training Materials and SSI Student Materials (digital learning and printable workbooks) form the basis of the SSI Teaching System and must be used for all SSI training programs. Whenever there is a discrepancy between these materials, the SSI Training Standards take precedence. If in doubt, contact the responsible SSI Service Center for guidance or interpretation.

Each SSI Professional has access to the most current Instructor Manual and Student Manual for the program they are conducting, as well as any additional training materials required by SSI or their affiliated Training Center.

Administration

Certification Procedures

Certifying Instructor

The certifying instructor is the instructor-of-record on the student's certification. They are responsible for ensuring that the training record is properly completed, including all required verification signatures and dates.

- For programs requiring in-water training, the certifying instructor is the SSI Professional who completes the final skill assessment with the student.
- For programs without in-water training, the certifying instructor is the SSI Professional who completes the final knowledge evaluation with the student.

Student Data Entry

Training Centers and SSI Professionals must confirm that the student or candidate's first and last name, contact data, birthdate, an acceptable photo that clearly shows the student's face, and email address are correctly entered into MySSI.

Processing Student Certifications and Recognitions

SSI certifications and recognitions must be issued to all students that successfully complete all SSI training requirements at all levels of training. Digital cards will be produced immediately after the certification or recognition is processed in MySSI. All certifications and recognitions must be processed within seven (7) days of the program's completion.

Note | Students are not required to achieve any program progress in the digital learning prior to receiving their certification or recognition card, as long as all requirements from the individual program standard are met.

Some recognition programs do not require a final knowledge evaluation. If there is no final exam for the program (see "Certification Requirements" in the individual program standard), then the SSI Professional issuing the certification or recognition card must verify that the student has the appropriate level of knowledge by either completing an academic session or by asking questions.

Note | After a certification or recognition is processed in MySSI, the student will be sent an email including a copy of their certification or recognition card. The student can also access all their certification and recognition cards by logging into their MySSI account, or on the MySSI app.

Processing Professional Certifications

Upon completion of all SSI training requirements for all professional programs, the candidate's training records or application form must be completed in full and uploaded in PDF format into the MySSI system or sent to the responsible SSI Service Center within seven (7) days of the program's completion.

Note | See Dive Professional Programs > Specialty Instructor for certifications issued using the co-teaching or verification methods, or for Specialty Instructor programs without digital materials.

For Specialty Instructor programs without digital materials, the certification is completed by the responsible Training Center, the Training Center QMS Manager authorizes the certification, and all required paperwork is maintained by the Training Center.

Issuing a Referral

Note / For entry-level scuba program referrals, see Entry-Level Scuba Programs

If a student only completes a portion of an SSI program and chooses to complete the program with another Training Center, you must provide copies of all appropriate training documentation, as well as a copy of the student's Medical Participant Questionnaire (or other valid medical document), to the student and/or the receiving Training Center.

All original training documentation and medical forms must stay with the referring Training Center.

Replacing Lost Cards

If a student has lost their printed card, do a diver search in MySSI to see if they have a digital card in their MySSI profile. If a digital card is found, have the student log in to access all their digital cards. They can order and purchase a printed card from their Training Center.

If there is no record of a digital card, contact the responsible SSI Service Center.

Recommendation / Individuals that have not been diving for five (5) years or longer should be considered inactive. Inactive divers should enroll in a Scuba Skills Update program to be eligible to replace a lost certification card.

Training Records and Logbooks

Training Records and logbooks must be used for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress.

Logbooks

The instructor and student must log and verify (digital logbook) or sign and date (paper logbook) all training dives conducted for SSI training programs upon completion of the applicable skills.

Training Records

The instructor and student must initial and sign the training completion record upon completion of each session. Training records must be maintained and retained for a minimum of ten (10) years by the Training Center.

Digital training record components that are uploaded into MySSI are held securely on SSI's servers. This meets the training center's requirements for record retention.

If necessary for quality management or grievance resolution, SSI Training Centers are required to send the training records or legible copies to the responsible SSI Service Center—or upload them using the QMS System—within the given time limit.

Recommendation / If possible, the appropriate parts of the training completion record should be completed by the student/candidate and the responsible SSI Professional at the end of each session or training day.

Note / Local laws may require that training records must be retained for more than ten (10) years.

Administration

Equivalent Certifications

Certifications from Recognized Training Agencies

Certifications issued by an SSI-recognized training agency or federation are considered equivalent SSI certifications. The certification holder may advance to the next level of training in the SSI Education System.

If a customer requests an equivalent SSI rating for a certification they hold from an SSI-recognized training agency or federation, it is at the discretion and liability of the SSI Professional or SSI Training Center to issue that certification.

Certifications from Non-Recognized Training Agencies

Students certified by training agencies or federations that are not recognized by SSI cannot be considered equivalent without an additional knowledge and skill evaluation administered by the SSI Professional.

These students must successfully pass the SSI Experienced Diver Test as outlined in the SSI Training Standards. Mastery of all diving skills of the level the diver is qualifying for must be displayed during the open water training dives.

After successful completion of the Experienced Diver Test, these students may be issued an equivalent SSI certification, and are eligible to attend the next higher program in the SSI Education System.

Training centers may still elect to recognize students certified by non-recognized training agencies or federations as equivalent, but do so at their own risk, taking full responsibility for the student's judgment and the associated liability risk.

Example / If an actively diving customer with your training center loses their Open Water Diver certification card that was issued by a certification agency that no longer exists, but the diver has other proof of diving experience (e.g. a signed logbook), then you may choose to issue this customer a new SSI certification based on your personal knowledge and verification of their diving experience. The Training Center must issue a Digital Open Water Diver Kit and assess the diver's knowledge and skills before issuing a new certification. The Training Center must decide what level of assessment is required before issuing an equivalent SSI certification.

Recommendation / If a customer requests an equivalent SSI certification card, but does not have adequate verification of certification, issue a Digital Open Water Diver Kit and conduct an Experienced Diver Test.

SSI Recognition Criteria

To qualify as an SSI-recognized training agency or federation, all of the following requirements must be met:

- Be in business for at least five (5) years
- Provide a complete range of training materials in at least three (3) languages
- Have at least 250 instructors and 50 authorized training centers globally
- Hold an active global ISO certification
- Be an active member of at least one RSTC

After proof/fulfillment of these prerequisites, the organization will be added to the current version of the SSI Equivalency Chart, and will be treated as an SSI-recognized training agency or federation.

SSI Professional Duties

Professional Liability Requirements

Professional Liability Insurance

Where required (e.g. the United States), the SSI Professional must maintain professional liability insurance.

The SSI Professional must:

- Verify SSI is listed as an Additional Insured on the professional liability policy
- Verify the professional liability insurance covers all SSI programs the SSI Professional is authorized to conduct (e.g. XR Instructors are required to have a Technical Diving insurance endorsement)
- Verify current proof of professional liability insurance is uploaded to the SSI Professional's MySSI profile
- Not provide any professional services in the absence of professional liability insurance
- Comply with all insurance policy terms, conditions, warranties and exclusions

SSI and SSI Service Centers are not responsible for verifying that an SSI Professional complies with professional liability insurance requirements. However, certifications may not be processed in the absence of proof of insurance where required.

SSI Professional Duties

SSI Professional Status

Active Status

SSI Professionals must fulfill the following prerequisites to maintain active status:

- Affiliate with an active status Training Center.
- Read and sign (online) the SSI Professional's Agreement and pay the annual membership dues.
- Maintain professional liability insurance (if required legally in the country). The SSI Professional must list SSI as an additional insured in the policy and must provide current proof-of-insurance to the responsible SSI Service Center.

Inactive Status

An SSI Professional who has met all the active status requirements but is not affiliated with an active status Training Center, and/or lacks current proof of professional liability insurance (where required).

The SSI Professional in inactive status will pay a reduced renewal fee and will still have access to training materials, but they cannot conduct any SSI programs until they return to active status.

Canceled Status

An individual who has been certified as an SSI Professional, but has not paid any annual fees to SSI.

Administrative Hold Status

A temporary status assigned to an SSI Professional as the result of a Verified QMS Complaint, Alert, or Incident Report. The SSI Professional must not conduct SSI programs while in Administrative Hold status. This status is generally communicated to the professional by the International QMS Manager.

An SSI Professional involved in the death of a participant/student/candidate for which they were providing direct supervision is automatically placed on Administrative Hold at the time of the fatal incident.

The individual's certification data cannot be verified any longer by the SSI Diver Verification system.

Expelled Status

An individual who has been certified as an SSI Professional, but has been expelled from SSI due to severe breaches of SSI Ethical or Training Standards.

A member in expelled status cannot obtain active teaching status again with SSI globally, and the individual's certification data cannot be verified any longer by the SSI Diver Verification system.

Individuals Expelled From Other Agencies

If a professional is expelled from another agency for any reason, they may be eligible to earn SSI active status. This decision is at the discretion of SSI International, and will be considered on an individual basis. See the SSI Quality Management System Manual for more information.

Retired Status

Some SSI Professionals are placed in “Retired Status” if they do not meet the minimum active status requirements for their highest professional rating. SSI Professionals in retired status remain in active status for the highest professional certification that they meet the minimum active status requirements for. They may also continue to conduct all student-level programs that they are qualified to teach.

Affected certifications

- Assistant Instructor Trainer/Dive Control Specialist
- Instructor Trainer
- Instructor Certifier

SSI Professional Duties

Returning to Active Status

SSI Professionals in canceled status may return to active status by completing the following requirements, which are determined by the length of time the professional has been out of active status.

Duration of Inactivity

Any duration:

- If an SSI Professional is in canceled status with SSI for any period of time, but has maintained active status with a recognized training agency, the responsible SSI Service Center may—at their discretion—permit the SSI Professional to complete an SSI Crossover program to return to active status.

Less than two (2) years:

- Complete all components of the online renewal process.

Greater than two (2), but less than five (5) years:

Option 1

- Successfully complete an SSI Professional Crossover program for the applicable certification level as defined in the Recreational Scuba Training Standards.

Option 2

- Successfully complete a Professional Update for Open Water Instructor as defined in the Recreational Scuba Training Standards.
- Complete an instructor update for the applicable certification as defined in the applicable training standard.

Greater than five (5), but less than ten (10) years:

- Successfully complete a Professional Update for Open Water Instructor as defined in the Recreational Scuba Training Standards.
- Complete an instructor update for the applicable certification as defined in the applicable training standard.

Greater than ten (10) years:

- Complete all program requirements, including any water fitness evaluations, digital learning materials, academic assessments, final exams, and in-water training requirements as outlined in the program-specific instructor manual.

Note / Open Water Instructors who are returning to active status are only required to complete the Instructor Training Course, and do not need to complete an additional Instructor Evaluation.

Certification

- Upon completion of training, upload the candidate's training record with all required documentation into the MySSI System or send it to the responsible SSI Service Center.

SSI Professional Duties

Ethical Standards

As an SSI Professional, you are accountable for your decisions and actions when representing SSI and conducting SSI programs. SSI expects you to display appropriate professional behavior at all times while conducting SSI training or other related activities. The guidelines listed below are expected and required of each SSI Professional:

- Be a professional role model at all times during training and other business-related activities.
- Be a role model to the public, practicing and promoting safe diving, environmental awareness, and minimal ecological impact.
- Advocate and promote adherence to the appropriate SSI Responsible Diver Code during all diving activities.
- Conduct all SSI programs with integrity and honesty and with the goal of providing the best possible customer experience.
- Adhere to SSI Training Standards and Procedures. Attend SSI Professional updates when required and on a regular basis.
- Do not disparage or otherwise make negative statements about SSI International, SSI Training Centers, SSI Professionals, or any other member of the diving industry.
- You are required to notify SSI immediately—or prior to any professional-level training—if you have been convicted of a felony or any form of sexual offense.
- Notify SSI if an SSI Training Center or SSI Professional is the subject of an ethical or standards violation, investigation, action, or proceeding brought by any other recognized training agency or governmental agency.
- Indemnify and hold harmless SSI, its officers, directors, and assignees for any loss, claim, or damage resulting from action of an SSI Training Center, SSI Professional or their agents, students, or assignees.
- Comply with all quality management and compliance procedures outlined in the SSI Quality Management System Manual.

The SSI Professional understands that any breach of these Ethical Standards may result in an SSI QMS review and compliance action, which may have an effect on their SSI Professional status.

SSI Professional Duties

SSI Quality Management

Note | SSI has implemented a completely new Quality Management System (QMS). The new Quality Management System (QMS) replaces previous versions of the Monitor Assessment Program (MAP), SSI Grievance Procedure and associated components with immediate effect. For definitions of terminology and a detailed description of SSI Quality Management procedures, please see the SSI Quality Management System Manual.

Equipment Definitions

Public Safety Dive Programs

Breathing Gas

(Also referred to in these standards as “air”) can include compressed ambient air, enriched air nitrox, or any other breathable mixed gas used during open circuit, semi-closed rebreather, or closed-circuit rebreather diving.

- If nitrox is used as a breathing gas, the ppO₂ at any point in the dive must not exceed 1.4 bar/ata.

Scuba Diving

Minimum Student Equipment

During all in-water scuba training, each student must be equipped with a properly fitted Public Safety Total Diving System:

- Mask
- Fins
- Buoyancy compensator with power inflator
- Weight System
- Delivery System with cylinder, primary regulator, and alternate air source
- Depth gauge, submersible pressure gauge, and bottom timer (or dive computer equivalent)
- Compass
- Exposure suit appropriate for the environment
- Two (2) cutting devices
- Full-face mask with electronic communications | Recommended
- Logbook

All surface team members must be equipped with the following:

- Personal flotation device | Coast guard-approved, or that complies with local policies
- Safety whistle

Divers completing tethered operations must be equipped with the following:

- Chest harness with locking carabiner and quick-disconnect snap shackle.

Note | There must be a sufficient amount of removable weight to make the student positively buoyant at any depth. Students must be able to achieve enough positive buoyancy so their head floats above the surface.

Note | Specific programs' training standards may require additional student and/or dive professional equipment.

Minimum Scuba Professional Equipment

- SSI Professionals must have experience with the equipment they use while conducting SSI programs. They must be able to perform all required skills at a professional level, including rescue and resuscitation skills.
- During all in-water scuba training, each SSI Professional directly supervising training must be equipped with a properly fitted Public Safety Total Diving System.

During all open water training, each in-water SSI Professional must be equipped with at least all student equipment, plus:

- A delayed surface marker buoy (DSMB)

Conducting SSI Programs

Assessing Knowledge and Skill

SSI Training Centers and SSI Professionals must ensure that each student receives the required knowledge, skills and experience to comfortably and confidently dive at the specified level of training before conducting open water training dives.

It is the SSI Professional's duty to ensure that all students achieve mastery of all required skills before issuing a certification. To achieve mastery the student must be able to comfortably repeat the skill in diverse and adverse conditions.

Skill Mastery Definitions

Expert-Level Quality

- The skill is completed without pauses or mistakes, and can be repeated without noticeable effort.

Demonstration-Level Quality

- The skill is completed without hesitation or mistakes, and can be repeated without noticeable effort.
- Each key point of the skill is clearly identified and demonstrated during the exercise with pauses for emphasis.

Final Exam

- The student/candidate must complete the exam without outside assistance or personal notes
- A qualified SSI Professional must directly supervise written final exams
- The professional administering the exam may only provide clarification to help explain the question
- Minimum passing score for student-level programs (written exam): 80%
- Minimum passing score for professional-level programs: 90%

Approved Materials

Students and candidates may use the following materials to complete the final exam:

- SSI Training Standards
- Calculator
- Air/Nitrox tables (if applicable)

Instructor Assistance

If the final exam is not available in the student's native language, or the student has a documented learning disability, the SSI Professional conducting training may administer the exam orally. The answer sheet must still be completed by the student and signed by both the student and SSI Professional.

Conducting SSI Programs

Program Duration and Time Limits

Program Duration

There is no maximum time limit for the duration of any SSI program. Some SSI programs may have minimum program hours listed in their standards.

Professional Training Programs

The number of classes, hours and sessions per day are set by the individual instructor, based on the candidate's needs, ability and local water conditions.

Time Limit to Complete a Program

Open water training for all SSI programs must be completed within six (6) months of the last academic or in-water training session. If it has been more than six (6) months, an SSI Professional must conduct a reevaluation (both knowledge and skill review) to determine if the student is sufficiently proficient to continue to the open water training.

For any entry-level training, if it has been more than 12 months since the student's last in-water session, the student must complete an SSI Scuba Skills Update.

Process the Scuba Skills Update in MySSI and issue a digital card to the student prior to any open water training dives.

Recommendation / For entry-level programs, if it has been more than six (6) months since a student has completed all academic and pool/confined water training, have the student complete a Scuba Skills Update.

Dives Per Day

Three (3) open water scuba training dives per day is the maximum allowed, unless otherwise indicated in the specific program standards.

Duration of a Dive

Dive time for an individual open water scuba training dive must be at least 15 minutes. The dive must include an entry and exit from the water and putting on and taking off the scuba unit.

Note / All SSI training dives must be conducted as no-decompression dives unless indicated otherwise in the specific program's standards.

Conducting SSI Programs

Specialized Equipment

Guidelines for Specialized Diving Equipment

If specialized equipment or additional equipment is incorporated into SSI training programs, you must conduct an equipment orientation prior to taking students into the open water. Additional training is intended to provide practice and basic proficiency with the equipment, and should include a review of specialty materials, academic sessions, and pool/confined water training sessions.

Additional cylinders or specialized configurations like full face masks must be introduced to students in pool/confined water prior to taking students into open water.

Dry Suits

During all in-water scuba training, the instructor directly supervising the program must be an active status SSI Dry Suit Diving Specialty Instructor.

The student-to-instructor ratio for any entry-level in-water scuba training where a student will be in a dry suit is 4:1.

Each student must meet one of the following to use a dry suit:

- Be enrolled in the SSI Dry Suit Diving specialty program. The pool/confined water session for the Dry Suit Diving specialty must be completed prior to any open water training.
- Hold an SSI Dry Suit Diving certification or equivalent from a recognized training agency. A pool/confined water session must be completed prior to any open water training.

Use of Surface Floats and Flags

Follow the local requirements for using surface floats or diver down buoys whenever open water training is conducted.

Conducting SSI Programs

Using Certified Assistants

- An active status SSI Assistant Instructor or higher may act as a certified assistant.
- The certified assistant must have a Public Safety Diver certification.

Public Safety Diver

- They may assist with in-water training, and may increase ratios as specified in the program standard.

Rescue Team Diver

- Using certified assistants is recommended, but they cannot be used to increase student-to-instructor ratios.

Conducting SSI Programs

Supervision

SSI Professionals must not engage in any activities other than supervision during in-water training for all programs.

Activities that do not affect the SSI Professional's ability to supervise and assist their students (e.g. taking a class photo with a pocket-sized camera) are permitted.

Direct Supervision

An active status SSI Professional certified to conduct the applicable SSI program must personally supervise and evaluate all students during any training. They may not delegate the supervision to a certified assistant.

Indirect Supervision

An active status SSI Professional certified to conduct the applicable SSI program is not required to personally observe all student knowledge and skills, but they must manage all program activities and be present at the training location.

In some SSI programs, an active status SSI Professional may delegate some supervision to a certified assistant, but the instructor must still be present at the location, and managing all program activities.

Distance Learning

With distance learning, the academic portion of the program is conducted by correspondence or over the internet, without the student's physical presence at the SSI Training Center.

All academic sessions for all SSI programs can be conducted using distance learning.

Proximity

Some program-specific standards require a minimum proximity (physical distance) between the SSI Professional and their students during in-water training.

Student-To-Instructor Ratios

The student-to-instructor ratio for academic sessions is set by the individual instructor, based on the ability of the instructor to deal effectively with all student needs.

The maximum student-to-instructor ratio for in-water training is provided in each specific program standard. Any certified divers that dive with a class during open water training dives must be counted towards the student-to-instructor ratios.

If conditions dictate, decrease the student-to-instructor ratio.

Recommendation / Whenever possible, additional certified assistants should be used during training.

Emergency Ascent Skills

An SSI Open Water Instructor or higher must directly conduct all simulated emergency ascent skills during in-water training.

Emergency ascent skills

- Emergency Swimming Ascent
- Emergency Buoyant Ascent
- Gas-Sharing Ascent
- Rescuing an Unconscious Diver

Any ascent training done during open water scuba training dives that simulates any emergency condition must be done from depths of thirty (30) feet or less.

During simulated emergency ascents, the Open Water Instructor must establish physical contact with the student or buddy team before the ascent begins, and maintain direct physical contact during the entire ascent.

Conducting SSI Programs

Duty of Care

Obligation of Care

All SSI Professionals must inform students that if they become excessively cold or tired, are under undue stress, are low on gas, injured, not feeling well, or have recently been sick, they must not dive, or must not continue the dive, as is appropriate.

Environmental Conditions

Instructors have an obligation to cancel or modify open water training dives when environmental conditions, a student's physical or mental condition or equipment difficulties make it advisable.

Note / This judgment can only be made by the SSI Professional at the time and place of the open water training dive. Students who do not successfully complete the required skills during a training dive may complete those skills during a later training dive.

Skill Level

Only realistic skills may be presented when students reach a level of SSI training where they are capable of dealing with underwater problems. The students should solve these problems as they would in real-world diving situations.

Forcing Students

SSI Professionals must never force students to perform skills if the student indicates (verbally or physically) that they do not want to perform the skill.

Emergency Plan

Any SSI Professional conducting in-water training must have a written emergency plan for incidents for each location where training is conducted.

First Aid Equipment

Emergency equipment must be available in the vicinity of the dive site, including a first aid kit, oxygen unit and communications equipment. This equipment must be accessible at all times while training is being conducted.

Reporting Procedures

In the event that an SSI Professional is involved in, or is witness to an incident, or if a claim or suit is filed against them or their Training Center, they must immediately notify the responsible SSI Service Center, their Insurance Agent and their affiliated Training Center's Insurance Agent.

Recommendation / Use the SSI Incident Report form found in the MySSI download section.

Conducting SSI Programs

Environmental Definitions

Shallow Water

Water shallow enough to stand with the head out of the water.

Deep Water

Water too deep to stand in with the head out of the water.

Deep Diving

Defined as any dive deeper than 60 feet.

Diving At Altitude

SSI Professionals must plan all dives conducted above 1,000 feet in elevation using specific altitude tables/software or altitude-compatible dive computers.

Diving in Cold Water

SSI Professionals must ensure that proper exposure protection is available to all students before conducting training in cold water. If dry suits are being used during open water training dives, the student must have an SSI Dry Suit Diving specialty certification (or equivalent) or be enrolled in the SSI Dry Suit specialty program. The pool/confined water session for the Dry Suit Diving specialty program must be completed prior to any open water training.

Note / When training in cold water, always adhere to the equipment manufacturer's guidelines.

Excursion Dive

A dive without formal performance requirements made prior to completion of all open water training dives. Entry-level students must be directly supervised during excursion dives.

Night Diving

Any dive conducted after sunset and before sunrise. SSI Professionals must make underwater dive lights available to all students when conducting training at night.

Conducting SSI Programs

Training Environments and Depth Limits

Pool

An enclosed artificial structure filled with water that is used for swimming and dive skills development. It must have adequate visibility to ensure an instructor can observe their students at all times.

- The maximum depth for all pool/confined water training is 15 feet unless specified in the program-specific standard.

Confined Water

Any body of water with a depth appropriate to the activity that offers conditions similar to those of a pool including visibility, depth, water movement, and access.

For all entry-level programs, pool/confined water should have depths both shallow enough for all students to stand up in and deep enough to adequately perform the program required skills.

- The maximum depth for all pool/confined water training is 15 feet unless specified in the program-specific standard.
- If shallow water is not available, the instructor must use a platform within six (6) feet of the surface, a float with handles, or a descent line, and must reduce ratios as necessary to ensure the comfort and safety of their students.

Open Water

An outdoor body of water suitable for swimming or diving activities with depths greater than fifteen (15) feet. Environmental conditions must be consistent with the requirements for the training program.

- The minimum depth for open water training dives is 15 feet.
- The maximum depth for recreational diving is 130 feet.
- The maximum depths of open water training dives are listed in each program's specific standards.

Recommended Depth Limits After Certification

After certification, SSI certified divers should dive with an equally- or more-qualified buddy, in environments and to a depth equivalent with their experience and level of training.

Conducting SSI Programs

SSI In-Water Training Philosophy

Teaching Air-Sharing Skills

For entry-level SSI programs, SSI Professionals may teach either method of air sharing (passing the primary or passing the alternate regulator).

Air Sharing Skills During Entry-Level Training

Due to the wide variety of equipment configurations, SSI encourages SSI Professionals to teach both methods of air sharing to entry-level divers.

As dive professionals, we have an obligation to provide students with the knowledge and training necessary to dive autonomously with an equally- or more-qualified buddy in environments consistent with their training. This includes equipment configurations they may encounter in equipment they purchase, rent, or see on their buddy.

Rationale For Passing The Primary Air Source

There are four common Delivery System configurations in modern recreational scuba:

- A first stage and primary second-stage with a traditional alternate air source (additional second-stage regulator)
- A first stage and primary second-stage with an integrated alternate air source and BC inflator
- A first stage and long hose primary second-stage with an alternate air source (additional second-stage regulator) on a necklace
- A first stage and primary second-stage, and an additional first stage with alternate air source (additional second-stage regulator)

Air Sharing During Professional-Level Training

Since passing the primary works with most equipment configurations, it is SSI's preferred method, and is a required and evaluated skill for all SSI Professional training programs.

Attention:

Read the owner's manual of the regulator before performing air sharing exercises. If the manual explicitly says that the regulator is for the use of only one person, at minimum the instructor needs to be equipped with an independent redundant breathing system to perform this exercise. If that regulator is designed for only one person, the instructor must be the donor during this exercise and equipped with a redundant breathing system.



PSD Water Fitness Evaluation

Note | This evaluation follows the parameters and scoring criteria from the I.A.D.R.S. Annual Watermanship Test.

Evaluation Parameters

There are five exercises that evaluate stamina and comfort in the water. All exercises are evaluated and points are awarded—where applicable—based on the amount of time required to complete the exercise.

- **Public Safety Diver and Rescue Team Diver students must successfully complete each exercise and score a minimum of 12 points to pass the test.**
- **Instructor candidates must successfully complete each exercise and score a minimum of 16 points to pass the test.**

Initial Conditions

- If a wetsuit is used, weights must be added to ensure the candidate is neutrally buoyant.
- All exercises must be conducted in a pool/confined water environment. The instructor is responsible for verifying distances, depths, weights, and times.
- The instructor must directly supervise the candidates at all times.

Transitioning Between Exercises

- Prompt the candidate to hydrate after completing each exercise.
- The evaluation should be completed with fewer than 15 minutes between exercises.

Exercises

Exercise 1 | 500-yard Swim

Objective

The candidate must swim 500 yards without stopping using a forward stroke. They may not use any swim aids such as a dive mask, fins, snorkel, or flotation devices.

Scoring Criteria

Completion Time (in minutes)	Points Earned
Fewer than 10	5
10–13	4
13–16	3
16–19	2
More than 19	1

Failure Criteria

The candidate earns an “incomplete” for the exercise if they stand up at any point, grasp the side of the pool, lane lines or a flotation device, use a backstroke, or stop swimming.

Exercise 2 | 15-Minute Tread

Objective

The candidate must stay afloat by treading water, drown-proofing, bobbing, or floating for 15 minutes. For the last two minutes of the exercise, their hands must remain above the water's surface. They may not use any swim aids.

Scoring Criteria

Performance	Points Earned
Completed the entire exercise	5
Failed to keep hands above surface	3
Touched the side or bottom for support at least once	1

Failure Criteria

The candidate earns an "incomplete" for the exercise if they touch the side or bottom for support more than once during the exercise.

Exercise 3 | 800-Yard Snorkel Swim

Objective

Swim 800 yards without stopping using a mask, fins, and a snorkel. The candidate's face must remain in the water for the duration of the exercise, and they are not permitted to use their arms for propulsion.

Scoring Criteria

Completion Time (in minutes)	Points Earned
Fewer than 15	5
15–17	4
17–19	3
19–21	2
More than 21	1

Failure Criteria

The candidate earns an "incomplete" for the exercise if they stop or stand up at any point.

Exercise 4 | 100-Yard Inert Rescue Tow

Objective

Push or tow an inert victim wearing a recreational Total Diving System on the surface for 100 yards without assistance or stopping.

Scoring Criteria

Completion Time (in minutes)	Points Earned
Fewer than 2	5
2–3	4
3–4	3
4–5	2
More than 5	1

Failure Criteria

The candidate earns an “incomplete” for the exercise if they stop at any time.

Exercise 5 | 10-Foot Object Retrieval

Objective

Freedive to a depth of ten feet and retrieve an object weighing about 5 pounds.

Scoring Criteria

This exercise is scored pass/fail. If the candidate reaches the surface while holding the object, they successfully pass the exercise.

Student Programs

Public Safety Diver

Intent

The SSI Public Safety Diver program provides students with the fundamental knowledge and skills required to participate in basic public safety diving activities as part of a public safety dive team.

Note | Additional training and affiliation with a professional public safety diving organization may be required, based on local and regional laws and regulations.

Minimum Instructor Rating

An active status Public Safety Diving Instructor may conduct the Public Safety Diver program.

Student Prerequisites

- Minimum age: 18 years old.
- Be physically capable of completing the required skills.
- Have proof of current Oxygen Provider, First Aid, and CPR training within two (2) years prior to issuing a certification card.

Have the following SSI certifications or equivalent from a recognized training agency:

- Open Water Diver

Duration

- Recommended hours for completion | 30-35

Depth Limitations

- Maximum pool/confined water depth limit | 15 feet
- Maximum open water depth limit | 60 feet

In-Water Ratios

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 8:1.
- The ratio may increase to 10:2 with (1) certified assistant.
- The ratio may increase to 12:3 with (2) certified assistants.

Proximity

- During in-water skill evaluations, the student must remain under the direct supervision of the SSI Professional so that physical contact can be made at any time.

Requirements For Completion

- Complete all academic sessions and assessments outlined in the instructor manual for Public Safety Diver.
- Complete the program's final exam.
- Complete at least two (2) pool/confined water sessions as outlined in the instructor manual for Public Safety Diver.
- Complete at least four (4) open water training dives as outlined in the instructor manual for Public Safety Diver.

Certification

- Upon completion of all academic and in-water requirements, the SSI Professional may issue the program's digital certification card.
- Certified SSI divers can dive with an equally- or more-qualified buddy in environments equivalent to their training and within the recommended depth limits of their certifications.

Update Procedure | Public Safety Diver

Intent

The initial Public Safety Diver certification is valid for three years from the certification date. By participating in the Public Safety Diver Update, students can extend their certification for an additional three years.

Student Prerequisites

- Have an SSI Public Safety Diver certification, or have held a valid SSI Public Safety Diver certification within twelve (12) months of the Update.

Requirements for Completion

- Provide proof of at least 18 logged public safety operations in the past 36 months.
- Provide proof of at least 6 logged public safety operations in the past 12 months.

The update must include the following:

- Complete the SSI PSD Water Fitness Evaluation.
- Complete the program's final exam.
- Complete a Scuba Skills Update, including all emergency ascent skills.

Certification

- Upon completion of the update program, the responsible SSI Training Center must process the student in the MySSI System.
- The student will receive the applicable digital certification card. Certification is valid for three years.

Rescue Team Diver

Intent

The SSI Rescue Team Diver program teaches the basic methods and skills required for a Rescue Team Diver to function safely and effectively as part of a public safety dive team responding to an in-water incident.

Minimum Instructor Rating

- An active status Rescue Team Diving Instructor may conduct the Rescue Team Diver program.

Student Prerequisites

- Minimum age: 18 years old.
- Be a member of a public safety team.
- Complete the Diver Medical Participant Questionnaire and Physician's Approval to Dive.

Have the following SSI certifications or an equivalent from a recognized training agency:

- Public Safety Diver

Duration

Recommended hours for completion: 24–30.

Depth Limitations

- Maximum open water depth limit: 40 feet.

Minimum Supervision

- An active status SSI Professional certified to conduct the program must directly supervise all academic and in-water activities.
- During the open water training dives, a diver tethered to a line tender is considered directly supervised as long as a qualified SSI Professional is directly supervising the line tender and all associated surface support personnel.

In-Water Ratios

Pool/Confined Water

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 8:1.

Open Water

- The student-to-instructor ratio is 6:1.

Proximity

- During the pool/confined water skill evaluations, the students must remain under direct supervision of the SSI Professional so that physical contact can be made at any time.

Requirements for Completion

- Complete all academic sessions and assessments outlined in the applicable instructor manual.
- Complete the program's final exam.
- Complete the SSI PSD Water Fitness Evaluation.

Practical Application Sessions

Non-Diving Option

- Complete all of the required skills while acting as Team Leader and Line Tender as outlined in the instructor manual.

Note | See Practical Application > Overview > Student Performance in the instructor manual for the skill requirements for the Non-Diving Option certification.

Diving Option

To earn the Rescue Team Diver (Diving Option) certification, the student must also:

- Complete at least three (3) pool/confined water session as outlined in program's instructor manual.
- Complete at least one (1) open water training dive as outlined in the program's instructor manual.

Sequence

- Pool/Confined Water Session 1 may only be conducted after the student successfully completes the SSI PSD Water Fitness Evaluation.
- Open Water Training Dive 1 may only be conducted after the student successfully completes all academic training and Pool/Confined Water Sessions 1 through 3.

Certification

Non-Diving Option

- Upon completion of all academic and land-based skill requirements, the SSI Professional may issue the non-diving version of the program's digital certification card.
- This certification qualifies the holder to act as surface support personnel for a period of three years after the certification is issued.

Upgrade procedure

- A non-diving certification card may be upgraded to a full Rescue Team Diver certification after completing all of the completion requirements for Rescue Team Diver (Diving Option).

Diving Option

- Upon completion of all academic and in-water requirements, the SSI Professional may issue the program's digital certification card.
- This certification qualifies the holder to act as an SSI Rescue Team Diver for a period of three years after the certification is issued.

Update Procedure | Rescue Team Diver

Intent

The initial Rescue Team Diver certification is valid for three years from the certification date. By participating in the Rescue Team Diver Update, students can extend their certification for an additional two years.

Student Prerequisites

- Have an SSI Rescue Team Diver certification, or have held a valid SSI Rescue Team Diver certification within twelve (12) months of the update.

Requirements for Completion

- Provide proof of at least 18 logged public safety operations in the past 36 months.
- Provide proof of at least 6 logged public safety operations in the past 12 months.

The update must include the following:

- Complete the SSI PSD Water Fitness Evaluation.
- Complete the program's final exam.
- Complete a Scuba Skills Update, including all emergency ascent skills.

Certification

- Upon completion of the update program, the responsible SSI Training Center must process the student in the MySSI System.
- The student will receive the applicable digital certification card. Certification is valid for three years.

Instructor Programs

Public Safety Diving Instructor

Intent

The SSI Public Safety Diving Instructor Seminar provides candidates with the knowledge, skills, and experiences required to conduct the SSI Public Safety Diver program.

Minimum Instructor Rating

- An active status SSI Instructor Trainer, certified as an SSI Public Safety Diving Instructor, may conduct the Public Safety Diving Instructor Seminar.

Candidate Prerequisites

- Minimum age: 21 years old.
- Be a current or former member of a public safety team.

Have the following SSI certifications (no equivalency allowed):

- Open Water Instructor

Have the following active status SSI certifications or an equivalent from a recognized training agency:

- Diver Stress & Rescue Instructor
- Perfect Buoyancy Instructor
- Navigation Instructor
- Night & Limited Visibility Instructor
- Search and Recovery Instructor

Note / Instructors should have instructor-level certifications for any specialty equipment that will be included in their training. For example, Dry Suit Diving Instructor if the program includes dry suit training, or Full Face Mask Instructor if the program includes the use of full face masks.

Requirements for Completion

- Complete all digital learning materials for the Public Safety Diver program, including review questions.
- Complete the program's final exam with a score of at least 90%.
- Complete the SSI PSD Water Fitness Evaluation if it has been more than six months since the candidate has been evaluated.
- Complete a Specialty Instructor Seminar for Public Safety Diving Instructor as outlined in the instructor manual for the Specialty Instructor Seminar.

Certification

- Once all requirements are met, verify that the candidate's training record and required documentation are complete and process the candidate's certification in MySSI or send it to the responsible SSI Service Center.
- The candidate will be certified as a Public Safety Diving Instructor.

Update Procedure | Public Safety Diving Instructor

The initial Public Safety Diving Instructor certification is valid for three years from the certification date. By participating in the Public Safety Diving Instructor Update, the instructor can extend their certification for an additional three years.

SSI Professionals may also use the Public Safety Diving Instructor Update to return to active status.

Prerequisites

- Have an SSI Public Safety Diving Instructor certification, or have held a valid SSI Public Safety Diving Instructor certification within twelve (12) months of the Update.
- Have conducted at least one SSI Public Safety Diver program in the past 36 months.
- Provide proof of current CPR/First Aid/Oxygen Provider certification.
- Submit a current Medical Participant Questionnaire and signed Physician's Approval to Dive form.
- Resubmit signed copies of the Public Safety Diving Responsible Diver Code, and the Public Safety Diving - Assumption of Risk, Liability Release, & Hold Harmless Agreement (where required).

Requirements for Completion

The update must include the following:

- Complete the SSI PSD Water Fitness Evaluation.
- Complete the program's final exam.
- Complete a Scuba Skills Update, including all emergency ascent skills.

Certification

- Upon completion of the update, the responsible SSI Service Center must process the candidate in MySSI.
- The candidate will receive the applicable digital certification card. Certification is valid for three years.

Rescue Team Diving Instructor

Intent

This Rescue Team Diving Instructor Seminar provides candidates with the knowledge, skills, and experiences required to conduct the SSI Rescue Team Diver program.

Minimum Instructor Rating

- An active status SSI Instructor Trainer, certified as a Rescue Team Diving Instructor, may conduct the Rescue Team Diving Instructor Seminar.

Candidate Prerequisites

- Minimum age: 21 years old.
- Be a current or former member of a public safety team.
- Have at least two (2) years of experience as a member of a public safety team.

Have logged at least thirty (30) public safety dive operations (either training or live), including at least:

- 10 operations as an in-water diver
- 10 operations as a surface support member

Have the following SSI certifications (no equivalency allowed):

- Open Water Instructor

Have the following active status SSI certifications or an equivalent from a recognized training agency:

- Public Safety Diving Instructor

Note | Instructors should have instructor-level certifications for any specialty equipment that will be included in their training. For example, Dry Suit Diving Instructor if the program includes dry suit training, or Full Face Mask Instructor if the program includes the use of full face masks.

Requirements for Completion

- Complete all digital learning materials for the Rescue Team Diver program, including review questions.
- Complete the program's final exam with a score of at least 90%.
- Complete the SSI PSD Water Fitness Evaluation if it has been more than six months since the candidate has been evaluated.
- Complete a Specialty Instructor Seminar for Rescue Team Diving Instructor as outlined in the instructor manual for the Specialty Instructor Seminar.

Complete the following as outlined in the SSI Evaluation Criteria using content from the Rescue Team Diver program:

- At least one (1) academic teaching presentation.
- At least one (1) in-water teaching presentation.

Certification

- Once all requirements are met, verify that the candidate's training record and required documentation are complete and process the candidate's certification in MySSI or send it to the responsible SSI Service Center.
- The candidate will be certified as a Rescue Team Diving Instructor.

Update Procedure | Rescue Team Diving Instructor

The initial Rescue Team Diving Instructor certification is valid for three years from the certification date. By participating in the Rescue Team Diving Instructor Update, the instructor can extend their certification for an additional three years.

SSI Professionals may also use the Rescue Team Diving Instructor Update to return to active status.

Prerequisites

- Have an SSI Rescue Team Diving Instructor certification, or have held a valid SSI Rescue Team Diving Instructor certification within twelve (12) months of the Update.
- Have conducted at least one SSI Rescue Team Diver program in the past 36 months.
- Provide proof of current affiliation with a public safety team.
- Provide proof of current CPR/First Aid/Oxygen Provider certification.
- Submit a current Medical Participant Questionnaire and signed Physician's Approval to Dive form.
- Resubmit signed copies of the Public Safety Diving Responsible Diver Code, and the Public Safety Diving - Assumption of Risk, Liability Release, & Hold Harmless Agreement (where required).

Requirements For Completion

The update must include the following:

- Complete the SSI PSD Water Fitness Evaluation.
- Complete the program's final exam.
- Complete a Scuba Skills Update, including all emergency ascent skills.

Certification

- Upon completion of the update, the responsible SSI Service Center must process the candidate in MySSI.
- The candidate will receive the applicable digital certification card. Certification is valid for three years.

