



SDI Standards and Procedures Manual

SCUBA DIVING INTERNATIONAL
tdisdi.com

SDI Standards and Procedures Manual:

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part 1

introduction

Introduction

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1. Instructor Package

This package contains all pertinent information necessary to do business as a SDI Instructor. All of the information enclosed is also available on line at www.tdisdi.com in the members' area.

Please retain this package as a handy reference guide. Forms may be copied as needed to process orders, register students, etc. We recommended that you keep the originals intact and use them as master copies when you need them.

World Headquarters:

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Orders or registrations can be faxed 24 hours a day.

Our staff of dive professionals will be happy to handle your business needs, questions, or concerns. We appreciate your business and look forward to giving you the best service we possibly can!

2. A Brief History

From its humble beginning in 1994 to today, the group of training agencies known as Scuba Diving International (SDI), Technical Diving International (TDI), and Emergency Response Diving International (ERDI) form one of the largest certification agencies in the world. With offices servicing more than 100 countries, the company today far exceeds the original vision the founders had when they conceived the idea on a napkin, sitting at the kitchen table many years ago.

As with many companies, the original concept for the business was an outgrowth of the recognition that a niche needed to be filled. This niche was providing specialized training for what the industry now calls technical diving, and the founders did so by forming the first agency of the group, Technical Diving International, in 1994.

Technical Diving International was one of the first agencies of its kind. It focuses on providing training materials and education in special areas ranging from Nitrox to Closed Circuit Rebreathers, along with overhead environments such as Cave and Wreck diving. TDI also provides training in the preparation of gas mixtures for dives up to 100 meters (330 feet).

During TDI's development, there were a few key things that separated it from its competitors and pioneered the way many divers learn to dive today. For one, TDI was at the forefront of the movement that convinced the dive industry to accept technical diving activities. In the early stages of technical diving there were many industry professionals who felt the average diver was not smart enough to handle the expanded dive planning that goes into doing a technical dive, and that technical diving was far too risky for non-professionals. These two factors were offset at TDI by an extensive education process conducted through seminars, publications, and TDI's training materials. The average diver realized that the risk in technical diving could be brought to an acceptable level and they were indeed smart enough to conduct technical dives. Today, the industry not only embraces technical diving, but Nitrox is now the largest specialty course taken worldwide.

Another key event in TDI's history occurred when it became the first agency to pioneer the use of Semi Closed Rebreathers by recreational divers. This opened the door to allow divers to use Closed Circuit Rebreathers recreationally and spawned a whole new segment of the dive industry. In short, TDI ushered in an exciting breakthrough in the dive industry that many believe actually prevented the industry from further decline.

In 1998 the membership of TDI could no longer be held back from their demands for creation of a sport diving division of TDI and thus was born Scuba Diving International (SDI). The primary reason for this expansion was that dive instructors enjoyed dealing with an agency that listened to the instructors in the

field and created programs that were, and continue to be, very profitable because they are tailored to the way today's diver wants to learn to dive.

Like TDI, SDI did a number of things that separated it from previously established training agencies. One example is that SDI was the first agency to require the use of personal dive computers by all divers during every dive. This new standard was put in place because dive computers were and are used daily by all diving professionals to make diving safer and more enjoyable. Research showed that the average diver forgot how to use dive tables soon after completion of a course. This fact, along with the advancement and increased reliability of dive computers, meant they were considered a safer alternative to dive tables. SDI recognized this and although dive tables are not required curriculum in the basic diver course, they still can be taught during any course. Another ground breaking step taken by SDI was the development of an e-learning platform for dive education. Allowing a student to learn the academic portion of a dive course online rather than requiring additional classroom instruction was a bold yet visionary step. Currently SDI is one of only a few agencies that offer divers the opportunity to learn online and is the only organization to offer continuing education courses.

With the membership now happy about their options for both sport and technical dive training through SDI and TDI, they continued to ask for more specialized training in public safety, and thus Emergency Response Diving International (ERDI) was born in 2000. ERDI was and continues to be the only training program that is supported by a major certification agency catering exclusively to public safety diving. Throughout the years ERDI has written programs that have trained very established dive teams such as the Chicago Fire Department, numerous state police dive teams, and also several federal agencies.

In 2004, with 10 years of development into the company, the founders of SDI/TDI/ERDI decided it was time to move on and sold the company to a group of investors who quickly expanded the offerings of the company. Immediate changes included applying for and receiving acceptance into the Recreational Scuba Training Council (RSTC) and the European Underwater Federation (EUF). This acceptance was critical because it meant that SDI standards were evaluated and found to be sound and safe by its competitors. SDI passed with ease and today is currently actively involved in both organizations, helping make the sport safer for more divers. Other changes came with additional staff and a commitment to embrace electronic technologies to make doing business easier for members.

Although SDI/TDI/ERDI is considered to be one of the newer organizations in the industry, it is viewed as one of the most professional and progressive certification agencies. SDI/TDI/ERDI's history and its reputation as an innovator have built a strong foundation for the future. By listening to its members and building programs that are profitable and keep risk at an acceptable level, the future is bright for the organization.

3. SDI Code of Ethics and Conduct

- Recreational diving is recognized as carrying a degree of risk and responsibility not normally associated with other recreational sports.
- We believe an individual should not be qualified as a SDI Diver unless those empowered to qualify the person would allow them to buddy or teach their loved ones recreational diving.
- The SDI Professional always maintains their personal, physical, and mental fitness as they relate to diving.
- The SDI Professional always maintains their equipment and never begins a dive with defective equipment.
- The SDI Professional strives to maintain an attitude of professionalism and objectivity, and supports the concept of safety in recreational diving.
- The SDI Professional will not encourage or recruit other individuals to dive recreational if unqualified.
- The SDI Professional will make every effort to pass on their knowledge to novice recreational divers and diving community if requested to do so, whether through formal instruction, answering questions or via appropriate publication in books, journal and magazines.
- The SDI Professional strives to encourage and practice an awareness of conservation of the underwater environment at all times.
- The SDI Professional, by virtue of their voluntary membership in SDI, recognizes a responsibility and obligation to promote SDI and support the official decisions adopted by SDI. In fulfilling this obligation to the organization, the SDI Divers and Instructors shall:
 - Publicly support SDI as an organization
 - Make every effort to bring about necessary changes in a professional manner by direct contact with those fellow SDI Members and Divers who are in positions of authority and responsibility.
- Every SDI Member has an obligation to report violations of SDI Standards and of the Code of Ethics.
- Every SDI Member should strive to set an example of professional behavior and ethical conduct in all activities including, public speaking, articles and books, and various forms of Internet style discourse.
- Unwarranted critical comment and deliberate inflammatory statements of diving peers is inappropriate and undesirable.

4. Introduction

As an instructor for Scuba Diving International (SDI), you are part of the most progressive scuba diving agency in existence. Founded by *Technical Diving International (TDI)*, the largest and most advanced technical dive agency in the world, SDI has the unique advantage of seeing the recreational diving community through the experienced eyes of technical diving. SDI was created with the philosophy that past practices should be re-evaluated in the light of new technology and that recreational scuba instruction should reflect the actual needs of open water divers.

Standards that ensure genuine diver safety while maximizing the pleasures of learning to dive are the foundation of SDI's diver training programs. SDI has re-examined limits that are arbitrary or based solely on tradition and developed new guidelines using scientific data and common sense. SDI believes divers should be trained from the beginning to take advantage of new technologies and enjoy the freedom to dive deeper or longer or both - with greater safety.

As skill and experience increase, SDI offers divers training that will allow them to advance beyond the traditional limits of recreational diving to the level of skill they desire. Simply put, divers can progress through SDI's recreational levels, then transition smoothly into technical diving with TDI.

4.1 You and SDI

As an instructor, your role in the SDI family is the most important of all. You are the ambassador who will deliver enlightened and innovative scuba instruction to divers. Your ideas and experiences are a vital part of SDI's growth and we value your input to help keep us on the leading edge. You are also encouraged to continue your career as an instructor by advancing into the technical diving field with TDI or emergency response diving with ERDI if you have not done so already.

You are already a qualified diver or you wouldn't be here. Our job is to provide you with the tools to transfer that knowledge to students. They would be overwhelmed if they tried to absorb, in one course, even a part of the knowledge you have gained throughout your career. Therefore, it is vital that we be selective and make sure that new students receive the training they actually need. This open water body of knowledge is so vital that SDI has focused a great amount of research and effort to determine which knowledge and skills are most important.

SDI will help you select the information that is most vital to students and show you proven ways to teach them. It's up to you to use your abilities as an instructor to deliver this critical core package to the student. It's a partnership between SDI and YOU.

5. Using Your Instructor Manual

5.1 Purpose

Your SDI Instructor Manual is intended to be your guide to providing safe and enjoyable training to divers through the divemaster and assistant instructor programs. It is your reference for the standards and procedures that SDI instructors implement to achieve consistency and quality. It outlines the vital “core knowledge” that each of your students needs to achieve SDI certification. Finally, but no less important, it is intended to help you effectively deliver the skills and knowledge your students will actually need.

Your SDI Instructor Manual is meant to be a “living manual” - updated on a regular basis, it is meant to grow and change with you throughout your diving career. From time to time you will receive updates for your manual and you should be sure to incorporate these updates promptly so that your manual is always up to date.

5.2 How to Use this Manual

Your manual has intentionally been kept brief but concise.

The manual consists of several parts. These parts are:

1. Introduction
2. Diver Standards
3. Diver Specialties
4. Leadership Standards
5. Scubility Standards
6. Forms

Part 1, Introduction covers:

■ The Need for Standardized Instruction

Explaining SDI’s progressive approach to consistency and excellence in instruction.

■ The Role of Instructor

Emphasizes your important role in the SDI family.

■ Risk Management

Directs you to further information that will help you protect yourself against a problem that could consume your career. Of course, you want to be the best instructor possible, so:

■ **Tips to Becoming a Great Instructor**

Tips that offer information that can help you be a better teacher and a respected professional in dive instruction.

■ **How to Conduct an SDI Scuba Course**

Covers the general approach to scheduling a scuba course and enrolling students. It focuses on the logistics and details (medical and legal) of scheduling your training sessions, organizing your students, collecting class fees and motivating your students to show up for all of the sessions.

Part 2, Diver Standards covers:

- The list of the current diver courses offered through SDI.

Part 3, Specialties covers:

- The list of the current specialties offered through SDI.

Part 4, Leadership Standards covers:

- The list of the current leadership courses offered through SDI.

Part 5, Scubility Standards covers:

- The list of the current scubility courses offered through SDI.

Part 6, Forms covers:

- The list of the current forms used by and required by SDI.

6. SDI - Professional Dive Instruction

6.1 The Need for Standardized Instruction

Early in the history of scuba instruction, experienced divers simply took novice divers under their wing and taught them what they felt they needed to know to be a “skin diver”. There were many accidents and diving gained a reputation as a dangerous sport. Scuba diving “clubs” were organized and began to develop standards for safe diving. Eventually, a large body of safe diving practices was developed as diving knowledge expanded. Professional training agencies were created and they sanctioned instructors to “certify” the divers they trained. This was an improvement over the era of “no standards”, but, there was wide variation in what knowledge and skills instructors thought their students should learn. Methods of instruction ranged from military style to “sink or swim”.

If scuba was to become safer and appeal to the general public, further changes needed to be made. Scuba needed to lose its macho image and punishing physical demands. A core of knowledge essential for safe and enjoyable diving had to be identified and standardized. Most difficult of all, uniform and consistent methods of instruction were needed so students could actually learn the real world knowledge and skills they needed to safely enjoy diving. SDI’s recognition of the importance of uniform standards and consistent instruction forms the foundation of this manual. If SDI instructors are to be successful in teaching students what they need to know, then they must *know what to teach* and, just as importantly, they must *know how to teach it*.

Instructors are individuals, and as such, they will naturally have individual teaching styles. It is SDI’s goal to grant you the freedom to project your own style and personality into your teaching, provided your students are exposed to the same core knowledge and proven methods of instruction as all other SDI students. It is this concept of a carefully chosen body of knowledge delivered consistently with a proven method of instruction that is reflected in the SDI instructor certification course.

Several benefits are obvious when you use a standardized course content and method of instruction.

- Since the course structure is standardized, you can focus on more important things like individual student needs, etc.
- You are less likely to be drawn into the trap of spending too much time on some topics at the expense of others. Naturally, students judge a topic’s importance by the amount of time you spend on it.

- You are less likely to entirely omit teaching something important.
- In the event of a lawsuit, your actions can be more successfully defended if you have instructed your students using a proven, standardized program developed by a respected international dive instruction agency.
- Your presentations will look far more practiced and professional.
- You will look more professional, and you will be.

6.2 The Role of Instructor

OK, so there are tremendous benefits to instructing using the SDI curriculum and methods of instruction, but what's left for you the instructor to do? *Plenty!* Even the best program of instruction is only as good as the people who present it. Why? Because even though your curriculum may be efficient and predictable, your students and diving environment are not! You will be the only one in the course with the *training, experience, and judgment* to put it all together. As an instructor, only you can combine these three elements into a safe and enjoyable, high quality learning experience!

Beginning with the decision to start an open water class, you must make a series of judgment calls:

- How big will the class be and how much help will you need?
- Who will be in your class and what mix of ages (10 - 72)?
- Are there health issues (heavy smoker needs release)?
- Will relationships (controlling parent, hovering significant other) interfere?
- What atmosphere will you teach best in?
- Will you incorporate videos or primarily lecture?
- How will you blend the online learning and classroom sessions?
- Will you take them to water early and risk overwhelming someone or late and risk losing their interest?
- How do you know who really understands and how can you help those who don't?
- Who's likely to panic in open water and how will you protect them?
- Do you certify the marginal student?

It's up to your judgment! It's obvious that even with the solid base of SDI's balanced curriculum and proven teaching methods, the most important factor in teaching open water students is *you*.

6.3 Becoming a Great Instructor

A great instructor is first of all a professional. Think about the people you most admire in almost any aspect of life and it is likely that they share many highly professional characteristics. In dive instruction, professionalism is so vital to both our success and our safety that it is important that we each ask the question - *what are the hallmarks of a professional?*

- A professional acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to offer and attract business - i.e. the business of scuba diving.
- A professional keeps abreast of the latest technology and changes in his/her profession.
- A professional charges a fee for services rendered.
- A professional endeavors to be open-minded and fair.
- A professional is a member of a self-policing organization.
- A professional is a role model who:
 - Is physically fit
 - Is ethical
 - Has a positive attitude
 - Shows consideration for others (i.e. is on time)

No one is “born” a professional and it doesn’t usually “come naturally” either. For most of us, *becoming a professional* takes hard work and long term commitment to a set of quality goals. Just as important, *remaining a professional* means a career-long commitment to supporting the best principles of your profession - while remaining open to new ideas and technology. The most challenging parts of being a professional instructor have little to do with scuba diving. For most of us, the real challenges are more closely related to the personal aspects of human relations; *patience, tolerance, self-control*, a willingness to deal with *our own feelings* and the ability to embrace *change*.

- *Change* is inevitable. It is sometimes fun, often painful and usually expensive. Since it will occur in our industry as in others, we must learn to make the very best of it.
- If a new idea is good, then why not be a part of it.
- If we believe a new idea is not good, then we should argue honestly and resist reasonably. If we are right, a poor idea will disprove itself and go away.
- Count on change happening - that way you won’t be disappointed.
- If you have a better idea – then act on it and make change happen yourself!

Our own feelings can create a world of trouble for us. We won't always like the people or situations we deal with and that can affect our behavior in destructive ways. Sometimes we don't even know it is happening! Therefore it is vital to try to recognize, be honest about and deal with, our own feelings. The goal is to emerge from the situation self-satisfied and productive.

Self-control is essential to professionalism. We all have strong feelings and emotions about some issues, but your students will look to you for balance and common sense. Avoid extremes of behavior or opinion and *do not publicly criticize* your competitors or your students. You will harm yourself more than them.

Tolerance is a sign of maturity and experience. Professionals are expected to deal with "all kinds" of people. Many will not be as sensible or well rounded as you, but that's one reason why you're the instructor.

Patience is a trait shared by the greatest teachers. People learn in different ways and at different speeds. If you move too slowly, you may bore some of your students, but, if you move too fast, you will lose others altogether. More importantly, if you appear impatient with your students' progress, you are likely to embarrass them. They may lose their ability to concentrate and ultimately resent you and scuba diving. If you are patient, most will become competent divers, enjoy themselves and respect your professionalism.

6.4 Risk Management

6.4.1. Teaching Defensively

Probably the single best advice an instructor can follow is to "expect the unexpected". In other words, never assume that everything will go right or as planned. You should never take for granted that all directions you convey will be followed. Since diving instruction began back in the 1960s, prudent instructors have made it a practice to always presume their students will suddenly divert into behavior exactly opposite to what has been briefed; therefore, they try to continuously think ahead to the countless contingencies that may be spontaneously presented and plan how to quickly respond in order to prevent accidents. Remember: the whole purpose of supervision is to give the student diver a chance to learn the skills of diving and, if mistakes are made, the instructor is right there to help turn those mistakes into positive learning experiences instead of grim survival tests.

It is vital that instructors conduct all programs in accordance with agency standards. These provide a proven curriculum of academics and skills that progress the student on the path of self sufficiency and independent activity. Training standards also are the boiler plate of defensibility should an accident occur and an instructor need to justify his conduct in a law suit. It is your responsibility to teach in compliance with current standards and to update your course content as changes are made periodically. If you have any doubt about course standards, contact the Training Director at International Training Inc. Headquarters office for an explanation. If you feel you need to deviate from some aspect of standards due to local site conditions, availability of confined water or pool facility, equipment in use, or any other possible non-standard situation, you must obtain a written waiver from HQ for your request. These are evaluated on a case by case basis. Never assume to deviate from a course standard without seeking approval.

Also, keep in mind that instructor/student ratios are based on site conditions. In situations that are not optimal such as reduced visibility, surf conditions, the presence of currents, and especially if your class has students needing special attention, you should take precautions to reduce the number of students and/or add additional assistant instructors to ensure proper direct supervision.

It would be great if we could purchase insurance and then teach the best course we are capable of teaching, with the confidence that even if an accident were to happen the insurance company would pay for a top-notch defense. We would also like to believe that any reasonable jury would be convinced that we did the best job of training that we could, and they would acquit us of any wrongdoing. But in the real world that rarely happens so simply. We have become a litigious society and it's best to learn the protocols that can alleviate our professional risk.

6.4.2. Introduction

Did you ever tell someone that diving is a safe sport? That's a mistake; you weren't being accurate. "Safe" literally means "without risk". And nothing in life is safe. Diving, like many other sports activities, is inherently dangerous. In fact, a lot of the diving industry's risk management protocols were liberally adapted from that of the snow skiing business. Skiers hurtling downhill with their feet crammed into awkward boots affixed to two narrow planks had the unfortunate luck to break legs, ankles, arms and precipitate other accidents that often led to fatalities with alarming frequency. This, of course, also led to law suits and the skiing industry was forced to react defensively.

Over three decades ago, it was already standard practice to require a participant to sign a Waiver and Release document in which they acknowledged an understanding of such risks and that it was their specific intent not to hold the ski resorts or their instructors liable if they were injured. As the popularity of other potentially dangerous sports became more widespread (think snowmobiling, ATV's, skateboard parks, skydiving, hang gliding, and even youth football and baseball leagues) the use of waivers and accompanying risk management practices to warn participants in advance of hazards became routine.

In today's society of litigation there is nothing more important to professional diving instructors than "risk management". Luckily there are some relatively simple steps that instructors can take to help balance the odds in their favor. The obvious first step is to acquire professional instructor liability insurance.

In today's world where even a stubbed toe on a dive boat is an excuse for a lawsuit, the specter of a negligence claim resulting from an accident is sobering. Without specific insurance coverage for our particular and very explicit needs, there is no protection from what can be the staggering costs of a law suit. Indeed, the cost of successfully defending an innocent instructor could very well bankrupt the individual or his business without the protection of insurance. But in addition to obtaining insurance, it's important to have a fundamental grasp of the facets of risk management in order to conduct yourself with all possible caution and to protect your students, divers in your care, and yourself.

6.4.3. Elements of a Law Suit

Okay, it's time for Basic Personal Injury Law 101. Four things have to happen to allow a plaintiff (the individual or his heirs that have filed suit against you) to recover money:

1. He must be able to show damages, either financial or physical, or both.
2. He must be able to show that you had a duty to provide training or supervision in an atmosphere of reasonable safety.
3. That by acts of commission or omission, you breached that duty.
4. Finally, that his damages were caused by your negligent performance.

So let's take a practical example:

Jack Smith signs up for a basic dive course. He has never dived before and wants to learn. Bob Jones accepts him as a student. A payment in the form of a course fee is exchanged. At this time, a basic contract exists between these two persons that Jones will teach Smith to dive and look after his well being and safety during all aspects of that course.

However, Smith misses the classroom session covering the consequences of holding his breath on ascent and Jones never covers the material with him when he shows up for the first pool session. Sure enough, he holds his breath from the deep end of the pool when he accidentally floods his mask and panics. Smith suffers a fatal arterial air embolism and his family sues Jones.

- Has Smith got damages? Yes, he is deceased.
- Did Jones have a duty to provide a reasonable environment of safety for the dive course? Yes, he did.
- Did Jones breach that duty? Yes. Smith never knew he shouldn't hold his breath while breathing from scuba because Jones never told him so.
- Did Smith die because of Jones' negligence? That would be the inevitable jury verdict.

This example hammers home a point. In entry level scuba instruction, the students really don't know anything at the outset. They are blissfully unaware of the hazards of diving until you, as the instructor, explain things like bends, embolism, sea urchins, and so on. The students are, to draw an elemental analogy, a blank slate that you will fill with information from which they can make decisions about how to conduct themselves while enjoying the sport.

Of course, you give them a waiver to sign in which they are asked to assume the risk for the activities they will take part in. This is the basis of "informed choice" wherein an individual is advised of risks associated with an activity and makes a deliberate decision to participate, with full knowledge of potential hazards that could lead to injury or death. That's why a properly executed waiver and release form is absolutely vital as part of your risk management.

6.4.4. Proper Use of Waivers

Look at this tool as your first line of defense. It's a contract between you and your student that essentially states: "Diving is potentially dangerous and here's a list of all the ways you can kill or injure yourself; you understand these risks and agree not to sue me if an accident happens." Is it really that simple? Not quite, but we're getting there. Now let's look at procedures for waivers and how to make them work for you.

We have reviewed the basic elements that make up a law suit. Now let's take a stroll through some of the front line risk management precautions that can help to nip a law suit before it ever gets into court or alleviate damages

later on down the line. We're talking pro-active use of the arsenal of waiver & release forms available to the instructor. These will generally include at least a medical history form and a general release of liability and assumption of risk agreement. No instructor or dive vessel operator should conduct their activities without proper use of such documents. They will be vital to any successful defense should an accident occur.

The whole idea of waivers and releases is to establish a contract between the student and instructor that stipulates certain understandings as to the nature of the activities about to take place in training. However, it's not enough to simply pass around a bunch of forms to be signed as the boat is pulling away from the dock and hope for the best.

In many states, asking a student to execute such a release without time for sufficient contemplation or under threat of monetary loss will alone be grounds to deny applicability.

First and foremost, the student must be made aware of the inherent risks and hazards associated with diving. (The waivers are available in the Members Area of www.tdisdi.com.) You will note upon examining its content that this document contains a variety of information that specifically identifies assorted dangers that might reasonably be anticipated to crop up. And, in no uncertain terms, the document explains that these things could happen to you if you decide to participate in diving.

After initial certification, subsequent waivers require the student to represent his diving experience and prior training. This is to clearly establish that the person executing the release has a body of life experience in the sport, separate from the specific warnings as to hazards and risks, on which he may base his decision to participate. For example, a person signing up for basic entry level scuba really has no understanding of the inherent risks of the sport until his instructor covers that material in his class. On the other hand, a certified diver with six years of diving experience in a variety of conditions and depths already is aware of most of the standard hazards associated with scuba participation. He can make an informed decision, based upon that experience and prior training, as to whether he wants to assume the risk of more advanced or technical programs. And a judge or jury may hold him to his contract wherein he agrees that should he be injured or killed, he has effectively waived his recourse to sue the instructor.

That, in a nutshell, is the whole basis of upholding such documents: Did the person signing understand the risk and was he capable of assuming that risk? Secondly, did the person know that by signing such a release he

had legally abandoned his right to sue for anticipated hazards even including negligence on the part of the instructor?

A detailed explanation of all SDI, TDI and ERDI waivers will be provided in the next section. Refer to this as "death by misadventure". This sounds even better with the proper accent. And in their legal system, it's unusual for someone to recover damages in such a case.

But if you're counting on that to protect you in the U.S. where people sue each other in such nonsense as dog paternity actions, well, I suggest you take a reality pill and settle in for a grim introduction to the wonderful world of personal injury litigation. Bring your lunch cause you're going to be awhile. And you better hope you packed some properly executed waivers & releases. Otherwise it's heartburn.

Use the risk management tools available and teach defensively. You can take that advice to the bank.

6.4.5. Sign on the Dotted Line, Please

Now let's get into the nuts and bolts of making a waiver & release valid. The student is entitled to a reasonable atmosphere of reflection and thought before being asked to enter into such a serious contract. The instructor should advise all students at the time of enrollment that a waiver & release will be required as a condition of participation. Then the document should be offered well in advance of the actual diving day, including the first pool session.

Asking a class to sign waivers shortly before water or pool activities begin does not meet the spirit of the release, especially if it is implied that a student may forfeit any fees already paid if they refuse to sign. Duress of any kind, whether emotional, peer pressure or financial loss, will probably cause a judge to cast a less than sympathetic eye on the release should the student meet with a mishap on the dive that day.

Handling execution of the waiver & release documents is one of the most important parts of your relationship with students or divers participating in post-certification activities. Explain at the outset that this is a formal contract that affects their legal rights and the rights of their family. Re-affirm that this is a potentially hazardous activity and that accidents can happen even when both the student and instructor perform to the best of their ability. Read the entire document out loud and after each paragraph ask for any questions. Then have each student initial that section in the line provided.

If students already hold prior certifications, remind them that this form requires them to be truthful and honest with regards to their experience, training and capabilities. Always make sure that the form is witnessed by a third party.

And finally, explain that if they have any reservations about participating, they may withdraw without any loss of face and with a full refund. Also encourage them to discuss their participation in detail with family members so they are also fully apprised of the potential for injury or death. It's not a session that is particularly pleasant for either student or instructor, but it is one that won't be forgotten. Do the briefing with all students present as a group so everyone is equally aware of the material covered. In the event of an accident, they can confirm as witnesses the extensive details covered in a thorough explanation of the releases.

Minor children must have their parents or legal guardian sign the release as well, since they are considered too young to independently execute a legal document waiving their rights to sue. It is recommended that you have the parents either attend the first session of class or send the waiver home with the minor and then call the parent to brief them just as you would an adult class participant.

Do not allow students to make any changes to the waiver documents as this could serve to invalidate them. Make certain that all information is completely filled out, initialed, dated properly, and signed. In some states, waivers may be disallowed as a first line of defense where an attorney files a motion for summary judgment to have the law suit dismissed. The waiver will still be admissible later at trial as an exhibit for the jury to consider. This exhibit will be used to determine if the student was properly informed, and if he was fully aware of the risk and his decision to assume that risk while participating in scuba training.

6.4.6. Student Training Records

Be sure to utilize the student training record folders to preserve written evidence of the student's successful completion of tests, skills, pool and open water sessions. This file is also the place to safeguard medical history forms, physician's approval if necessary, as well as waiver documents. These files should be preserved for a period of seven years. Obviously, if an accident were to occur during training they would be of immediate use. But they have additional importance if an accident were to occur after certification and a law suit was filed with allegations that the original course was lacking full content or that the student failed certain academic topics or skills without proper reinforcement or review to ensure the student's complete understanding or proper mastery of skills. Be vigilant in keeping your paperwork up to date as the training program proceeds and always be sure to review any incorrect performance by a student until it is properly completed.

6.4.7. Medical History

Ensure that students complete the medical history form prior to any class activities, including academic lectures. It is recommended that instructors not coach students on completion of the form. However, it is appropriate to clarify any questions that may arise. Should a student accidentally respond to a question in error, a new form should be given to them to fill in with accurate answers.

When a student indicates one of the areas that requires a physician's medical approval, have the student provide the executed approval for proper documentation of the student record.

6.4.8. In the Event of an Accident

If an accident were to occur, your primary concern is to care for the victim. Additional concerns include:

- Secure the victim's equipment - in a serious accident, local
- authorities may take custody of the equipment
- Gather all relevant information, using the International Training accident/incident report form
- Be sympathetic to victim's family and friends
- Do not speculate about the facts of the incident
- Make no comments regarding anyone's potential liability
- Take photographs of everything

As soon as possible, email or fax the completed accident/incident report to International Training or your local regional office. Include a copy of any applicable liability release. If the accident occurred during training, also include copies of the medical statement and all student training records. Every accident should be reported (even relatively minor ones). If your insurance company requires certain reporting procedures, those should be followed as well. If the incident occurred during a training program conducted through another agency, the instructor should follow the procedures of that agency. Whenever possible, submit the same report to all parties (avoid multiple versions of the report).

Cooperate with any subsequent official investigation. This may be conducted by International Training, local authorities, and other training agencies. Refrain from making statements to the news media or to anyone else.

Prudent dive professionals will have established emergency procedures and have established emergency plans for all training locations used. Staying current with CPR and first aid certifications demonstrates prudence. Verify that you have proper contact information for emergency services for each

location. Be ready to control the scene, assign tasks, and evaluate the equipment used and surroundings. Take copious notes, establish a timeline for the report, and photograph equipment and the surrounding area. Interview witnesses and get observations from numerous witnesses if possible to help with the report. Be sure to complete the accident report in a timely manner, submit it to the proper entities or individuals, and do not share with third parties.

6.4.9. Summary

Risk management is serious stuff. It's necessary to cover all aspects soberly and professionally without any distractions. Teach your programs in strict observation of the agency's course standards and try to anticipate situations where accident scenarios could arise. In technical diving and some advanced programs, we have a duty to screen less experienced or under qualified divers out of the programs. Sometimes this can be a difficult reality but you may save a diver from themselves in the process.

Accidents can happen. They may be due to conditions beyond anyone's control or ability to foresee. But if you're counting on that fact to protect you from a law suit in the U.S., where people sue each other over nothing and anything, be prepared for a grim introduction to the wonderful world of personal injury litigation. Make sure you have those properly executed waivers & releases and complete student records.

Use the risk management tools that are available and teach defensively.

7. SDI General Membership Standards

All the following criteria apply to

- SDI Leadership positions
 - Assistant Instructor
 - Divemaster
 - Instructor
 - Non-Diving Specialty Instructor
 - Course Directors
 - Instructor Trainer

7.1 General

1. Instructors, Course Directors and Instructor Trainers must comply with the 'Two Year Renewal/Refresher Policy' detailed at 8.10 in these General Standards.
2. Members must ensure they are in renewed, active teaching status and that they hold the appropriate instructor level prior to teaching any SDI course.
3. All courses must be completed within 12 months unless otherwise stated.
4. Recommendation for all SDI Courses- Any student must demonstrate skills required in previous courses to the new instructor
5. With the exception of the SDI Open Water Scuba Diver, Scuba Discovery, Future Buddies and Inactive Diver Refresher courses, an active SDI instructor may teach an open circuit SDI diver level course while using a SCR/CCR under the following conditions (note these conditions apply to ALL training dives):*
 - a. Current SDI standards for the course are followed
 - b. The instructor must be an active SDI Instructor on open circuit at the level being taught
 - c. The instructor must be an active TDI Instructor on the SCR/CCR unit he is diving
 - d. The instructor must carry sufficient bailout gas for himself and one student to abort the dive and carry out a safe ascent to the surface
6. Under NO circumstances shall a SDI instructor teach any part of any SDI course while using a SCR/CCR without holding a current TDI Instructor-rating on that specific unit.

*As a courtesy, we also suggest the student(s) be made aware of the situation and be comfortable with the circumstances of their course dives.

7.2 Regional Office Affiliation Procedures

1. Members (Dive Masters, Assistant Instructors, Instructors, Course Directors, and IT's) are required to be affiliated with the Regional Office (RO) that is managing their country of residence with the following guidelines:
 - a. Member resides in the region for a period of 4 months or longer.
 - b. If member travels to a different region to teach, they are not considered a part of that Regional Office unless they are spending more than 4 months in the location continuously.
2. All new members are required to be registered and affiliated with Regional Office of their country of residence .
 - a. Instructor Trainers must submit leadership application paperwork to the appropriate regional office.
 - b. Instructor Trainers who are unsure of the region to register a new dive professional should contact SDI/TDI/ERDI World Headquarters for directions.
3. Members must have an address in their user profile that coincides with the region they are affiliating with.
4. It is strongly recommended that any member that is traveling outside their region they are affiliated with to conduct courses, contact the Regional Office in the area they are teaching in to become familiar with local law, rules and regulations should they apply and as a courtesy to the local Regional Office.

7.3 Active Teaching Status

An Instructor given the designation of Active Teaching Status must agree to the following criteria:

1. Annual dues must be paid in full.
2. All account balances from previous year must be paid in full.
3. Submit proof of current liability insurance in accordance with applicable local regulations.
4. Having taught or assisted in at least one Scuba Diver course. All instructors must hold Active Teaching Status to be authorized to teach SDI courses and to certify SDI divers.
5. Ability to perform all the leadership skills.

7.4 Probation Status

An Instructor may be placed on Probation Status for any of the following reasons:

1. Account balance is 90 days or more.
2. Failed to meet the contractual obligations of Active Teaching Status.
3. Violated teaching standards.

An Instructor placed on Probation Status is authorized to teach SDI courses and to certify SDI divers. Further standards violations can result in an Instructor being moved from Probation Status to Suspended or even Expelled Status.

7.5 Non-Teaching Status

An Instructor can be placed on Non-Teaching Status for any of the following reasons:

1. Account balance is 90 days or more.
2. Temporarily placed on suspension.
3. Failed to meet the contractual obligations of Active Teaching Status.

Instructors placed on Non-Teaching Status are not authorized to teach SDI courses or certify SDI divers.

7.6 Suspended Status

An Instructor can be placed on Suspended Status for any of the following reasons:

1. Account balance is 120 days or more with no attempt to rectify the situation.
2. Failed to meet the contractual obligations of Active Teaching Status.
3. Violated teaching standards.

An Instructor placed on Suspended Status is not authorized to teach SDI courses or to certify SDI divers. Further standards violations can result in an Instructor being moved from Suspended Status to Expelled Status.

7.7 Expelled Status

An Instructor can be placed on Expelled Status for any of the following reasons:

1. Account balance is 120 days or more with no attempt to rectify the situation.
2. Placed on Suspended or Probation Status on more than one occasion.
3. Failed to meet the contractual obligations of Active Teaching Status.
4. Violated teaching standards.
5. Displayed conduct unbecoming a professional Instructor.

An Instructor placed on Expelled Status is no longer authorized to teach SDI courses or to certify SDI divers. An Instructor placed on Expelled Status is no longer a member of Scuba Diving International.

Note: Scuba Diving International reserves the right to suspend, expel or terminate an individual based upon the determination that standards violations have occurred.

7.8 SDI/TDI/ERDI Quality Assurance (QA) Procedures

Quality assurance issues are handled at SDI/TDI/ERDI World Headquarters by the Training Department. This is to ensure that Regional Offices and Sales Managers remain neutral in the final decision.

7.8.1. General Quality Assurance Procedures

General quality assurances are defined as random Q&A letters sent out to students who were recently registered by members in good standing. General Q&A letters are sent out to maintain the quality of instruction and ensure that proper training materials were used.

- Letters are sent with a self addressed, return postage paid envelope or via electronic e-mail course survey form.
- All course survey letters are forwarded to SDI/TDI/ERDI World Headquarters Training Department.
- Non-English speaking student's letters are translated to the student's language.

There are four possible actions that may be taken when a SDI/TDI/ERDI Professional's standing comes into question. They are:

1. No Action Required
2. Probation
3. Suspension
4. Expulsion

7.8.2. No Action Required

No Action Required means that the information provided to the Training Department was insufficient or unfounded.

7.8.3. Probation

Probation status requires that a course survey letter be sent to every student the member registers; it does not restrict or preclude the member from teaching courses. This status can be placed on the member without notification and is generally only short term. Probation status is used when information is brought to the attention of the Training Department that suggests a member may not be conducting themselves according to the standards or ethics of SDI/TDI/ERDI. A member may also be placed on probation without written documentation by the complainant, at the discretion of the Training Department.

7.8.4. Suspension

Members placed on suspension status are not allowed to teach at any level for a period of time or under conditions determined by the Training Department. These conditions, along with the reasons they are being placed on suspension, will be provided to the Member in writing. Members can only be placed on suspension after they have been given a fifteen day period to respond to the allegations against them and after the Training Department has performed a complete investigation into the allegations.

7.8.5. Expelled

Expelled members are indefinitely prohibited from teaching SDI/TDI/ERDI programs. Members are expelled only after all attempts to correct their actions have been exhausted or their actions deem that expulsion is the only correction. Expulsions can only be approved by the president of International Training after the Training Department has performed a complete investigation.

All QA issues are to be kept confidential and not shared with outside instructors or facilities unless authorized by HQ Training Department.

Regional Offices and Sales Managers may be asked to assist in acquiring information about the QA issues.

A provisional status or remedial training requires the file be kept open until all requirements have been met.

7.8.6. HQ Quality Assurance Steps

- **Step 1:** The HQ Training Department receives a written letter or course survey alleging a standards or ethics violation. The letter must be signed (electronic signature is acceptable) by the individuals who witnessed the alleged standards or ethics violation. Phone conversations will not be accepted.
- **Step 2:** SDI/TDI/ERDI HQ Training Department will check the database for current status of the dive professional in question. Once HQ has all contact information, they will notify the individual that a complaint has been filed against them. Notification will be attempted first by phone or email and then by letter.
- **Step 3:** The notification letter will contain the alleged quality assurance violations. The individual will be notified they have fifteen (15) days to reply.
- **Step 4:** HQ will send course surveys to former students.
- **Step 5:** When all information has been submitted and reviewed, a final decision will be made as to what action will be taken. SDI/TDI/ERDI World HQ Training Department will compose a letter and inform the member as to their decision.
- **Step 6:** The member's status will be noted in the database.

All feedback on the material used and quality of instruction will be noted in the instructor's file in the database at HQ.

7.9 Definitions

Supervision

1. **Direct supervision:** Visual observation and evaluation of participant skill introduction and development during diving activities by an instructor or certified assistant. Direct supervision requires personal observation and evaluation of the skills introduced and developed in the program. During skills introduction and development, direct supervision requires the participant to be accompanied underwater. During the initial introductory scuba dive, direct supervision requires an instructor to accompany the participant underwater and be in control of the participant. Subsequent dives may be led by a certified assistant with reduced ratios as required by the training organization.
2. **Indirect supervision:** The overall control, general observation, evaluation and direction of the participant skill performance and participant diving activities. The instructor must be personally present at the dive site and be prepared to come to the aid of a participant.

7.10 Forms

1. SDI Forms, where provided in the Standards and Procedures Forms section for use by members, are to be used for training courses where applicable. Equivalent documents, not produced by SDI, are not acceptable without prior authority from SDI Headquarters. Authority to use non-SDI forms must be applied for prior to commencement of training and will only be granted under circumstances such as:
 - a. Form not available in a language the student or instructor understands
 - b. Form is superseded by document(s) produced under local regulations

7.11 Exams

1. The required score for all students taking any SDI Diver level or leadership course exam is 80%, with 100% remediation of any incorrect answers required by the course instructor. Alternate exams, where produced, are also to be used when student's score is below 80%.

7.12 Requirements for Dive Leader Crossovers

Dive leaders associated with another recognized scuba training agency must provide a copy of their active ratings with the other agency.

- If they have been inactive for less than five years, they must secure a letter from that agency, stating what requirements must be completed prior reinstatement with that agency.
- If they have been inactive for more than five years, they must secure a letter from that agency stating what requirements must be completed prior reinstatement with that agency. Due to the length of inactivity, they will be required to complete an IEC for the level they wish to cross over.
- All crossover candidates must also complete the online crossover program (if it is available in their language), complete the appropriate crossover application, and submit it along with proof of current leadership rating(s), insurance (if required in their geographical location), and documentation they have completed the online program. They will then be required to complete the crossover program with a qualified individual*. This can be completed either in person or via a web conference (if administrative).

*Qualified individuals are defined for each crossover level as follows:

- Instructor crossover with evaluation – Instructor Trainer qualified to level needing evaluation
- Instructor crossover (administrative) – Course Director, Instructor Trainer, Regional Representative, or Headquarters/Regional Office Staff Member
- Assistant Instructor crossover – Instructor, Course Director, Instructor Trainer, Regional Representative, or Headquarters/Regional Office Staff Member
- Divemaster crossover – Instructor, Course Director, Instructor Trainer, Regional Representative, or Headquarters/Regional Office Staff Member

If unsure a crossover is administrative or requires evaluation, contact the SDI Headquarters Training Department (or Regional Office) prior to conducting the program.

7.13 Two Year Renewal/Refresher Policy

Instructors and Instructor Trainers must teach a course at their highest level every 2 years from the date they last taught that course. If a course is not taught within that two-year period, teaching status for that level is will be inactive and the instructor or IT must attend an update to regain active status for that level. Members usually affected by this policy are those who have not renewed as SDI members for 2 or more years. However, members who are actively teaching lower ratings but not at their highest level may also be affected for that level.

The following information details how members can regain fully active status either by verifying activity at an equivalent level with another recognized agency or by completing an update with an instructor trainer.

When an update with an IT is required, the following criteria applies:

1. SDI: Update covers SDI OWI and Specialty ratings only (with the exception of CPR ratings which require a separate update)

Renewal Policy for Inactive Members of SDI

1. For an instructor who is a member of SDI and has not renewed for 2 or more years but *has been teaching with another recognized scuba certification agency*, the requirements for renewal includes

All of the following:

- a. Successfully complete the on-line professional familiarization course (code issued by headquarters)
 - b. Purchase or verify possession of all current teaching materials for ratings held
 - c. Complete and submit membership renewal and agreement form for the current year
 - d. Submit an *SDI Member Update* Form detailing activity as a scuba instructor during the period, including verification of teaching activity at equivalent ratings with another recognized agency during the past 2 years
 - e. Verify no quality assurance issues with any other agency during the period of inactivity with SDI.
2. For an instructor who is a member of SDI/TDI/ERDI and has not renewed for 2 or more years *and has **not** been teaching with another recognized scuba certification agency*, the requirements for renewal includes ALL of the following:
 - a. Successfully complete the on-line professional familiarization course (code issued by headquarters)
 - b. Purchase or verify possession of all current teaching materials for ratings held
 - c. Complete and submit membership renewal and agreement form for the current year
 - d. Verify no quality assurance issues with any other agency during past 2 years.
 - e. Complete SDI Instructor Evaluation Course (IEC) as an update with a qualified active teaching status SDI Instructor Trainer
 - f. Submit a completed Member Update form, signed by the instructor trainer who completed the update
 - g. Submit a current medical signed by a licensed physician with no restrictions or limitations for scuba diving
 - h. Submit verification of current CPR and first aid training

Active Teaching Status Policy for SDI Members Who Have Maintained Renewal

1. For an instructor who is a member of SDI and has maintained renewal but not taught or assisted at their highest level for 2 or more years and *has been teaching at an equivalent level with another recognized scuba certification agency*, the requirements for regaining active teaching status are as follows:
 - a. Purchase or verify possession of all current teaching materials for ratings held
 - b. Submit an *SDI Member Update* form detailing activity as a scuba instructor during the period, including verification of teaching activity at equivalent ratings with another recognized agency during the past 2 years
 - c. Verify no quality assurance issues with any other agency during the period

Or

- d. Have a current and active SDI Instructor Trainer (qualified to the same levels) submit a Member Update form verifying an update has been completed
2. For an instructor who is a member of SDI and has maintained renewal but not taught or assisted at their highest level for 2 or more years and *has **not** been teaching at an equivalent level with another recognized scuba certification agency*, the requirements for regaining active teaching status are as follows:
 - a. Verify no quality assurance issues with any other agency during past 2 years.
 - b. Complete SDI Instructor Evaluation Course (IEC) as an update with a qualified active teaching status SDI Instructor Trainer
 - c. Submit a completed Member Update form, signed by the instructor trainer who completed the update
 - d. Submit a current medical signed by a licensed physician with no restrictions or limitations for scuba diving
 - e. Submit verification of current CPR and first aid training

Note: Additional requirements and documentation may be required once the application for renewal has been reviewed by SDI Headquarters Training Department (or Regional Office). Members who have been inactive for 5 or more years may have additional requirements to regain active status and must contact the Training Department.

Online codes can be obtained from headquarters for any and all of the aforementioned procedures at no charge.

Instructor Trainers wishing to renew IT status after an inactive period of 2 years or longer at that level must attend an Instructor Trainer Workshop (*or IT crossover program*) conducted by SDI Headquarters Training Department Staff (no charge is made for this). Additionally, the requirements of renewing at the corresponding instructor level must also be met.

SDI Divemasters, SDI Assistant Instructors, TDI Divemasters and ERDI Supervisors who have not been active with SDI/TDI/ERDI in over 2 years must follow the same procedures as instructors. However, where an IT signoff is required any SDI Instructor can sign.

