

National Incident Statistics 2008 and You

Introduction

I'm sorry to be a bore, but I've been preparing to deliver a new round of Decompression talks that deals with personal decompression computers (PDCs), with a look behind the scenes and to highlight the things that PDCs can't do ie the stuff divers must do for themselves.

During my preparation I delved into our national incident statistics for the past 12 years. Pretty reading it is not, see Table 1 below:

Table 1	
Year	No of DCI Cases Reported
1996	204
1997	160
1998	190
1999	98
2000	125
2001	116
2002	144
2003	122
2004	121
2005	110
2006	121
2007	81
2008	132
Ave	About 132/pa
2008 Close-up	
1. Rapid Ascents	38
2. Missed Stops	15
3. Dry suit/DSMB foul-up	26
4. Out of Air	10
5. Repetitive Diving	44
6. Deeper than 30m	23

You can see that the average DCI incident rate is about 132 per year over the 12 year period.

The close-up of 2008, see Table 1, reveals some interesting events. To be frank, at this time, I'm not too interested in Repetitive Diving or Dives below 30m, although combined they account for 50% of all reported incidents. What people do the most when out for the day diving is to get a few dives in and some may be below 30m. Without a great deal of digging not much can be gleaned from this information.

However, items 1 to 4 tell a whole different story. These are totally avoidable DCIs! No real deep digging to determine the most likely cause - "Poor diving skills/practices", with a touch of poor equipment maintenance thrown in for good measure.

My main aim is to draw your attention to these appalling statistics, which year on year are not getting any better, and to ask each and every one of you reading this article to take a critical look at yourself. I for one have done just that and a number of small items of equipment have been taken to the dive shop to be tarted up. I've replaced the line on my main reel and cut a few minor knots from the line on my two distance reels. "You should have done that before now", I hear you say and you are right - but I've done it now, have you?

Why should you bother? Well the number of deaths (there were 10 last year and the number this year is rising) and the cases of avoidable DCI is growing and you would be doing me a great favour if did not become one of these statistics. I've worked 30year+ for the SAA in a bid to help make our diving safer. I need your help to achieve this goal.

The New SAA Training Programme

A good starting place is to check out the New SAA DeeP-Stop Tool Box Training programme and our SAA Bühlmann DeeP-Stop System, which have been written with these issues in mind and where you will find a number of good ideas on:

- Dry suit/BCD valve user maintenance
- DSMB deployment

- Determining your required air without loads of calculations
- Tips on buoyancy
- Deep-Stop diving for all
- And much, much more.

So people will say, and I can hear them from here as I type this article, "I've been diving 10, 20 or even 30years+ and I don't need a lecture on such stuff". My answer to that is I've been diving for nearly 55years and I still brush up on my skills and I enjoy learning new stuff. There is hardly a day goes by without stealing a good idea from someone. I don't suffer from plagiarism, I enjoy it.

Go on, be critically honest with yourself, you might learn something new about the SAA and even yourself. You may even save yourself a trip to a hyperbaric chamber or a ride in long black limo.

Kind regards

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