



SPECIALTY OPERATIONS		906.00		
		SEARCH AND RECOVERY DIVE TEAM		
ISSUED: 10-29-1997	EFFECTIVE: 11-08-1997	REVISED: 08-14-2025	REVIEWED: 08-14-2025	PAGES: 10

CONTENTS

This procedure consists of the following numbered sections:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| I. CONTROL | V. DIVING REGULATIONS/
PROCEDURES |
| II. GENERAL PROCEDURES | VI. PRE-DIVE SAFETY CHECKS |
| III. ON-SCENE PROTOCOL FOR DIVE
TEAM MEMBERS | VII. TRAINING |
| IV. ON-SCENE AUTHORITY | VIII. RECIPROCITY |

PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to establish guidelines for utilization of the Punta Gorda Police Department Search and Recovery Dive Team.

SCOPE

This procedure shall apply to all Punta Gorda Police Department personnel.

DEFINITIONS

- Public Safety Diving:** Diving performed by individuals necessary to, and part of, a police, fire, or public safety activity.

DISCUSSION

These guidelines ensure that all diving is conducted in a manner that maximizes protection of the Search and Recovery Dive Team members from accidental injury and/or illness. In addition, this standard operating procedure sets forth guidelines for training and certification of divers. The fulfillment of these guidelines shall be consistent with the furtherance of safety The Punta Gorda

Police Department's Search and Recovery Dive Team works to ensure that dive operations are conducted as effectively as possible. This standard operating procedure will set forth Patrol and Dive Team responsibilities, on-scene authority, call out procedures, and the basic regulations and procedures for safety in dive operations.

PROCEDURE

I. CONTROL

- A. No person shall be engaged in any dive operation unless that person holds a current certification from a nationally recognized organization (e.g. P.A.D.I., Y.M.C.A., N.A.U.I., SSI etc.)
- B. The minimum certification to be accepted on the Dive Team will be Basic Open Water (or its equivalent). The members should obtain their Advanced Open Water and Recovery certification (or their equivalents) within two (2) years of acceptance to the team unless an extension has been requested and approved by the Operations Division Commander or the Chief of Police.
- C. When vacancies occur on the Dive Team, a memorandum or e-mail shall be sent to all sworn officers referencing the requirements to be considered for addition to the Dive Team. To qualify for consideration and subsequent inclusion on the Dive team, each applicant must successfully complete the following:
 - 1. Each applicant shall submit a medical statement based on a one-time physical exam, dated no more than 12 months from the date of application, attesting to the applicant's physical fitness for this position based on the job description. This will be completed by a duly licensed physician. Upon receipt of the medical statement applicants will move on to the first phase of testing.
 - 2. The first phase shall include a 300-yard swim, 15 minutes of treading water, and an 800-yard swim without stopping. There will be no time limit placed on the 800-yard swim but the diver must complete the swim with mask, fins, and snorkel.
 - 3. Once phase one is complete the applicant will be chosen to move on to phase two for the existing vacancy. If there are multiple candidates, applicants may be required to participate in an interview process.
 - 4. Minimum requirement to participate in phase 2 of testing is Open Water Dive Certification. If applicants that are chosen after successfully completing phase one do not have their open water certification, they will be sent by the Punta Gorda Police Department to obtain Open Water Dive Certification.

5. The second phase of testing will determine the diver's ability to work through various scenarios involving gear problems that have the propensity to create stress. An example scenario is to ditch and don gear in black-out conditions. All phase two testing will be conducted under zero visibility conditions by utilizing a blackened-out mask. All tests will be Dive Team-related and reflect the diver's ability to react under pressure.
6. The third phase of testing will determine a diver's ability to perform tasks in a practical open water environment. Divers will receive instruction and perform a series of search patterns guided by a line tender. This will determine a divers ability to safely perform tasks and maintain composure in real-world, stressful working conditions. This phase of testing will reflect normal dive team operations.
 - a. To ensure the continual readiness of the Dive Team to perform required duties team members shall complete this qualification test annually to remain on the Dive Team.
7. The Dive Team Leader conducting the evaluation shall document by memorandum or e-mail to the Operations Commander that each phase of the testing process has been successfully completed.
8. The ultimate selection of Dive Team members is at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

D. Equipment Inspection and Maintenance

1. All individually-assigned department diving equipment shall be inspected during each Dive Team training session.
2. All department diving equipment (e.g. backup equipment) will be inspected quarterly and the inspections documented on the appropriate forms.
 - a. A dive team member who loses, misplaces, or damages issued equipment shall immediately report such loss or damage to the Dive Team Leader.
 - b. The Dive Team member shall also submit a written memo detailing the lost or damaged equipment, accompanied by the case number of the diver operation or explanation of the training exercise to the Dive Team Leader. The Dive Team Leader shall forward the memo to the Operations Commander for further action.
3. The Dive Team Trailer is to be used solely for the purpose of Dive Team related matters.
 - b. Members utilizing the Dive Team Trailer are responsible for the proper care and cleanliness of the interior and exterior. The Dive Team Leader is responsible

for ensuring that all routine maintenance and required services are performed. The Dive Team Leader will ensure that equipment deficiencies are addressed and replenished if necessary.

4. The Dive Team Leader is responsible for ensuring the annual Dive Team budget includes the necessary funds to maintain and service all department diving equipment in accordance with department policy and any other applicable guidelines or requirements.
- E. It is the intent of the Chief of Police to authorize personal use of the equipment with the expressed goal of improving Dive Team familiarity with their equipment and various diving situations, thereby enhancing the overall capability of the Dive Team. Use of department diving equipment must satisfy the following conditions:
1. Approval from a Command Staff member for personal use of any agency dive equipment;
 2. Members shall be responsible for any personal use of the dive equipment.

II. GENERAL PROCEDURES

- A. When a police officer arrives at a scene potentially requiring divers, the officer shall:
1. Secure the area, locate and secure any possible evidence, and maintain crowd control;
 2. Provide a secure area for divers and equipment;
 3. Have witnesses available for interview upon arrival of the Dive Team; and
 4. Initiate an incident report.
- B. The Watch Commander shall notify the Operations Commander of the Dive Team request. The Operations Commander will notify the Dive Team Leader of their designee and the Dive Team Leader will respond to determine if divers are needed.
- C. In the event of a death, the Dive Team Leader or their designee shall refer to the [Emergency Notification policy \(SOP 1113.00\)](#), as necessary.
- D. Call-Out Procedures
1. Dive team members will be readily available for contact via telephone or radio on a 24hour basis. Team members may be required to respond to situations during nonscheduled working hours. Upon request to activate the dive team by a member or supervisor so authorized, the supervisor will contact the team leader (or designee)

who will forward the request to the Operations Commander for approval prior to notifying other team members. At least three (3) capable and properly equipped Divers will be utilized on all call-outs. Once notified by the supervisor, the team leader will attempt to ascertain the necessary information required to determine the scope of the operation. This information should initially contain, though not be limited to, the following:

- a. The type of incident (drowning, homicide, evidence recovery, public demonstration, etc.);
 - b. Location of the incident;
 - c. Date of immersion of the victim or item for which the search is initiated; and
 - d. Complete description of the water site to be searched.
2. For call-out's initiated by CCSO outside of our jurisdiction, where our assistance is requested, the CCSO Dive team leader (or designee) will notify the dive team leader, who will forward the request to the Operations Commander for approval prior to notifying other team members.

E. Non-Emergency Responses

1. Routine calls will utilize on-duty divers.
2. In the event on-duty personnel are unable to respond, off-duty divers will be called.

F. Exceptional Incidents

1. When an exceptional incident occurs (e.g. plane crash in water, explosives in the water, extended underwater searches) the Dive Team Leader or his/her designee will be notified of the situation.
2. The Dive Team Leader or their designee will assume responsibility and coordinate the dive operation.
3. When an incident involving possible contaminated waters or bio hazard conditions where there may be a potential health risk, divers shall utilize full dry suits for diving.

G. Reports

1. Following an incident in which the Dive Team is used, the Dive Team Leader or their designee will prepare and submit a report containing the following, at a minimum:

- a. Diagram of the incident;
 - b. Critique of on-scene dive operations;
 - c. Suggestions for correction, deletion, or addition of operational procedures.
 - d. Report of any physical problems or symptoms related to decompression sickness or air embolism and any medical treatment received by the divers for these conditions; and
 - e. Equipment checks performed and problems or malfunctions reported to the Dive Team Leader.
2. This report shall be submitted to the Operations Commander for review and approval of the report. It will then be forwarded to the Professional Standards Specialist for filing.
 3. The Dive Team Leader or their designee shall appoint personnel to complete a supplemental report if the dive operation was in support of a Punta Gorda Police Department incident.
 4. The Dive Team Leader or their designee shall assign dive personnel to complete an incident report if the dive operation was in support of another agency.

III. ON-SCENE PROTOCOL FOR DIVE TEAM MEMBERS

- A. Non-Emergency Responses: The Dive Team Leader or their designee shall choose a location near to the scene, but away from crowds and bystanders, to assemble the Dive Team and equipment.
- B. Dive Team members will not discuss dive operation procedures with the news media or general public while the operation is in effect. The Dive Team Leader or their designee will brief the Public Information Officer (P.I.O.) after the operation is complete.
- C. In the event of a body recovery, the body shall not be left unattended.

IV. ON-SCENE AUTHORITY: On-scene authority will be established in accordance with the Punta Gorda Police Department *Unusual Occurrences* policy. The following additional considerations apply.

- A. Due to the inherent dangers of diving and strict adherence to established safety measures, the Dive Team Leader or their designee shall have final authority in placing or removing divers from the water.

- B. The authority of the Dive Team Leader or their designee shall not be superseded in matters of diver safety and on-the-scene operational procedures.

V. DIVING REGULATIONS/PROCEDURES

- A. No person shall engage in diving operations unless they hold current certifications pursuant to the provisions of this procedure.
- B. Equipment: All equipment used by divers or trainees, regardless of ownership, shall conform to the standards set forth in this procedure.
- C. Diving Sites: The regulations herein shall be observed at all dive locations where an operation is being conducted.
- D. Solo Diving Prohibited
 - 1. All diving shall be planned and executed in a manner as to ensure that every diver involved maintains constant effective communication with at least one other comparably-equipped certified diver in the water. This buddy system is based upon mutual assistance, especially in the case of an emergency. Dives should be planned around the experience and competency of the least experienced diver. If loss of effective communication occurs within the buddy team, all divers within that team shall surface and re-establish contact.
 - 2. Exception may be made on a case-by-case basis in the event of a rescue or other exigent circumstances.
 - 3. The solo, line-tended diver shall be considered an exception to the solo diving prohibition. However, both the diver and the tender shall be sufficiently trained in this technique prior to their operational use of this type of solo diving. During a solo, line-tended dive, a safety diver shall be utilized in addition to the line tender.
- E. Enclosed or Confined Spaces: Where an enclosed or confined space is not large enough for two (2) divers, one diver will be stationed at the underwater point of entry and a safety line shall be utilized to tether the two divers together.
- F. Diver's Flag: The diver down flag, and where necessary an international Alpha flag, shall be prominently displayed during all dive operations.
- G. Flotation Devices: Each diver shall, on every dive, possess the capability of attaining and maintaining positive buoyancy. This will be accomplished by the use of a buoyancy control device (BCD), unless in a rescue mode.

H. Timing Devices, Depth Gauges, and Pressure Gauges: Both members of the diving pair must have an approved depth indicator and a submersible tank pressure gauge. Divers shall be responsible for monitoring their air consumption and depth. The line tender is responsible for monitoring the diving pair's profile and ensuring it is within the profile of a nationally recognized dive table.

I. Dive Tables and Computers

1. An appropriate dive table or dive computer that is nationally recognized must be available at every dive location.
2. Only those dive computers or dive tables which have been properly studied may be utilized.
3. The Dive Team Leader will ensure that each diver utilizing a dive computer or dive table is trained to understand basic diving theory and to properly and safely operate the dive computer with which they dive.
4. A Dive Team on which only one (1) diver has a computer shall rely on the dive tables that they have been trained on.
5. On any given dive, if both divers in the buddy team utilize computers, they must follow the more conservative dive computer.
6. Ascent rates shall not exceed 60 feet per minute.
7. Divers shall make a five (5) minute rest stop at 15 feet, for all dives that exceed 60 feet.
8. Diving that results in exceeding the no-decompression limits of the dive computer/dive table at any time during the dive is prohibited.
9. Repetitive and multi-level diving procedures will start the dive or series of dives at the maximum depth, followed by subsequently shallower dives.

J. Refusal to Dive

1. The decision to dive rests with the individual diver. A diver may refuse to dive without fear of penalty whenever they feel it is unsafe. The safety hazards will be relayed to the dive team leader and/or watch commander.
2. Ultimate responsibility for safety rests with the individual diver. It is the diver's responsibility and duty to refuse to dive or continue to dive if, in their judgment, conditions are unsafe, unfavorable, or if diving would violate the concepts of his training or the guidelines of this document.

K. Termination of Dive

1. Unless it compromises the safety of another diver already in the water, it is the responsibility of the diver to terminate the dive without fear of penalty whenever the diver feels it is unsafe to continue.
2. The dive shall be terminated while there is still sufficient tank pressure to permit the diver to safely reach the surface, including the safety stop. It is suggested that an ascent to the surface from a dive of 60 – 100 feet be initiated when the tank pressure reaches 1000 psi.

VI. PRE-DIVE SAFETY CHECKS

- A. Each diver shall conduct a functional check of their diving equipment in the presence of the dive buddy or tender.
- B. No diver shall be permitted to dive for the duration of any known condition that is likely to adversely affect the safety and health of the diver or other dive Team members.

VII. TRAINING: The Dive Team Leader or their designee shall be responsible for orientation of all new divers and shall review the supplemental Dive Training Guidelines with all new divers.

1. Each Dive Team member will be allowed 8 hours per month, with a maximum of 96 hours a year, for in-service training.
2. Each month the training will attempt to include the primary areas of physical fitness, academics, and practical hands-on scenarios.
3. Training will include areas such as advanced diving skills, underwater investigation, diver safety, search and recovery, tactical operations, underwater photography/video, or any other subject matter deemed appropriate.
4. All training will be documented on a training form to be maintained in the training files.
5. Annually, each Dive Team member must complete a training dive under the supervision of the Dive Team Leader.

VIII. RECIPROCITY: Reciprocity may exist between other agencies. A diver currently certified by another agency and in good standing, may be so recognized by the Punta Gorda Police Department. Reciprocity may be extended to individuals possessing the necessary training and experience which is appropriate for the diving to be undertaken. Such

reciprocity will be at the discretion of the Dive Team Leader and/or their designee, with final approval at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

APPROVED



PAMELA R. SMITH, CHIEF OF POLICE

STAFF REVIEW DATES: 10-29-1997, 11-24-1998, 12-20-2000, 09-04-2003, 03-14-2006, 10-15-2007, 09-19-2011, 12-10-2013, 04-18-2016, 03-28-2019, 03-10-2021, 08-10-2023, 08-14-2025

REVISION DATES: 10-29-1997, 11-24-1998, 12-20-2000, 09-04-2003, 03-14-2006, 10-15-2007, 09-19-2011, 12-10-2013, 04-18-2016, 3-28-2019, 03-10-2021, 06-02-2022, 08-10-2023, 10-24-2023, 08-14-2025