

	OFFICE OF MARINE AND AVIATION OPERATIONS	POLICY 0308	VERSION 1.0
		EFFECTIVE DATE May 4, 2011	
	AUTHORIZED BY:  RADM Jonathan W. Bailey, NOAA Director, Office of Marine and Aviation Operations	REVIEW DATE May 4, 2014	
		RESPONSIBLE POSITION NOAA Diving Program Manager	

DIVING IN LOW VISIBILITY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy specifies the requirements for conducting scuba diving operations in low visibility within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Diving Program.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all NOAA Divers, and Temporary, Observer, and Reciprocity Divers during NOAA diving operations.

3. POLICY

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 Section 1910.424(c)(2) of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Commercial Diving standards for SCUBA diving states, "A diver shall be line-tended from the surface, or accompanied by another diver in the water in continuous visual contact during the diving operation."
- 3.1.2 Section H.1.b. of OSHA Directive CPL 02-00-143 for 29 CFR 1910, Subpart T, notes: "When two SCUBA divers are in the water, one tending line to the surface is sufficient when the two divers are connected by a "buddy line."
- 3.1.3 NOAA diving operations conducted in low visibility, as defined in Section 7 of this policy, shall comply with the standards outlined in this policy.

3.2 Requirements

- 3.2.1 The following options are for conducting scuba diving operations in low visibility:
- A. Deploy one line-tended diver and have another line-tended diver standing by on the surface, or
 - B. Line-tend one of the divers in a buddy team from the surface and have the other diver connected to the tended diver via a "buddy line" which can be quickly released.
- 3.2.2 The use of line-tending equipment and techniques requires completion of the Procedures for Tending Standby Scuba Divers presentation found in the 'Training and Certification' section of the NOAA Diving Center website followed by "hands-on" practice conducted by the Unit Diving Supervisor, or designee.
- 3.2.3 All members of the dive team, including divers and topside tenders, must complete the prescribed training prior to conducting line-tending operations.

- 3.2.4 Should underwater visibility deteriorate to the point visual contact can no longer be maintained, the divers must terminate the dive, return to the surface, and initiate line-tended operations described above.

3.3 Equipment

- 3.3.1 Equipment used for line-tending diver(s) in zero visibility (as defined above) shall comply with standards described in the Procedures for Tending Standby Scuba Divers presentation.
- 3.3.2 Buddy lines used to maintain tactile contact between two divers shall be limited to a maximum length of six (6) feet and be secured to each diver in a manner that can be quickly released if required.

4. GUIDANCE

Associated procedures will provide guidance.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 NOAA Divemaster

- 5.1.1 Determines when procedures for diving in low visibility must be initiated.
- 5.1.2 Ensures all dive team members have completed line-tending training and that the minimum required equipment to perform low-visibility diving is available.
- 5.1.3 Determines which deployment protocol (section 3.2.1) to use to conduct the low-visibility dives.

5.2 NOAA Unit Diving Supervisor

- 5.2.1 Appoints Divemasters to oversee and direct diving operations.

6. REFERENCES

Code of Federal Regulations, 29 CFR 1910

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title29/29cfr1910_main_02.tpl

- 29 CFR 1910, Subpart T, Section 1910.424(c)(2)
- OSHA Directive CPL 02-00-143 for 29 CFR Part 1910, Subpart T, Section H.1.b.

NOAA Scientific Diving Standards and Safety Manual

http://www.ndc.noaa.gov/pdfs/NOAA_Scientific_Dive_Manual.pdf

NOAA Working Diving Standards and Safety Manual (in press)

7. DEFINITIONS

Low Visibility

When visual contact with the dive buddy can no longer be maintained.

NOAA Divemasters/Lead Diver

Individuals appointed by Unit Diving Supervisors to oversee and conduct diving operations.

NOAA Unit Diving Supervisors

NOAA divers appointed by a NOAA Line/Staff Office Diving Officer to oversee, direct, and approve diving activities conducted within their respective unit and to administer to the needs of assigned divers.

8. AUTHORITY

OMAO Policy 0301, Category 0300 – Diving

9. NOTES

Effect on other documents: None.

Distribution: All NOAA Divers

Document History:

<u>Version</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Brief Description of Changes</u>
1.0	May 4, 2011	Initial Document