	OFFICE OF MARINE AND AVIATION OPERATIONS	POLICY 0313	VERSION 1.0
		EFFECTIVE DATE July 27, 2011	
	AUTHORIZED BY: RADM Jonathan W. Bailey, NOAA Director, Office of Marine and Aviation Operations	REVIEW DATE July 27, 2014	
		RESPONSIBLE POSITION NOAA Diving Program Manager	

NOAA SCIENTIFIC DIVER TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This policy specifies the training requirements for certification as a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Scientific Diver within the NOAA Diving Program (NDP).

2. SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to all eligible candidates for NOAA Scientific Diver Certification.

3. POLICY

3.1 NOAA divers shall be certified to dive by the NDP and be sufficiently trained and experienced to undertake assigned diving tasks safely and effectively.

4. REQUIREMENTS

4.1 General

4.1.1 Divers are assigned throughout the agency to conduct underwater tasks in support of NOAA's scientific mission.

4.2 Training Prerequisites

4.2.1 Divers shall:

A. Possess SCUBA diving certification, above the basic entry level, from a nationally, or internationally recognized diver training agency.

B. Possess Rescue Diver certification, or equivalent as determined by the NOAA Diving Control and Safety Board (NDCSB), from a nationally or internationally recognized diver training agency.

C. Have a minimum of 25 logged dives.

D. Pass a NOAA diving physical examination and drug test.

E. Know how to apply cardio-pulmonary resuscitation procedures, including adult Automated External Defibrillator (AED).

F. Know how to apply First Aid (American Red Cross, American Heart Association or equivalent).

G. Be knowledgeable on oxygen administration (by a NOAA-approved agency).

4.3 **Medical Clearance Requirements**

4.3.1 All NOAA divers must successfully pass a NOAA diving physical examination and drug test prior to beginning the NOAA Scientific Diver certification process.

4.3.2. Specific physical examination requirements are covered in detail in the NOAA Diving Medical Standards and Procedures Manual which can be viewed and downloaded from the NOAA Diving Center (NDC) website at www.ndc.noaa.gov.

4.3.3. Physical exams must be completed by a credentialed provider (i.e., Medical Doctor, Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, Nurse Practitioner, or Physician's Assistant), preferably with hyperbaric training.

4.3.4. All physical exams shall be submitted by the diver candidates directly to the NDC Diving Medical Officer (DMO) for approval.

4.4 **Voluntary Drug Testing Requirements**

4.4.1. The use of illegal drugs can dramatically affect the physical and mental condition of divers; which in turn can affect their abilities to make sound decisions underwater.

4.4.2 As a condition for becoming a NOAA Diver, individuals not already in testing designated positions must:

A. Submit to a voluntary drug test, and

B. Volunteer for unannounced random testing in accordance with the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) Drug Free Workplace Plan and Guide.

4.4.3. A verified positive drug test for any individual for which diving is included in their position description may result in denial of initial employment, or if already employed, termination of employment.

4.4.4. A verified positive drug test for any employees for which diving is not included in their position descriptions will result in denial of initial diving certification, or if already certified to dive, termination of NOAA diving privileges.

4.4.5. Specific information on the drug testing program is outlined in the DOC Drug-Free Workplace Plan and the DOC Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace Testing Guide; both of which can be downloaded at hr.commerce.gov.

4.5 **Swim Test Requirements**

4.5.1 General

A. All NOAA diver candidates must successfully pass the NOAA Swim Test, per standards outlined in NAO 209-123, prior to undergoing initial NOAA Scientific Diver certification.

B. All swim test skills are to be completed in one pool session and without the use of swimming aids (i.e., mask, fins, snorkel, or flotation devices).

C. Completion of swim test shall be documented on the NOAA Scientific Diver Skill Check-off (available for viewing and downloading at www.ndc.noaa.gov), signed and dated by the NOAA Instructor.

4.5.2 Requirements

A. Swim 550 yards (500 meters) on the surface without stopping in under 15 minutes.

B. Swim 25 yards (22 meters) underwater without surfacing.

C. Tread water for 30 minutes without any flotation aids.

4.6 **Training Requirements**

4.6.1. Goals of the NOAA Scientific Diver Training Program

A. Review, refresh, and update prerequisite training that candidates have as divers.

B. Extend depth of knowledge in diving theory and practice.

C. Introduce students to specific equipment, regulations, procedures, skills, and methodologies used by NOAA divers.

D. Confirm student understanding of diving theory and NOAA requirements.

E. Develop and confirm student ability to perform skills and procedures per NOAA requirements.

4.6.2 Documentation

A. Successful completion of the academic and practical portions of the NOAA Scientific Diver Training Program shall be documented on the Student Evaluation Record (available for viewing and downloading at www.ndc.noaa.gov), by the NOAA Instructor and forwarded to the Diving Program Manager (DPM).

B. The DPM shall review the form for compliance with NDP requirements and, if complete and satisfactory, issue a NOAA Scientific Diver Certification.

4.6.3. Academic Instruction

A. Students must complete all material included in the NOAA Scientific Diver Student Study Guide.

B. Students must pass all written examinations with a minimum score of 80 percent.

C. Candidates failing to obtain a passing mark on the exam may take a make-up exam for the topics they failed to pass after appropriate remediation, as determined by the NOAA Instructor.

D. Completion of Academic instruction shall be documented on the NOAA Scientific Diver Training Course Student Evaluation Record, signed and dated by the NOAA Instructor.

4.6.4 Practical Instruction

A. Students must demonstrate successful completion of all skills, per performance criteria specified in the NOAA Scientific Diver Student Study Guide in a pool and open-water environment.

B. In addition to basic scuba skills, students must also demonstrate proficiency in the NOAA Reserve Air Supply System, buddy breathing, and NOAA Standardized Equipment and Configuration.

C. Completion of practical instruction shall be documented on the NOAA Scientific Diver Skill Check-off, signed and dated by the NOAA Instructor.

D. Time allowing, instructors may allow students who fail to complete a skill or exercise to repeat them until they demonstrate adequate performance.

5. GUIDANCE

Associated procedures will provide guidance.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 NOAA Scientific Divers

6.1.1 Adhere to the standards contained within the NOAA Scientific Diving Standards and Safety Manual when conducting scientific dives.

6.1.2 Refuse to dive when in their judgment conditions are unsafe, or if they would be violating the precepts of their training or the requirements in this policy

6.1.3 Maintain good physical condition and a high level of diving proficiency.

6.1.4 Report to the Divemaster or Lead Diver any changes of a physical or psychological nature that may adversely impact their or their buddy's fitness to dive.

6.1.5 Do not begin or continue a dive if problems exist of a physical or psychological nature that can compromise the safety of the diver or dive team.

6.1.6 Ensure diving equipment used is maintained in a safe operating condition.

6.1.7 Are accountable for NOAA-issued equipment.

6.1.8 Adhere to the buddy system, actively monitor buddy status including, but not limited to, cylinder pressure, and intervene to the maximum extent practicable to ensure the safety of the dive team.

6.1.9 Refrain from the use of illegal drugs that could compromise the safety of the diver or dive team.

6.2 **NOAA Scientific Diver Instructors**

6.2.1 Review applications for NOAA Scientific Diver training for compliance with prerequisites.

6.2.2 Administer written examinations, prepare training schedules, and assemble student training material.

6.2.3 Review student answers to questions in NOAA Scientific Diver Student Guide and written examinations.

6.2.4 Evaluate and document student performance per evaluation criteria listed in the NOAA Scientific Diver Instructor Guide.

6.2.5 Ensure all confined and open-water dives are planned and conducted safely per the policy.

6.2.6 Forward Student Evaluation Records to the NOAA Diving Program Manager along with recommendation for certification.

6.3 **NOAA Diving Program Manager**

6.3.1 Review documentation and recommendations from NOAA Scientific Diver Instructors.

6.3.2 Issue NOAA Scientific Diver Certifications and Identification Cards.

7. DEFINITIONS

NOAA Scientific Divers	Individuals certified to dive by the NDP Manager in support of NOAA's scientific, research, and educational activities. A science diver is an observer and data gatherer who uses scientific expertise to study the underwater environment, its organisms and its dynamic processes.
NOAA Scientific Diver Instructors	Individuals certified to conduct NOAA Scientific Diver Training Classes by the NDP Manager.
NOAA Diving Program Manager	Individual responsible for managing the day-to-day affairs of the NDP and serving as the ranking NOAA diving official for matters relating to the interpretation and application of the NOAA Diving regulations, standards, policies, and procedures.
NOAA Diving Medical Officer	Health care provider assigned to the NDP to provide medical care and advice in support of the NDC and NDP.
NOAA Diving Center	Headquarters for the NOAA Diving Program located on the NOAA Western Regional Center, Seattle, WA.
NOAA Diving Program	A formal structured entity within the NOAA which promulgates standards, policies, and regulations covering all aspects of manned operations in hyperbaric environments for official government duties or while using government supplied equipment. The NDP provides equipment, training, and operational and medical advice for diving activities supporting NOAA's scientific mission.

8. REFERENCES

NOAA Administrative Order 209-123

NOAA Diving Medical Standards and Procedures Manual

NOAA Scientific Diver Student Guide

9. AUTHORITY

OMAO Policy 0301 – Category 0300

10. NOTES

Effect on Other Documents: None

Distribution: NOAA Divers

Document History:

Version	Effective Date	Brief Description of Changes
1.0	7/27/11	Initial Document