



Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
PHILIPPINE COMMISSION ON SPORTS SCUBA DIVING



PCCSD MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2021-002

**AMENDED HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS OF
DIVE ESTABLISHMENTS AND LIVEBOARD DIVE BOATS IN THE NEW NORMAL**

WHEREAS, on 09 October 2020, the Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving (PCSSD) issued Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 2020-001 or the *"Health and Safety Guidelines Governing the Operations of Dive Establishments in the New Normal;"*

WHEREAS, upon consultation with stakeholders concerned, there is a need to expand the coverage of the Guidelines to include Liveboard Dive Boats;

WHEREAS, under IATF-EID Resolution No. 101 dated 26 February 2021, testing shall not be mandatory for travelers except if the Local Government Unit (LGU) of destination will require testing prior to travel;

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing, and pursuant to PCSSD Resolution No. 2021-004 adopted on 24 March 2021, these Amended New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Dive Establishments and Liveboard Dive Boats are hereby issued:

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. Short Title. This Circular shall be known as the *"Amended New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Dive Establishments and Liveboard Dive Boats."*

Section 2. Definition of Terms. For purposes of this Circular, the term:

- (a) "Accident Management Plan" refers to a document containing the detailed strategy or procedure to be observed in case of a dive accident, which shall include, but is not limited to, decompression sickness and potential COVID-19 infection of any guest or staff, and the corresponding transporting, reporting, and disinfection protocols.
- (b) "Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT)" refers to a team established under DILG MC No. 2020-023 to help implement local prevention and mitigation, preparedness, and response measures for COVID-19 (DOH MC No. 2020- 0020).
- (c) "Community Quarantine" refers to the restriction of movement within, into, or out of the area of quarantine of individuals, large groups of people, or communities designed to reduce the likelihood of transmission of COVID-19 among persons in and to persons outside the affected area (IATF-EID Omnibus Guidelines).
- (d) "Confirmed COVID-19 case" refers to a person with laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 infection, irrespective of clinical signs and symptoms (DOH DM No. 2020-0439).
- (e) "Contact Tracing" refers to the identification, listing, assessment, and monitoring of persons who may have come into close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case. Contact tracing is an important component in containing outbreaks of infectious diseases (DOH DM No. 2020-0439).
- (f) "Contact Tracing Form" refers to the form a person must fill out to provide contact information through a mobile application such as StaySafe.Ph, substantially following the template in Annex A-2 of the DTI-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04-A.

RECORDS AND COMMUNICATION SECTION

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- (g) “Disinfection” refers to the process of reducing the number of viable microorganisms on a surface to a less harmful level. It involves use of chemicals including but not limited to a bleach solution, and is more effective if done after cleaning (which is the physical removal of contaminants such as dirt, and organic material such as blood and secretions from surfaces, using cleaning agents such as soap and water, among others, as a first step in preparation for disinfection and sterilization) (DOH DM No. 2020-0439).
- (h) “Dive Boat” refers to any motor-run or sail boat used for SCUBA diving purposes duly registered with Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA).
- (i) “Dive Center” refers to any establishment engaged in all of the following activities:
1. Importation and/or wholesale of major diving equipment;
 2. Renting out of scuba diving equipment;
 3. Provision of air-filling service;
 4. Service and repair of scuba diving equipment;
 5. Conduct of scuba diving courses; and
 6. Conduct of dive tours.
- (j) “Dive Doctor” or “Hyperbaric Doctor” refers to a medical doctor who has completed either a subspecialty of hyperbaric and dive medicine or a related continuing medical education course in hyperbaric and dive medicine. A hyperbaric doctor uses hyperbaric oxygen (HBO) therapy to treat diving conditions such as decompression illness and carbon monoxide poisoning. The dive or hyperbaric doctor must be a Level 2D diving physician.
- (k) “Dive Establishments” refer to facilities involved in SCUBA diving, such as, but not limited to, Dive Centers, Dive Shop/Facility, or any business establishment licensed by the Local Government Unit (LGU) engaged in the conduct of sports scuba diving activities in the Philippines, whether or not for a fee.
- (l) “Dive Shop/Facility” refers to any establishment engaged in any or more of the following:
1. Sale or retail of scuba diving equipment and accessories;
 2. Renting out of scuba diving equipment;
 3. Provision of air-filling service;
 4. Service and repair of scuba diving equipment;
 5. Conduct of scuba diving courses; and
 6. Conduct of dive tours.
- (m) “Health Declaration Form” refers to a form that a person must fill-up, using a mobile application or other contactless means, to declare his or her current health condition and travel history for the past fourteen (14) days, substantially following the template in Annex A-1 of the DTI-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04-A.
- (n) “Liveaboard Dive Boat” refers to any motor-run or sail operated boat with live-aboard facilities used for scuba diving purposes, duly registered with Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA).
- (o) “Management” shall refer to the owner, proprietor, manager, supervisor, administrator or other officer with control and supervision of operations of the Dive Establishment or Liveaboard Dive Boat.
- (p) “Minimum Public Health Standards” refer to guidelines set by the Department of Health (DOH) under Administrative Order No. 2020-0015, as well as sector-relevant guidelines issued by national government agencies as authorized by the IATF, to aid all sectors in all settings to implement non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI), which refer to public health

measures that do not involve vaccines, medications, or other pharmaceutical interventions, which individuals and communities can carry out in order to reduce transmission rates, contact rates, and the duration of infectiousness of individuals in the population to mitigate COVID-19 (*IATF-EID Omnibus Guidelines*).

- (q) "New Normal" refers to the emerging behaviors, situations, and minimum public health standards that will be institutionalized in common or routine practices and remain even after the pandemic while the disease is not totally eradicated through means such as widespread immunization. These include actions that will become second nature to the general public as well as policies such as bans on large gatherings that will continue to remain in force (*IATF-EID Omnibus Guidelines*).
- (r) "Operational Capacity" refers to such a number of employees or workers who can be permitted or required to physically report to work on-site in a particular office or establishment (*IATF-EID Omnibus Guidelines*).
- (s) "Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)" refers to protective garments or equipment worn by individuals to increase personal safety from infectious agents (*DOH DM No. 2020-0439*).
- (t) "Physical Distancing" or "Social Distancing" refers to the strict maintenance of a distance of at least one (1) meter radius between persons (*Memorandum from the Executive Secretary dated 13 March 2020*).
- (u) "Pocket Mask" refers to the device used to administer CPR designed to prevent direct mouth contact with the patient's face when providing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.
- (v) "Probable COVID-19 case" refers to an individual who meets the clinical criteria under DOH DM No. 2020-0439 or the Omnibus Interim Guidelines on Prevention, Detection, Isolation, Treatment, and Reintegration Strategies for COVID19.

Section 3. Scope and Application. This Circular shall apply to all Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats in the Philippines in areas where a Community Quarantine is no longer in place.

II. DIVE OPERATIONS IN AREAS UNDER COMMUNITY QUARANTINE

Section 4. Supplementary Application to PCSSD Administrative Order No. 2021-001. For Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats in areas declared to be under a Community Quarantine, PCSSD Administrative Order No. 2021-001 entitled "Amended Guidelines on the Operations of Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats Under a Community Quarantine" and its subsequent amendments shall primarily govern, and these Guidelines shall apply in a supplementary character.

III. DIVE OPERATIONS UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

Section 5. Operational Capacity. In areas where a Community Quarantine is no longer in place, Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats may undertake normal operations and operate at full Operational Capacity, subject to the observance of Minimum Public Health Standards and these Guidelines.

IV. HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

Section 6. Employee Management

- A. All employees of the Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boats are required to fill out a Health Declaration Form (HDF) upon entering the premises. If based on the HDF, the employee meets any of the following conditions, he/she shall be denied entry and shall be directed to consult a doctor or stay at home:
1. Employee is experiencing fever, cough and/or colds, body pains, or sore throat;
 2. Employee had a face-to-face contact with a Probable or Confirmed COVID-19 case within one (1) meter and for more than fifteen (15) minutes for the past fourteen (14) days;
 3. Employee provided direct care for a patient with Probable or Confirmed COVID-19 case without using PPE for the past fourteen (14) days; or
 4. Employee travelled outside the Philippines in the last fourteen (14) days (*DTI-DOLE JMC 20-04-A*).
- B. The Management must ensure the monitoring of body temperature of all employees every time they report for work. Those with body temperature exceeding 37.5 degrees Celsius or those exhibiting flu-like symptoms shall be directed to see a doctor and to stay at home.
- C. The Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat must provide employees with their respective PPEs, to be worn, when necessary while on duty, such as:
1. Facemasks;
 2. Face shield;
 3. Alcohol (70% solution alcohol) / alcohol-based hand sanitizer; and
 4. Such other equipment/apparel that will ensure and promote the safety of the employees.
- D. Employees shall wear their PPE and disinfect their hands before and after touching the gear of each guest or diver.
- E. Employees shall limit their contact with the diver and other guests.
- F. The Management must ensure that all employees undergo annual health check-up.
- G. The Management shall comply with COVID-19 testing protocols for employees, as may be required or recommended under applicable issuances of the DOH, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), or the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Section 7. Reservation and Booking

- A. Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats shall require their guests to reserve or pre-book courses and other diving activities online or through other digital means to avoid mass gathering and to control the number of guests to be accommodated.
- B. Cashless or online modes of payment using payment applications shall be utilized. If online or mobile payment is not possible, Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats shall create a method for a no-contact payment schemes, such as receiving cash on a small tray or leather bill folder to avoid mutual hand contact with clients.

- C. All guests shall fill-out an online Health Declaration Form not more than forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled booking and submit all the necessary documents required by the Dive Establishment and Liveboard Dive Boat.
- D. Unless revised by subsequent IATF-EID rules and regulations, testing shall not be mandatory except if the LGU of destination will require testing prior to travel.
- E. Guests shall be encouraged to secure a travel insurance with medical coverage and dive insurance for coverage of dive-related accidents. It is incumbent upon dive operators to recommend this to divers before engaging in dive activities.

Section 8. Check-In, Reception, and General Guest Handling

- A. Guests not wearing masks and face shields shall not be allowed to enter the Dive Establishment and Liveboard Dive Boat. Face masks and face shields shall be worn properly at all times except when eating and drinking.
- B. All guests must be screened prior to entry to the Dive Establishment and Liveboard Dive Boat through:
 - 1. Body temperature check using a thermal scanner or thermometer gun;
 - 2. Completion of Health Declaration and Contact Tracing Form using a mobile application or other contactless means.

Only guests cleared during screening shall be allowed to enter the perimeter to check-in. Those with fever and flu-like symptoms will not be allowed to enter the establishment and will be referred to the doctor on duty, if any, to the nearest hospital, or to the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) in accordance with the DOH prescribed protocol.

Accomplished Health Declaration and Contact Tracing Forms shall be handled and processed with confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Privacy Act, and shall be disposed of after thirty (30) days from the date of accomplishment.

- C. The practice of the Filipino Brand of Service (FBS) or the “*Mabuhay Gesture*” in greeting and receiving guests, as well as other forms of contactless greeting, is highly encouraged.
- D. Walk-in guests shall only be entertained for inquiries at the reception or receiving area of the Dive Establishment and Liveboard Dive Boat.
- E. Guests shall be required to disinfect their shoes on sanitizing mats provided at the entrances.
- F. Physical Distancing measures, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette shall be observed when handling guests at the check-in counter.
- G. Official up-to-date information shall be available at the reception desk about travel to and from countries and/or other areas, including local destinations that are identified by the DOH as high-risk in spreading the virus or disease.
- H. The Dive Establishment and Liveboard Dive Boat shall make visible and accessible at the front desk the Accident Management Plan and emergency contact numbers for diving networks, public health authorities, nearest hospital or medical center, and the DOH Assistance Center.

- I. The following shall be readily available at the reception counter or desk:
 - 1. Germicidal disinfectant/wipes for surface cleaning;
 - 2. Face mask or face shield;
 - 3. Biohazard disposable waste bag;
 - 4. 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
 - 5. Tissue paper, napkin, or paper towel; and
 - 6. Disposable gloves.
- J. Guests shall be provided with relevant information on the prevailing disease, as well as the policies enforced by the Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat to reduce the risk and spread of the disease.
- K. Guests shall be provided with reminder cards, which may include reminders on:
 - 1. Prohibition on sharing of food or any personal or non-personal belongings;
 - 2. Proper disposal of used PPE;
 - 3. Limitations on mingling with occupants of other rooms ;
 - 4. Practice of proper handwashing etiquette/hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and proper use of face mask; and
 - 5. Strict observance of Physical Distancing.

Section 9. Facility-Related Policies

- A. Foot or sanitizing baths shall be made available at entrances and exits of the Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats.
- B. In areas where guests are expected to queue or gather, floor markers allowing one (1) meter distance between guests shall be in place to ensure Physical Distancing.
- C. Disinfection of the whole operation areas, high-touch surfaces, and diving facilities including gear and equipment shall be conducted frequently.
- D. All common areas such as but not limited to reception areas, dining areas, dive preparation, rinse and/or shower areas, shall have visible signages indicating the venue capacity to effectively implement Physical Distancing. Management shall be responsible for the enforcement of Physical Distancing, and shall schedule activities accordingly (i.e. briefings/dining in shifts or according to schedule if needed).
- E. Used PPE shall be properly disposed of and segregated. Employees and guests shall immediately wash hands after disposing of used face masks.
- F. The Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat shall directly dispose of used tissue, face masks, face shields and PPEs in a separate waste bag appropriately labeled according to its contents.
- G. Employees shall ensure that waste bags are tightly closed or sealed.
- H. The Guidelines on Ventilation for Workplaces and Public Transport to Prevent and Control the Spread of COVID-19 or DOLE Department Order No. 224, Series of 2021, where applicable, shall be complied with.

Section 10. Diver-Specific Policies

- A. If the guest is a recovered COVID-19 individual, the Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat shall advise the guest in advance to secure a medical clearance or certificate from a Dive or Hyperbaric Doctor indicating that he/she is physically fit and cleared to dive.

- B. Guests shall be briefed and reminded of the liberal use of hand disinfectants and hand washing throughout the day, the practice of Physical Distancing, and wearing of protective face masks when not on an actual dive.
- C. As far as practicable, guests shall be required to bring their own set of SCUBA gear, instead of renting the Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat's gear and equipment.
- D. Guests are also encouraged to bring their own gear box with cover which can be used as rinse and storage bins. Otherwise, the Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat must be able to provide covered bins for guests.
- E. The Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat shall provide a rinse tank with disinfectant solution properly marked as to the contents. i.e. "Disinfectant-Clorox/water."
- F. The Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat shall also provide a defog solution consisting of soap or shampoo for guests to use. The use of spit/saliva as defogger is prohibited, especially for rental masks. Divers may supply their own masks instead of using rentals
- G. The Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat shall inform the guests that they are required to bring reusable plastic or water-resistant bags with drawstrings or sealed octopus holders. They shall also inform the guests that all second stages must be covered when not in use. The Dive Establishment or Liveaboard Dive Boat shall provide these items in case guests do not have their own.

Section 11. Boat Diving and/or Liveaboard Dive Boats

- A. The number of participants or members during group dive trips shall be limited, subject to the capacity of the boat used. As far as practicable, group members shall be limited to members of the same household to avoid the possible spread of the virus from people with unknown health condition or medical history.
- B. Dive Boats shall be disinfected prior to embarkation, and immediately after disembarkation. High touch surfaces shall be disinfected as often as possible.
- C. Boat crew and passengers shall observe Physical Distancing on the boat at all times. For this purpose, passengers shall be seated following a distance of one seat apart or at least one (1) meter spacing between each other. Physical contact shall be avoided if not necessary.
- D. Boat crew and the passengers shall wear face masks at all times when not diving.
- E. Boat crew shall maintain a distance of at least one (1) meter from passengers, and avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- F. Bringing of unnecessary materials onboard shall be discouraged.
- G. If the provision of meals is included in the dive package, meals shall be pre-packed in lunch boxes and utensils must be sanitized. Divers shall also be encouraged to bring their own water in reusable bottles. Sharing of food or utensils is not allowed.
- H. 70% solution alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer shall be available on board.

Section 12. Dive Center/Shop Operations

A. Gear Rental

1. Diving Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats shall advise divers to bring their own mouthpiece. In case the diver does not have one, the Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat should have stocks of new mouthpieces for sale. Fitting of rental equipment should be done outside the storage area. The Dive Shop must also have a dedicated set for sizing purposes.
2. All rental equipment shall be sanitized and disinfected with the appropriate disinfectant and completely dried after its return.

B. Rinsing of SCUBA Gear

1. Each rinsing tub shall be thoroughly drained and cleaned at least twice a day.
2. A hanging or drying area shall be provided for each group and disinfected after every use.

C. Compressor for SCUBA/Air Fill

1. The compressor room shall be disinfected every day and must not be in a damp, humid, and/or musty condition.
2. Access to the compressor room shall be limited to employees assigned in filling the tanks.
3. Employees assigned to the compressor room must always practice proper hand washing, respiratory etiquette, and wear face mask at all times.
4. Intake hose must be properly installed as recommended by the manufacturer.
5. The Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat must follow the manufacturer's specification for filter replacement and maintain a filter replacement log.
6. Tanks shall be rinsed with a disinfecting solution after every use.
7. Tanks shall be disinfected before being brought inside the compressor room.
8. In case of a depleted tank, the tank must be disassembled and disinfected thoroughly inside and out. Ensure that the tank valve is also disinfected thoroughly. The Dive Shop/Center and Liveaboard Dive Boat shall remind guests not to deplete the tank and what the monetary cost is to have it pulled out, opened, and disinfected.
9. Tank valves must be covered once these are filled.
10. All tanks including the inside must be visually inspected and disinfected every year. Tanks must also be subjected to hydrostatic tests every five (5) years.

D. Sale and Repair of Equipment

1. Employees shall always wear face masks and wash or sanitize their hands before and after handling equipment.

2. In repairing dive gear and the like, the Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat shall designate a specific area or space for the dive gear of each customer.
3. Customers shall not be allowed to try or fit the gear or accessories without the permission of and assistance from the designated employee.

Section 13. Conduct of Dive Courses and/or Trainings

- A. As far as practicable, instructors shall offer distance learning or e-learning, and utilize current technology and digital platforms to teach the theory part of the course online. They are advised to refer to their certifying agencies for further instruction, available materials, and training techniques.
- B. In case the conduct of physical trainings cannot be dispensed with, classrooms may be set up subject to compliance with Physical Distancing requirements. Smaller classes with a 1:1 or 1:2 ratio are highly encouraged.
- C. Students shall be required to wear face masks, and to wash their hands before and after classes.
- D. Any equipment that is used during class must be disinfected after every use by the student or instructor. Likewise, desks and chairs shall be disinfected each day or in between classes of different students.
- E. For pool sessions, the Dive Establishment must ensure to maintain pool disinfection methods such as filtration and regular testing of pool water to check chlorine and pH levels.
- F. In the event that an instructor or student becomes ill due to a contagious disease during the training, the course shall be deferred to avoid possible exposure.

Section 14. Emergency Response and Medical Clearances

Subject to clearance by or supervision of a Dive Doctor, the following protocol shall be observed in case of emergencies:

- A. The patient shall be brought immediately to a nearby hospital or medical facility, if available or be provided with Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
- B. If Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) needs to be performed immediately, the first-responder shall observe precautionary measures. A Pocket Mask shall be utilized to serve as a barrier.
- C. When the EMS arrives, the first-responder shall immediately disinfect himself/herself thoroughly after performing CPR. The Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat shall also ensure that the area is thoroughly disinfected.

In an emergency situation wherein a Dive Doctor may not be present, the minimum requirement for supervision should be the presence of a medical doctor or a certified paramedic practitioner.

V. OTHER PROVISIONS

Section 15. Reportorial Requirements. Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats shall report to the DOT Regional Office with jurisdiction over their area the following information:

- (a) Number of guests who have developed the symptoms of the illness, if any; and

(b) Number of guests who were transferred to the appropriate health facility, if any.

Section 16. Supplementary Application of DOT Memorandum Circular No. 2020-002-B. The provisions of DOT Memorandum Circular No. 2020-002-B or the *Further Amended New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Accommodation Establishments* shall apply by analogy or in supplementary character, and insofar as they are not inconsistent with any provision herein.

Section 17. Compliance with other relevant issuances. Dive Establishments and Liveaboard Dive Boats shall comply with other relevant IATF-EID, DOT, DOH, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) issuances on health and safety standards, as well as rules and regulations imposed by the LGU having jurisdiction over the Dive Establishment and Liveaboard Dive Boat, which are deemed to apply to these Guidelines suppletorily or by analogy.

Section 18. Penalties. Any violation of these Guidelines shall subject the Management of the Dive Establishment, Liveaboard Dive Boat or the Dive Individual to the appropriate fines and penalties including the revocation of PCSSD accreditation, in accordance with relevant laws, rules and regulations.

Section 19. Separability Clause. If any portion or provision of this Circular is declared void or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected shall continue to be in force and effect.

Section 20. Effectivity. This Circular shall take effect immediately after publication in a newspaper of general circulation or the Official Gazette, with three (3) copies hereof filed with the Office of National Administrative Register (ONAR) of the UP Law Center and shall remain effective until otherwise superseded, amended, or repealed accordingly.

For guidance and strict compliance.

27 May 2021


BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT
Secretary, Department of Tourism
Chairperson, PCSSD

