BELIZE NATIONAL STANDARD

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BELIZE NATIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RECREATIONAL SCUBA DIVING SERVICES

BBS
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BELIZE NATIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RECREATIONAL SCUBA DIVING SERVICES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION ..... Pages

0 FOREWORD 5

1 SCOPE 5

2 NORMATIVE REFERENCES 6

3 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS 6

4 REQUIREMENTS 9

5 REQUIREMENTS FOR OPERATION 15

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS 16

7 MANAGEMENT OF EMERGENCY 18

8 MANAGEMENT OF EQUIPMENT 20

9 MANAGEMENT OF SPECIAL EQUIPMENT 20

Annex A (Informative): Example of a Dive Safety Log 22

Annex B (Informative): Sample of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 23

Annex C (Informative): Template of an EAP 24

Annex D (Informative): Dive Flags Guide 26

Annex E (Normative): Safety Screening Form for the Blue Hole of Belize 27

BELIZE NATIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RECREATIONAL SCUBA DIVING SERVICES

0 FOREWORD

0.1 This standard specifies minimum requirements for the effective and operational safety of the scuba diving experience in Belize. The standard was created in an effort to prevent and minimize accidents when scuba diving and for the prevention of possible environmental impacts of recreational scuba diving operations on fragile marine ecosystems in Belize.

0.2 In preparing this standard, assistance was derived from the following publications:

a) ICRAN-MAR 1; ICRAN Mesoamerican Reef Alliance and Code Taskforce: (2007). *Standard Requirements for Recreational Scuba Diving Services in the Mesoamerican Reef System*, San Francisco, CA 94104: Coral reef Alliance

b) PADI Instructor Manual: (2013). Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688-2125 USA

c) DAN Europe - EAP. (2014). *DAN Europe - EAP*. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.daneurope.org/eap.

1 SCOPE

1.1 This standard specifies the minimum requirements for conducting guided recreational scuba diving operations in ecosystems such as coral reefs, sea grass beds and related coastal environments of Belize, only. The standard applies to the following critical areas:

a) Minimizing impact to the marine environment, particularly coral reefs, sea grass fields and related coastal environments;

b) Establishing minimum requirements for conducting guided and recreational scuba diving;

c) Ensure the safe operation and management of recreational scuba diving tours the activity, safety, health, emergency, equipment and special equipment of guided and recreational scuba diving and competence of staff;

d) Provides guidelines for the rental of scuba diving equipment of scuba diving tour operators selling dive packages;

e) Provides guidelines for the sale of scuba diving packages to the public.

1.2 This standard does not:

a) Specify curricula or practices for initial, nor advanced diver training, the qualifications of instructors, or related subjects;

b) Address standards related to technical diving such as cave diving, mixed gas diving or commercial diving;

c) Address technical specifications needed for technical diving such as cave diving, mixed gas diving or commercial diving;

d) Address standards for snorkelling or free diving.

2 NORMATIVE REFERENCES

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this standard. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

a. Dive Operators Policy, 2001;
b. Belize Tourism Board (Tour Operators) Regulations, Chapter 275;
c. Belize Port Authority Act - Chapter 233; Revised Edition 2003;
d. Belize Fisheries Act - Chapter 210; revised Edition 2003
e. Environmental Protection Act – Chapter 328;

3 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this standard, the following definitions shall apply:

3.1 **Autonomous Diver** means Open Water Diver and above. However, all visiting certified divers to Belize shall be accompanied by a certified dive master that is a licensed Belize tour guide.

3.2 **Coral Reef Conservation** means the act of conserving coral reefs and related near shore ecosystems such as sea grass beds, mangroves and related coastal environments.

3.3 **Coral Reef Ecology** means the study of organisms in coral reefs and related environments, and the physical and biological interactions with their environment.

3.4 **Diver** means the visitor or tourist that is paying or purchasing a dive service from a scuba diving tour operator

3.5 **Dive master** means a qualified, professional scuba diver that licensed by the BTB and is a member in good standing with an international scuba diving training agency who is responsible for the monitoring and safety of other divers under his supervision.

3.6 **Pre-Dive Briefing/Dive Briefing** means a briefing given to the diver (s) prior to a guided scuba diving tour. It shall include, but is not limited to safety and emergency procedures, separation procedures, exit and entry procedures, buddy or group assignments, underwater signs, the identity and role of staff, and a diver's expected conduct.

3.7 **Dive Assistant** means a person who has sufficient knowledge and skill to dive and holds minimum minimum of a dive master in training or equivalent from an accredited recreational scuba diving training agency. Dive assistants shall not increase the dive ratio of 1:8.

3.8 **Dive Flag** means a red flag with a white diagonal running from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner or a blue-and-white swallow-tailed flag is the signal flag for the letter A, pronounced phonetically as "alfa" or "alpha." A dive flag shall indicate the presence of a person(s) engaged in diving in the water or that is in progress in the immediate area. ***(See Annex D)***

3.9 **Dive Leader** means the person who has sufficient knowledge, skill and experience to plan, organize, supervise and lead dives to known sites within the region, possesses personal rescue and rescue management skills and holds minimum of a dive master or equivalent rating certificate from an accredited recreational scuba diving training agency. In order to lead dives in Belize, a dive leader must be a licensed Belize tour guide.

3.10 **Dive Shop** means a building or any other facility where recreational scuba diving services are offered by a scuba diving tour operator.

3.11 **Dive Site** means the area where a scuba diving tour operator conducts recreational scuba diving.

3.12 **Environmental Briefing** means oral or visual information sharing by dive leaders that instruct and guide divers on ways and reasons to minimize impact on coral reefs, sea grass beds and related coastal environments while scuba diving.

3.13 **Guided Scuba Diving Tour** means scuba diving where clients are accompanied and supervised by a dive leader or dive master appointed by the scuba diving tour operator.

3.14 **Marine Protected Area (MPA)** means an area of the marine environment that has been reserved by local laws or regulations to provide protection and conservation to part or all of the marine, terrestrial and cultural resources within its boundaries.

3.15 **Recreational Scuba Diving** means an underwater recreational activity which utilizes a self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (scuba). Recreational scuba diving is limited to diving no deeper than 130 feet or 40 meters within the no stop limits of recognized dive tables or dive computers.

3.16 **Recreational Scuba Diving Ratio**: For this standard, it means 1:8; i.e, 1 guide per every eight (8) certified divers.

NOTE 1: This ratio is a maximum ratio based on scuba diving with ideal conditions; however, ratios may be adjusted to one (1) dive master with less divers, but shall not be adjusted higher than 1 diver master to 8 divers, at the discretion of the scuba diving tour operator and/or dive leader considering environmental factors such as, but not limited to, strong currents, low visibility, dive depth, and diver certification level and experience.

NOTE 2: None-certified divers shall be guided as per ratios established by the scuba diving training agency which the scuba diving tour operator is a member of.

3.17 **Risk Assessment** means a precautionary examination of possible causes of harm in the workplace in order to determine measures to prevent said harms.

3.18 **Scuba Diving Tour Guide** certified and renewed dive master, instructor or equivalent grade with a current BTB tour guide license.

3.19 **Scuba Diving Tour Operator** means an entity (business, individual or organization), including any individual acting on behalf of such entity, which organizes and guides scuba diving tours and excursions for certified divers, is licensed under the BTB and is a certified member of a scuba diving training agency.

3.20 **Scuba Instructor** means anyone who holds a valid BTB tour guide license, a valid and renewed instructor certification from a scuba diving training agency such as, but not limited to: Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), Scuba Schools International (SSI), or Technical Divers International (TDI).

3.21 **Scuba** means a self-contained underwater breathing apparatus.

3.22 **Staff** means individuals fully employed or working under contract hired by a scuba diving tour operator and includes but not limited to a dive leader, dive assistant, boat captain, deck assistant and office personnel.

3.23 **Supervised Diver** means a Discover Scuba Diving participant, Scuba Diver Certified, and student diver.

3.24 **Waiting Area** means an area where people sit or stand until the event they are waiting for occurs.

3.25 **Snuba Diving** means underwater swimming with the use of air tanks that remain on the surface of the water.

3.26 **Hookah Diving** means shallow diving in limited depths and areas with the use of a personal surface-supplied compressed air apparatus.

3.27 **Sea Trek** means underwater diving with the use of a helmet diving system.

4 REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Policy requirement

The following requirements for a scuba diving tour operator and staff are compulsory and are subsequent requirements to the dive operator's policy of 2001 in order to ensure the utmost safety for divers in Belize. Its violations can be reported to local authorities, including co-managers of marine protected areas, natural monument and national park rangers or manager, the Fisheries Department, the Belize Port Authority (BPA) or the Belize Tourism Board (BTB). The Quality Assurance Department of the Belize Tourism Board reserves the right to conduct audits and inspections to ensure the below are adhered to. Failure to comply with these mandatory standards may result in legal or disciplinary action.

4.2 General requirements

4.2.1 Scuba diving tour operator shall:

a) Have a valid Belizean Tour Operator license;

b) be a member and ensure the staff conducting scuba diving tours with supervised divers is also a member of a scuba diving training agency; namely, but not limited to, Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), Scuba Schools International (SSI), or Technical Divers International (TDI) and have in possession a valid certificate of said membership and have documentation of professional liability insurance;

c) shall verify that all divers are certified and have the necessary credentials or experience for the recreational scuba diving tour.

NOTE 1: Whereas divers present a diving certification card or temporary card without a photograph, the diver shall show proof by means of a photo ID.

d) have a written established Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that shall address decompression and injury emergency response procedures and tropical storm/hurricane evacuation plan ***(See Annex B for sample of an SOP);***

e) Maintain a file for each permanent staff member that will include a copy of the following documents:

i. Social Security card;
ii. current professional dive credentials where applicable;
iii. current address;
iv. valid Belize tour guide license where applicable;
v. Boat Captain's license where applicable;
vi. job description;
vii. copy of insurance for staff, where applicable;
viii. current oxygen administration and first aid provider (or instructor) credentials.

f) abide with the following requirements of operation to ensure quality of the dive site and tour:

i. ensure equipment (snorkel, mask, BCD, regulators, compressed gas tanks, emergency oxygen units, engines and vessel) are in good working condition to provide for the safety and health of divers;

ii. provide clean and comfortable waiting areas and restrooms for divers;

NOTE 1: Restrooms shall be done using appropriate systems in place as per local regulations.

iii. provide, if requested by divers, proof of staff's qualification;

iv. provide oral dive instructions and information in English, Belize's official language unless another language is requested by the diver;

v. not conduct recreational scuba diving tours at dive sites that may be deemed unreasonably safe for the level of certification of the diver;

NOTE 1: Recreational scuba diving tours to the "Blue Hole" require special skill sets because of its unique environment; therefore, divers are required to be screened as per Annex E by the scuba diving tour operator for eligibility to perform the dive.

vi. ensure proper mooring of dive vessel so as not to damage the coral reef at the dive site.

g) ensure the below are fulfilled prior to provision of scuba diving tour:

i. Liability waivers: shall be provided by the scuba diving operator and signed by the diver (s). It shall outline risks associated with scuba diving activities, but not limited to:

a) Possibility of decompression sickness: if flying on an airplane, jet or helicopter or any travelling at altitude is done within 18 hours after scuba diving;

b) Person (s) that is pregnant or trying to get pregnant: It is not advisable to dive. There is not sufficient evidence to indicate the effects of Scuba Diving on a fetus.

ii. Scuba diving tour operators may allow a person to complete a dive only if that person:

a) Provides a current and valid medical declaration of fitness to dive; or has read and signed a fit to dive declaration; and

b) Has not declared any conditions that may be contraindications of diving, e.g. a cold, flu, hay fever, ear infections, heart conditions or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

NOTE 1: If a diver declares that they have a medical condition, they should receive a medical clearance to dive prior to being permitted to dive. The use of medical statement form and medical clearance forms shall be kept confidential.

iii. Ensure that diver(s) are certified, and have the necessary credentials or experience for special types of dives. Additionally, determine whether the diver (s) should do a refresher course and the extent of any refresher course considering the time since last dive, level of certification and experience.

iv. Insurance requirements in accordance with national regulations;

v. If the service provided involves training; it shall be done using the standards of the scuba diving training agency with which the scuba diving tour operator is accredited with;

vi. Information concerning the service which shall not be limited to: cost of tour, departure time, depth and/or time of dive and return time shall be provided to the diver (s).

h) Cooperate with other stakeholders, marine protected areas' managers and other authority agencies to establish limits and use of dive sites and to install and maintain permanent mooring buoys;

i) When scuba diving from shore, entry and exit routes shall be used that avoid walking on corals or sea grass beds.

j) Ask for proof of diver's certification prior to agreeing to the rental of scuba diving equipment and/or gear.

4.2.2 Dive Staff

a) All staff required to go in the water shall be at least a dive master or dive instructor; dive masters in training shall also be allowed to go into the water; however they shall not lead dives;
b) All staff on the dive boat and in the dive shop shall be trained in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to address emergency events, such as decompression and injury emergency response procedures and tropical storm/hurricane evacuation plan, diving accident, etc. and shall be knowledgeable of their actions and responsibilities in the event of an emergency as specified in the respective Emergency Action Plan (EAP);
c) All staff shall be required to dress professionally at all times while conducting a recreational scuba diving tour;
d) All staff that conducts dives shall adhere to environmental and conservation regulations as per the Environmental Protection Act; Chapter 328 and the Belize Fisheries Act, Chapter 210.

4.2.2.1 **Dive leader shall:**

a) demonstrate leadership and role modeling both above and underwater by practicing good environmental behavior;

b) conduct an oral briefing prior to the scuba diving tour to review these preferred practices and alert divers to the impact of poor diving practices on coral reefs, sea grass

beds, related coastal ecosystems and wildlife, including national laws related to removal and/or damage of coral and wildlife within the marine environment.

c) identify the environmental impact caused by client's inappropriate diving behavior and use practical tools and methods for taking corrective action such as:

   i. First time offender shall be given a verbal communication in a private place and in a positive and reassuring manner mentioning that failure to comply will result in banning from activities;
   ii. Second time offender shall be given a written notice/warning to desist from contravention;
   iii. Third time offenders shall be banned from diving activities.

d) A dive leader shall oversee all guided scuba diving activities. The dive leader shall utilize an additional dive assistant with large groups. A dive leader and dive assistant shall serve as role models, share information and provide leadership to clients;

e) A dive leader shall have the minimum of a Belize Tour Guide License and a diver master certification card from a scuba diving training agency;

f) A dive leader shall conduct a dive interview with diver(s) to ascertain competence to conduct the Recreational Scuba Diving Tour. This shall include at least level of certification, number of dives, date of last dive and level of comfort with the recreational scuba diving tour.

4.2.2.2 **Dive assistant shall:**

a) Be at least dive master in training or equivalent from an accredited agency.
b) Abide and be knowledgeable of the requirements set for the dive leader;

4.2.2.3 **Boat captain and deck assistant shall:**

a) Be trained in Oxygen First Aid delivery; scuba diving tour operators' procedures for diving, and safety practices including diver rescue procedures, boat handling and navigation, communications, and first aid; cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); and shall have completed an emergency

oxygen for scuba diving injuries course as they will be the person(s) to receive an injured diver in the case of an accident;

b) Be knowledgeable of the boat operations requirements and regulations stated in the Belize Port Authority Act - Chapter 233, revised edition 2000, the Fisheries Act Chapter – 210, revised edition 2003, and the requirements for marine protection in the Environmental Protection Act - Chapter 328.

c) Ensure that any marine incident is immediately reported to the National Maritime Communications Centre (NMCC) VHF Channel 16 or 232-9440.

4.2.3 Dive Planning and Organization

a) When conducting a guided scuba diving tour, a person onshore, employed by the scuba diving tour operator, shall have written details of the planned and alternate dive sites and dive routes. They shall also have a manifest of the passengers, crew and their expected return time;
b) All dives shall be planned in accordance with specifications required by the scuba diving training agency with which the tour operator is a member of;
c) Before commencement of diving, a suitable method of diver recall must be agreed upon between the diver(s) and the scuba diving tour operator;
d) Scuba diving tour operators shall assess all divers are competent for the dives that they plan to undertake;
e) Scuba diving tour operators shall give divers a briefing that shall include, but is not limited to: dive safety, dive equipment and function, underwater signals and site orientation;
f) Scuba diving tour operators shall retain written, accurate record of each dive conducted for a period of one year. The record shall include the dive plan, the name of the dive guide(s), name of the diver (s), the location, depth, time in, time out, and any incidents occurred ***(See Annex A).***

4.2.4 Boats and vessels

a) All vessels used for diving shall comply with all Belize Port Authority regulations stated in the Belize Port Authority Act, Chap 233;

All vessels/boats used for Scuba Diving in a reserve shall comply with existing policies, guidelines and managements plans of the dive site in accordance with established regulations;

b) All vessels used for scuba diving shall carry an Oxygen system capable of delivering oxygen to any diver (s) involved in a decompression accident during their transportation to suitable evacuation site or medical facility;

c) All Dive vessels shall comply with regulation "Diver's down flag" stated in Fisheries Act.

5 REQUIREMENTS FOR OPERATION

5.1 A guided scuba diving group shall be conducted at a recreational Scuba diving ratio of one (1) guide to every (8) certified divers. Non-certified divers shall be guided as per ratios established by the scuba diving training agency with whom the scuba diving tour operator is accredited with;

5.2 Water entry points from boats shall lie over water with sufficient depth allowing divers to become acclimated with no impact on corals or sea grass beds;

5.3 When diving from shore, a diver buoy shall be placed and entry and exit routes shall be used to avoid walking on corals or sea grass beds;

5.4 Scuba diving equipment:

a) Diving equipment may consist, but is not limited to the below items:
   i. wet or dry suit when and if appropriate
   ii. mask
   iii. snorkel
   iv. fins
   v. regulator
   vi. cylinder and cylinder-support system
   vii. buoyancy control device (BCD)/buoyancy compensator
   viii. weights
   ix. means to measure time and depth limit exposure to inert gas
   x. submersible pressure gauge
   xi. delayed surface marker buoy (DSMB)/surface marker buoy (SMB)
   xii. underwater compass

NOTE 1: Specific environments may require additional equipment (e.g. an underwater navigational aid, knife/cutting device).

b) A record of all rental equipment, inclusive of scuba cylinders, shall be maintained at the scuba diving tour operator's tour establishment at all times. The record shall include the following information on each piece of equipment:

i. Manufacturer
ii. Model
iii. Serial number
iv. Servicing due and completed dates
v. Name, signature and certification # of the technician

c) All equipment used for diving shall be serviced and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations;

d) Compressors shall be operated and maintained in accordance with manufacturers recommendations;

e) A running log of a compressor's use shall be maintained. The log shall include the following information:
i. Start/Stop time
ii. Filter part numbers
iii. Filter life
iv. Service due
v. Operator name and signature

f) An air analysis certificate in accordance with whichever scuba diving training agency the operator is accredited with, shall be posted or available;

g) A record of all tanks shall be maintained. This should include the following information:
i. Manufacturers name;
ii. Date into service;
iii. Visual Inspection Procedure (VIP) due date;
iv. Hydrostatic test due and completed date;
v. Servicing done on the tank or valve;
vi. Name and certification number of the person doing the work;
vii. Tanks which are de-commissioned and taken out of rental fleet.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

6.1 Liability forms shall be available for a diver to review and sign. The scuba diving tour operator shall keep a file for storage of such forms;

6.2 All staff shall be trained in all aspects of emergency management procedures as outlined in the emergency action plan and the scuba diving tour operator shall review the procedures with staff annually;

6.2.1 A simulation shall be conducted at least every two (2) years to evaluate effectiveness of EAP. This shall be done by an emergency response evaluator identified by the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) and/or National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO);

6.3 In the event of any accident resulting in the death of a diver, a scuba

diving tour operator shall make available the equipment and gear used by the diver at the time of the accident to the legally responsible authority;

6.3.1. The tour operator shall not alter, repair or in any way tamper with any such equipment prior to the completion of any investigation into the matter;

6.4 A dive leader and/or dive assistant shall have a list of all divers or dive students for roll call on and off the boat;

6.5 A safety briefing shall be done prior to leaving the dock and shall review safety and emergency procedures, separation procedures, exit and entry procedures, buddy or group assignments, the identity and role of staff, and a diver's expected conduct;

6.6 Prior to conducting a scuba diving tour, a scuba diving tour operator shall consider the following critical factors for diving:

a) weather;
b) local restrictions;
c) underwater visibility;
d) divers' fitness;
e) current;
f) surface visibility;
g) planned activities;
h) water current;
i) entry and exit;
j) water depth;
k) boat traffic; and
l) emergency plan

6.7 Dive leaders have the responsibility of preventing any diver from participating in the dive if, following a risk assessment, this is determined to be in the best interest of the diver, other divers, or both. A risk assessment can indicate the need to reduce the planned number of divers in each group due to sea conditions or other factors.

6.8 Scuba diving tour operators shall ensure that, in addition to meeting all specified requirements outlined in the Belize Port Authority Act and the Fisheries Act, that dive boats are equipped with the following:

a) Communications equipment, including contact numbers for medical transportation services (i.e. ambulance), emergency medical services (diving medical physician) and a hyperbaric chamber that can provide appropriate care and treatment;

b) navigation equipment appropriate for the locality; and

c) an oxygen first aid unit including sufficient medical-grade oxygen to

deliver a minimum amount to last for the duration of the journey to shore or other medical emergency services, as per 4.2.4 (c) above;

d) A fire extinguisher;

6.9 The dive leader and boat captain shall account for each diver on the vessel, as per 6.4. above, prior to leaving the dive site. This shall be accomplished by making use of the following count systems:

a) An active count system requires the persons being counted to actively participate in the counting process. Roll calls, tagging or signing systems are examples of such systems.

b) A passive counting system in which the boat captain and the dive leader both have to do individual counts and both counts need to match;

6.10 A dive safety log shall be filled in by the dive leader or dive assistant for the diver upon dive completion. It shall contain the following information ***(See Annex A):***

a) date of dive;
b) diver's name;
c) dive buddy's name;
d) dive leader's and boat captain's name;
e) dive site's name and location of the dive;
f) time in and time out;
g) maximum depth of the dive;
h) any incident, problem, discomfort or injury experienced or suffered during the dive;
i) amount of air at entry and exit.

6.11 The boat captain or deck assistant shall remain in the vessel to lookout for any possible potential hazards or dive incidents that may occur in water;

6.12 All scuba diving equipment shall be washed and rinsed as per manufacturer's recommendations after each and every use;

6.13 Alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs:

The consumption of alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs prior to or during a guided scuba diving tour shall not be allowed.

7 MANAGEMENT OF EMERGENCY

7.1 A scuba diving tour operator shall have a written Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for each type of service offered. The procedures shall take into account any unique local hazards, the capabilities of local emergency services and training required by the provider's staff. It shall also identify and define actions to mitigate existing and potential hazards and risks to clients and staff, and how to respond to emergencies including at least the following:

a) Identification of a core emergency response team (ex: care team)

c) rescue procedures for underwater, in-water, and surface emergencies;

d) diver recall procedure (s);

e) evacuation routes;

f) list of emergency procedures to follow and medical services' numbers, head office contact, hospital/clinic contact, DAN hotline number, recompression chamber contact number etc. ***(See Annex C for EAP template)***

7.2 The scuba diving tour operator shall ensure that all staff is fully familiarized with the EAP and signs a document indicating such;

7.3 Dive staff shall be in possession of current oxygen administration and first aid provider (or instructor) credentials;

7.4 Injury and lost diver prevention plan: An injury and lost prevention plan shall be kept by the tour operator. This is general information that includes:

a) Emergency First Aid Procedures; and

b) Injury Information Form: A scuba diving tour operator shall ensure that an Injury Information Form is filled out in the case of an emergency for every diver injured. The form shall include: the diver's name, address, a description of the injury, significant medical history and dive profiles.

7.5 In the event of an accident and/or incident happening on a Scuba diving tour, a tour operator shall ensure that a copy of the accident and/or incident report is submitted to the legally responsible authority in a timely manner;

7.7 **Emergency Equipment:** A scuba diving tour operator shall ensure that emergency equipment is readily available at all times. Emergency equipment shall include, but is not limited to, an oxygen kit and first aid kit that are in good working conditions and with all needed emergency materials available, and shall ensure that everyone on board the vessel knows where to find them;

7.8 **Oxygen Equipment Maintenance:** The inspection, servicing and repair of oxygen equipment is the responsibility of the scuba diving tour operator. The scuba diving tour operator shall ensure that the above is carried out by a certified technician and conducted per the manufacturer's recommended schedule;

7.9 **Dive operations**: A scuba diving tour operator and staff shall make sure divers know what to expect and what to do in certain situations. This includes the use of entry/exit procedures, safety stop procedures and lost diver procedures.

8 MANAGEMENT OF EQUIPMENT

8.1 The management of recreational scuba diving equipment is the responsibility of the scuba diving tour operator. The management shall include the inspection, repair and maintenance of of all equipment used in the diving activity ensuring that:

a) scuba diving equipment shall be inspected as per manufacturer's recommendations by a certified technician;

b) worn or torn scuba diving equipment shall be repaired or replaced immediately and based upon condition and recommendation of the certified technician mentioned above;

c) basic on-site scuba diving equipment maintenance may be conducted by the dive leader or divemaster;

8.2 Certifications of equipment inspection and repair shall be kept in a file and shall be made available to Belize Tourism Board's Quality Assurance Department if requested;

8.3 The servicing, maintenance and storage of other scuba diving equipment (masks, fins, snorkel and wet suits) shall be conducted based upon the discretion of the scuba diving tour operator. It shall be performed in the best interest to present a safe, healthy and clean dive shop.

9 MANAGEMENT OF SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

9.1 Cylinders shall be stored in the following way:

a) Cylinders shall be stored in a cool and dry place;

b) Partially empty air cylinders shall be stored as above and kept to at least 200 pounds per square inch (psi) to prevent any moisture from entering the cylinder;

c) Compressed and uncompressed air cylinders shall be maintained in an upright position.

9.2 Cylinders shall be used as per the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations;

9.3 Air compressor system (where applicable):

a) An Operations Manual for the compressor shall be kept on file;

b) The scuba diving tour operator has the responsibility for the safe operation of the air compressor and shall ensure that the individual operating the

system has basic mechanical and safety training in the operation of the compressor;

c) All staff shall be familiar with emergency shutdown procedures of the compressor;

d) The operation and maintenance of the air compressors shall be in accordance to the manufacturer's recommendations, and the following components of the compressor should be addressed:

   i. Pressure relief devices: A scuba cylinder shall be fitted with relief valves of sufficient capacity to prevent the rated pressure of the scuba cylinder from being exceeded. In addition, compressors may be fitted with 'offloading' mechanisms.

   ii. Filtration, drying and odor absorption: materials used for filtering, drying or odor absorption shall not introduce contaminants into the air supply. Drain cocks shall be provided to draw off any water and oil that may accumulate in filters. The drain cocks shall be arranged so that they can be operated while the filter is in use.

   iii. Supply lines: The supply line between the compressor and the receivers shall be either permanent pipe or high quality air grade hose with external grade protection suitable for the delivery of breathing gas and shall be free of contaminants. All supply lines shall be located or guarded so that they are protected against mechanical damage, fatigue and vibration.

   iv. The exhaust pipes of gasoline or diesel-powered air compressors shall not be a health hazard. The fumes shall be vented away from breathing by staff, divers, and other surrounding people and from compressor air intake ports.

e) If a tour operator has an air compressor system, the scuba diving tour operator shall keep in a file the test certificate from a certified technician and shall be made available to the Belize Tourism Board's Quality Assurance Department.

Annex A (Informative):
Example of a Dive Safety Log that exemplifies the type of information to be collected in a Dive safety Log Book.

Dive 1 Location: Glover's Reef, Southwest Caye						Date: 11/01/2006	
Diver's name	Buddy	Time in	Time out	Max. depth	Bottom time /	Repetitive dive	Signature
1. R. Wilson	R. Toth	09:00	09:23	18	23	M	*R. Wilson*
2 R. Toth	R. Wilson	09:04	09:27	18	23	M	*R. Toth*
3.							
4.							
5.							
	Log entry completed and signed						
	Dive leader *M. Castillo*				Boat Captain *V. Palacio*		
Incidents etc	Dive 1: Incidents – None Injury – None None Others – None				Problems – None Discomfort –		
Environmental conditions	Surface conditions – Calm Visibility – 10 ft Other – None				Currents – 0 Maximum depth – 20m		

Dive 2 Location: Glover's Reef, Usher's Caye							Date: 11/01/2006	
Diver's name	Surface	Repetitive	Buddy	Time in	Time	Max. depth	Bottom time/	Repetitive dive	Signature
1. R. Wilson	2:37	B	R. Toth	12:00	12:20	23	20	R. Wilson	*R.*
2. R. Toth	2:35	B	R. Wilson	12:02	12:22	23	20	R. Toth	*R. Toth*
3.									
4.									
5.									
	Log entry completed and signed								
	Dive leader *M. Castillo*				Boat Captain *V. Palacio*				
Incidents etc	Dive 2: Incidents – None Injury – None None Others – None				Problems – None Discomfort –				
Environmental conditions	Surface conditions – Calm Visibility – 10 ft 25m Other – None				Currents – 0.5 knot Maximum depth –				

Annex B (Informative): Sample of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Name of Facility: _____

S.O.P authorized by: _____ Effective as of: (specify date)__

Introduction:

It describes the need for procedures and a general overview of the SOP. Things to be considered in this section include who will be using the SOP and the reason for the SOP.

Purpose:

This section briefly describes the SOP's purpose. It describes the reason why the SOP is required. (e.g compliance with Scuba Diving Standards). It also describes tasks and procedures being covered in the SOP.

Scope:

This section states the sections and areas that the SOP covers. If certain areas are not covered in the SOP, then it should be mentioned in this section as well. This section also states the importance of the procedure.

Responsibilities and Procedures:

This section describes detailed information like people required for details responsibilities for each, the supplies, tools and equipment required and the result of task performed. These include Pre-dive procedures, procedures when Scuba Diving is in progress, Post-Diving Procedures, and Record-keeping.

Ensure that all staff is familiarized with SOP for the effective implementation of such.

Any forms or templates to be used for SOP should be attached here

Date of SOP Effectiveness: _____

BELIZE TOURISM BOARD

Annex C (Informative): Template of an EAP

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (EMERGENCY PLAN) TEMPLATE/SAMPLE
for the purpose of Scuba Diving Tours in Belize

Facility's Name:_____ Facility Owner's/Manager's Name:_____

Facility's Address: _____
_____
_____

Facility's Contact Information:

Tel: _____ E-Mail Address: _____ Website: _____

Date Emergency Plan prepared: _____

(BRIEF DESCRIPTION/SUMMARY of the Emergency Action Plan)

_____
_____
_____
_____

List of Emergency phone numbers (it is not limited to the below):

Emergency/Police	911
Ambulance:	90
Bert (local ambulance direct line)	223-3292/0078\
Belize Port Authority	VHF Channel 16 or 232-9440
Belize Coast Guard	Channel 16 (Marine Radio)/222-5260
Recompression Chamber (Ambergris Caye)	226-2851
Fire Department	(# local fire station)
Police	911
Crime Stoppers	0-800-922-8477

Tour Operator Head Office	
Local hospital or clinic phone numbers	(# local hospital/clinic)
Astrum Helicopters	225-5100
DAN Hotline number	1-919-684-9111

(Brief Description of procedures to follow In case of Medical or Injury Emergency & name of person in charge to ensure this protocol is carried out e.g. boat captain or Dive leader)

_____

_____

_____

(Brief description of procedures to follow in case of boat-related emergency& name of person in charge to ensure this protocol is carried out e.g. boat captain or Dive leader)

_____

_____

_____

(Brief description of procedures for evacuation in case of Tropical storm/Hurricane & name of person in charge to ensure this protocol is carried out e.g. Tour operator Manager)

_____

_____

_____

TRAINING

The following personnel have been trained to ensure a safe and orderly emergency evacuation of other employees:

Facility: _____

Name	Title	Responsibility	Date

Emergency Action Plan Signed:

_____

Owner/Manager of Facility (Name in print and signature)

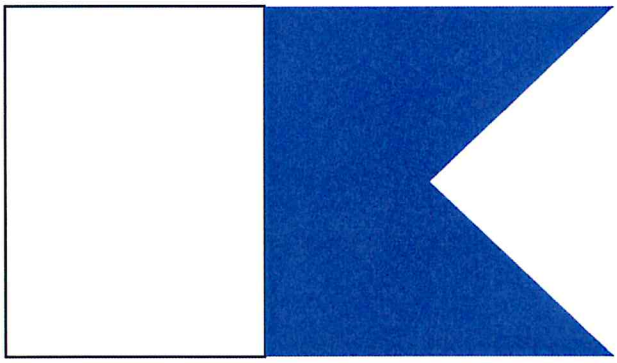
BELIZE TOURISM BOARD

Annex D (Informative): Dive Flags Guide

Dive Flag means a red flag with a white diagonal running from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner or a blue-and-white swallow-tailed flag is the signal flag for the letter A, pronounced phonetically as "alfa" or "alpha." A dive flag shall indicate the presence of a person(s) engaged in diving in the water or that is in progress in the immediate area.

a) Diver's down flag: A red flag with a white diagonal running from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner. Please see illustration below:

b) The Alpha or Alfa Flag: A blue-and-white swallow-tailed flag is the signal flag for the letter A, pronounced phonetically as "alfa" or "alpha." Please see illustration below:



BELIZE TOURISM BOARD

Annex E (Normative):
Safety Screening Form for Recreational Scuba Diving Tours to the Blue Hole of Belize

The Blue Hole is a large submarine sinkhole that is 412 feet deep and 1,000 feet wide. It is located forty-three (43) miles from the mainland. The crystal-clear water allows you to see stalactites, stalagmites and sharks among other aquatic life.
Recreational Scuba Diving tours to the "Blue Hole" require special skill sets because of its unique environment; therefore, divers are required to be screened for eligibility to perform the recreational scuba diving tour. Based on the information provided, it is left to the discretion of the Scuba Diving Tour Operator to proceed with the Recreational Scuba Diving Tour or additional training prior to the same.

Diver's Name: _____
Address: _____
_____

Type of Scuba Diver certification (Please check one):

☐ Open Water Diver ☐ Advanced Open Water Diver ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

Number (#) of logged dives: _____
Date of last dive: (dd/mm/yy): _____
The deepest depth I have dove to is: _____ feet OR _____meters

☐ I hereby certify that the above information provided is true and accurate

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

***The below is to be filled out by the Recreational Scuba Diving Tour Operator:**

Based on the information provided by the diver above, the below action is to be taken (Please check one):

☐ Proceed with the recreational scuba diving tour to the Blue Hole
☐ Refresher Course needed
☐ Additional training needed (Please specify): _____

Name of Dive Leader for the tour: _____
Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

In accordance with Regulation 4(6) of the Standards (Preparation and Declaration) Regulations, Cap.295, the Standards Advisory Council has agreed that the **Belize Standard Code of Practice for Recreational Scuba Diving Services** be declared a Belize Standard.

Chairman

Standards Advisory Council

20/1/2016

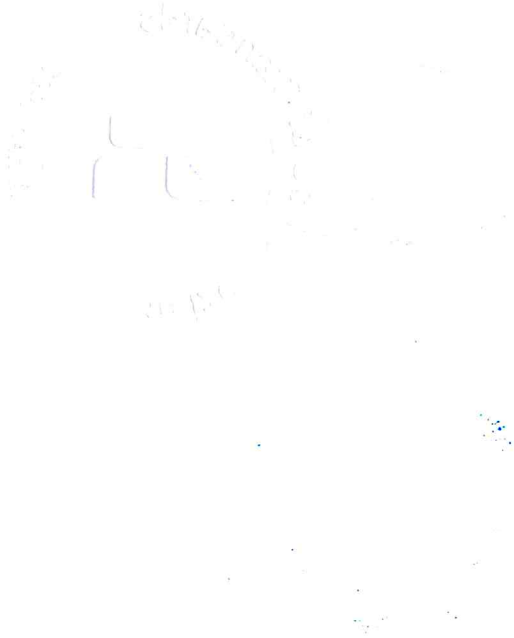
(DD/MM/YR)

Director

Belize Bureau of Standards

18/01/16

(DD/MM/YR)



Statement of Public Notification

1. In accordance with Regulation 5 of the STANDARDS (PREPARATION AND DECLARATION) REGULATIONS, 1997, the Standards Advisory Council is recommending that the **Belize Standard Code of Practice for Recreational Scuba Diving Services** be declared compulsory. This standards is intended primarily:

   (a) to protect the consumer or user against danger to health or safety;
   (b) to require adequate information to be given to the consumer; and
   (c) to ensure quality in any case where there is restriction in choice of source of supply.

2. The standard referred to in paragraph 1 was notified for public comments in accordance with Section 4(1) of the Standards (Preparation and Declaration) Regulations 1997, in the gazette, newspaper and social media.

3. The Standards Advisory Council recommends the effective date as a compulsory standard as of 1st April, 2016.

Chairman

Standards Advisory Council

Director BBS

Belize Bureau of Standards