



FINDINGS OF CONCERN

Marine Safety Unit Port Arthur

June 30, 2020
Port Arthur, TX

Findings of Concern 006-20

HEED CRITICAL SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR DIVING

Purpose. The U.S. Coast Guard issues findings of concern to disseminate information related to unsafe conditions that were identified as causal factors in a casualty and could contribute to future incidents. Findings of concern are intended to educate the public, state, or local agencies about the conditions discovered so they may address the findings with an appropriate voluntary action or highlight existing applicable company policies or state/local regulations.

The Incident. A loss of life occurred when a group of experienced divers conducting underwater spear fishing around an offshore oil platform. During the dive one of their Dive Masters (DM) went missing. He was lost and later presumed deceased.

Contributing Factors and Analysis. Although the exact cause of this loss of life remains unknown, the facts revealed the following existing unsafe conditions:

1. The lost DM had uncontrolled and deteriorating preexisting medical condition;
2. The DM demonstrated the signs and symptoms of decompression sickness;
3. The group failed to have a safety plan in place prior to diving;
4. Worsening weather conditions and reduced underwater visibility.

The deceased had several medical conditions that were not under control at the time of the dive. He had conducted two dives on the two previous days, and was showing multiple symptoms of decompression sickness, including severe joint pains and headache. These symptoms were not managed in accordance with the industry standard, which then increased his risk of a negative outcome. The group had no safety plan in place to address worsening weather conditions or an emergency situation.

Findings of Concern. Coast Guard investigators have identified the following measures to mitigate the risks associated with the above identified contributing factors:

- Know the risks associated with diving, especially when those risks are increased due to past or current medical history, and consider self-terminating the day's planned events when the risks are high;
- Follow industry standards for entering/exiting the water and reducing nitrogen build up;
- Actively monitor the sea state and weather conditions, both prior to getting underway and throughout the voyage, until the vessel safely returns to the dock.

Closing. These findings of concern are provided for informational purpose only and do not relieve any domestic or international safety, operational, or material requirements. For any questions or comments please contact MSU Port Arthur by phone at (409) 723-6500 or by email at PortArthurIO@uscg.mil.