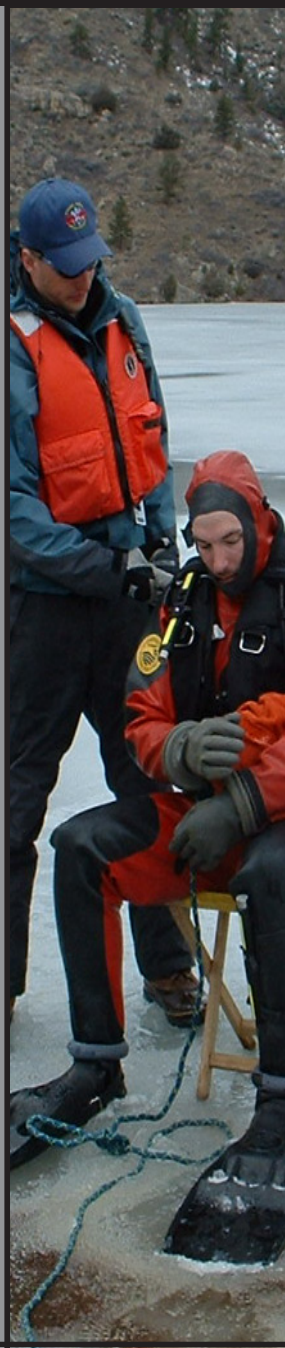
# How to Start a Dive Team

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# Introduction

For every dive team in operation today, there have been ten attempts at forming a team. Hundreds of departments and individuals have started the process of organizing a dive unit only to fail at some point along the way.

This guide is designed to give a broad range of organizations and people the tools necessary to begin the process of starting a dive team with the ultimate goal of being successful. It is essentially an outline for developing a complete proposal to form a dive team.

The steps outlined in this guide may appear rather black and white in nature. This is because many times the people ultimately making the decisions will view it in just that way. As concerned, dedicated people we sometimes fail to understand the views of less impassioned and inspired individuals who hold reign over our projects. It is hoped however, that the information presented here, combined with sufficient desire on your part will lead to a successful conclusion of your project.

# Determining the Need for a Dive team

*"Why should we spend all this money for something we don't need?"*
*"Wouldn't we be better off putting this money someplace where it will do more good?"*

These are the first things you are likely to hear when you take your idea outside your own group and unless you have some facts to back up your position, it is also likely to be the end of your project. With the proper groundwork, these questions, when they arise, will only cause momentary delays.

The process of determining the need for a dive team is fairly simple, yet it will provide a base to build upon. The first step is to conduct a use survey of your expected area of operation. The survey should include the following information:

1. Number of Drownings
2. Number of Near Drownings
3. Number of Water Accidents
4. Ice Rescues
5. Vehicles in Water
6. Crime Evidence in Water
7. Swiftwater Rescues

Although it may be impossible to gather information on all seven areas, the more data you can gather the more solid your position will be.

### *Survey*

To conduct the survey will require reviewing public records and published reports from various agencies. For example the State Department of Health may have compiled data on drownings for your county or city. The local Coroner or Medical Examiner's office should have records on drownings. The national code for drowning used by reporting agencies is E-910. Asking for all the statistics on E-910 should get you what you need.

The local Emergency Medical Provider may have statistics on near drownings and ice rescues. Coast Guard and or State Water Patrol will have information on water accidents in your area. The fire department may be a good source of information on incidents. Local, State and County Police can probably provide information on stolen merchandise and evidence suspected of being thrown in water.

One item to ask for is the "rate" of drowning for your area. This figure represents the number of drownings which occurred per hundred thousand population. Currently, the national average is 2.61/100,000. If your area is significantly higher, make note of it.

Try to compile the information for a period between five to ten years. This data will be more significant than a single year and will provide a truer picture of your situation.

Once you have collected your data, you will need to put it into some organized form. Such as the example below:

**Table 1**

| Year | Drowning | Near Drowning | Ice Rescue | Evidence Recovery |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2001** | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| **2002** | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| **2003** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| **2004** | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| **2005** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **2006** | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| **2007** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **2008** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **2009** | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| **2010** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **Totals** | *15* | *3* | *3* | *22* |

**Note List of source agencies is in appendixes.**

This table illustrates a problem which can occur if your survey period is too short. No ice rescues occurred after 2004 and a smaller survey would have failed to reveal those incidents. At the same time, the table shows a significant use or need for a unit capable of rescue/recovery and evidence recovery.

### *Review of Responses*

This leads into an important question. How were these incidents handled and where would your team fit into the picture? To do this you will need to review these incidents in greater detail.

For drownings, the important question is response time. How long did it take the team that made the recovery (if any) to arrive on scene? How many of the fifteen drowning victims were recovered or rescued? How quickly were they recovered?

If you see response times that take more than twenty minutes, then that would be a strong argument for the formation of a local dive rescue team. Also if the team that has been called fails to find a significant number of the victims, then the quality of that team also comes into play.

With evidence recovery, the fact that another agency had to be called might very well be justification for your department to form a unit which specializes in that function. Also determine if the evidence was handled properly or did the lack of trained divers prevent any attempt at recovery?

### *Review of Resources*

By now you should have a fairly complete picture of what problems occur in your area, who is presently doing the work, where they are and what their response times look like. You should also have a pretty good idea of the effectiveness of area teams and what their strengths and weaknesses are.

Now is a good time to look at all the information you have compiled and ask yourself these questions:

- Would forming a dive team provide a measurable level of service to the community?
- What are the measurable services the team would provide and of what value are they?

You should write down specific answers to these questions. For example, if you could recover evidence but the state police are already doing it, what value would your team have? If your team would not be capable of rescue type operations or you have very few or no history of drownings, what would your value be?

Some people may tell you that a recovery dive unit is of little value to a community. That simply isn't so. Tell a widow with several children who could not claim insurance because there is no body, that a recovery unit isn't valuable. Ask a prosecutor who couldn't make a murder case because there wasn't a weapon, that a recovery unit wouldn't be valuable. These are measurable services. If you would be able to perform them, say so.

These are tough questions which need to be answered honestly and early on. If you have difficulty in putting down the benefits your team would have for the community, then how will you be able to convince others?

## Preparing Written Justification for a Dive

Once you have listed what your value would be, you need to get it written down. Specifically you need to outline the following items:

1. What the problem is (drownings, water accidents etc.)
2. Your proposal to solve the problem, which is forming a dive team
3. The benefits to the community of forming a dive team

When you have this neatly typed out, save it because that's the first part of a total proposal.

### *Under Whose Authority*

For many organizations, the question of whose authority they will operate under is a moot point. For teams not associated with police, fire, or EMS however, the question is a very important one.

### *Why You Need Official Authority*

By law, police, fire, and EMS have specific responsibilities and authority. A dive team operating without official sanctions might at the very least find themselves at cross purposes with the agency having the authority or inadvertently find themselves breaking a law.

Depending on the area, water rescue might be under the authority of the fire department. In many areas, drownings are considered unwitnessed deaths and are the responsibility of the police. In several communities, EMS handles drownings.

In most cases fire, police nor EMS will have any difficulty in justifying their authority to operate a dive team; fire departments under their historical role as rescue agencies and police under their authority to investigate all accidents. In several areas, EMS uses their authority over injured accident victims as justification.

For independent agencies or civilian dive units, it is imperative that at least one group in the area grants you some form of official recognition. Without this recognition, you will remain outside the system and will therefore never be utilized.

There are two possible approaches to this problem. One is to become an auxiliary to the host organization and the second is to work out an agreement where the host will call you when a water accident occurs. Both methods have their good and bad points.

### *Independent*

If you decide to take the course as an independent organization, then you have the advantage of being your own master and the increased control over your organization that represents. On the negative side however you must consider how you will handle liability insurance, dispatching, incorporation, and all the other details which as an auxiliary unit would be handled, in part or full, for you.

## Insurance

Insurance will most likely be your biggest hurdle. There are several areas that the insurance industry reports as problems when it comes to issuing insurance to independent dive teams. Gail Hodgen, Senior Marketing Manager with Volunteers Firemen's Insurance Services, Inc. stated that the nature of some independent dive teams is preventing their coverage. Specifically, the fact that the divers, rather than the teams, owned the equipment being used and that rescue diving was secondary to sport diving for

the divers. In addition she cited a lack of specialized training and not being incorporated as major problems.
Ms. Hodgen suggested that any independent team wanting to be covered take the following steps:

1. Incorporate
2. Provide a mission statement for the team
3. Show specialized and recognized training in dive rescue techniques
4. Provide Standard Operating Guidelines
5. Have the team own the equipment they want insured

Taking these steps will not guarantee that you will get coverage, but it is definitely a step in the right direction.

The difficulty in obtaining coverage may well lead you to consider operating without insurance, an approach that unfortunately many teams take. One accident, one mistake, could easily cost you everything you own, or ever hope to own. The prospect of watching your home and belongings being auctioned off to settle a court judgment should be more than enough to dissuade you from taking that course of action.

## Incorporation: Liability and Taxes

Many people are under the assumption that corporate status limits liability of the people who own and operate a corporation. In part this is true. Financial liability is limited in the situation of a corporation that is unable to pay its bill. The bill holder, in this situation is severely restricted on who they can go after to collect the money owed. This is why most banks will require a personal guarantee on any loan made to a small new corporation. However, in cases where legal action has been brought against the corporation for damage or injury (Tort case), the board of directors, and other officers may be held liable for the damage personally.

There is, in general, only one type of corporation of interest to public safety groups, which is the Non Profit Corporation.

Non Profit Corporations make up the bulk of organizations which are doing public interest work. A Non Profit Corporation is not allowed to make money for profit, and in return, pays reduced, or no income taxes. This is not to say that a nonprofit corporation cannot solicit or generate money, through a fund drive, for example. But what is done with that money is limited in a nonprofit organization. You may pay reasonable salaries, accrue money and interest on that money but you cannot pay dividends. You will also be expected to spend the money you collect on projects which you outline during incorporation.

A Non Profit Corporation may apply for charitable status with the IRS. As a charitable nonprofit corporation, people who make a donation to your organization may deduct the donation from their taxes. This is an important factor in fund raising. In addition nonprofit charitable corporations get a better rate with the postal service.

To achieve a charitable status with the Internal Revenue Service will require filing several forms which outline the purpose of your organization, how you intend to earn money and who the officers of the corporation are. Once the IRS reviews this information, they will either grant or deny you charitable status. In addition, you will probably need to file similar papers to receive charitable status for the state you are in.

No matter which avenue you decide to take you would be well advised to contract the services of an attorney and CPA. An attorney should be able to advise you on the ins and outs of incorporation and handle the filing with the State Attorney General and IRS. A CPA will be able to advise you on how to maximize your moneys as well as how to steer clear of IRS auditors.

As an alternative to paying for these services, you can approach attorneys and CPA's to serve on your board of directors. Many times professional people are more than willing to help out in this fashion.

It should be apparent by now that organizing a totally stand alone dive team is a major undertaking with several difficult problems to overcome. For this reason most teams are associated in some fashion with a host organization. The host organization provides authorization and insurance and the dive team provides divers.

Fire Departments, Police and Sheriff’s Departments, EMS and Civil Defense are the typical organizations that dive teams align with. Each has strengths and weaknesses as well as an organizational philosophy which you should consider before approaching them for support.

In very broad terms fire departments are more rescue oriented than police departments. EMS is patient oriented and generally not very interested in recovery operations. The scope of Civil Defense varies so widely from area to area that it is difficult to characterize them. Depending on the goal of your team, rescue vs. recovery or both, you should investigate the organizations in your area and then pick your best candidates.

Almost all agencies will require you to take additional training of some sort if you are to work with them. For example, EMS might require your people to take EMT training. Other agencies might require your divers to attend their meetings or participate in functions other than diving. Whatever they require, you must consider this the cost of admission.

## Approaching an Agency for Official Sanction

Before approaching an agency for support, you should consider what you have to offer that would motivate the people in charge to accept your proposal. Is all the work and effort that your proposal is going create have a real world benefit down the road for them?

For the agency's people, there are some serious questions to be considered and answered before anything happens. You need to anticipate these questions before you go in and have workable solutions for as many of them as possible. Also, how you present your ideas is just as important as what you present!

Starting with your initial contact over the phone, through the end of your association with these people, you will be projecting an image which will shape their opinions of you. Although image may not be high on your list, it needs to be.

As an extreme example, if you were to walk into the meeting with your old pair of blue jeans and a novelty tee shirt on, the public official who holds the key to your future is probably going to impression you (as is) on the evening news representing his agency. If he or she is an elected official, they'll be counting the lost votes before you sit down!

The need to project a professional image cannot be overemphasized. You need these people to look at you as a person who takes a professional approach, gets the job done and can be counted on. A good first image will go a long way in reassuring everyone that you are worth listening to. Once an agency decides that you are worth giving serious consideration, they are going to ask the same questions that you have probably already considered, namely:

1. Is there a need?
2. How much is it going to cost?
3. Who's going to pay for it?
4. Can they (you) do the job?
5. What are the liabilities?
6. How will it work?
7. What's in it for us?

In addition to these questions, there are many others which could also arise depending on the particular situation. Administrative concerns such as worker's compensation, union contracts, overtime, etc.

You should be prepared to answer these questions as best you can as they arise. Each question should be considered an objection, rather than a query. If you fail to answer the question, the objection will remain as a roadblock to implementing your plan. This is not to suggest however that every answer you propose will be accepted, but it will act as a basis for negotiation to a mutually satisfactory solution.

In most cases, problems (i.e. questions), will arise and both groups will work them out. This process of problem solving may take hours or weeks, so don't be surprised if you do not have a firm *go ahead* after the first meeting. You must however get a commitment to continue working on the proposal before you leave. If you walk out of that first meeting with no more than a promise that they will get back to you, in reality you were just told to forget it!

## What to Do When the Answer Is NO!

The absolute first step is to find out why. You will quickly discover that there are no's and then there are NO'S! Keep the dialog going, perhaps there is a misconception, or a question wasn't satisfactorily answered. You might discover that the person in charge hates special rescue units, dislikes the person sitting next to you, or was just served divorce papers. In either event, it is now up to you to find out what causes are behind the decision and to make attempts at reopening the discussion.

# Organizational Planning

Organizational Planning includes a number of seemingly diverse elements. These elements are:

- Mission Statement
- Table of Organization
- Budget
- Table of Implementation
- Standard Operating Guidelines

Don't let the terminology scare you. A mission statement is just a written "Here's what we are going to do". A Table of Organization lists what positions you have, officers, etc. and what they do. A budget outlines how much you estimate the team with cost to equip and run. The Table of Implementation sets up a time schedule for getting things done and SOG's outline how you will operate.

Viewed together these elements present a clear written description of your team. It describes who you are, what you do, how you do it, when you will be able to do it and how much it costs. Anyone wanting answers to these questions will look to these documents. You will also notice that these documents will answer five of the seven questions in the previous chapter.

Organizational planning also forces us to sit down and put some order to our thoughts and plans. This has the benefit of getting everyone on the same track. In essence you will be setting a goal and laying out a map of how everyone can get there. Plus, when completed, these documents with the survey and an introduction will be the written proposal for your dive team.

## *Mission Statement*

A mission statement is a clear and concise statement of what you are going to do. It should spell out all major functions of your team as well as any specific limitations you care to impose.

For example, your team intends to function in a rescue and recovery capacity in your district and outside your district as resources allow. There is already a police unit so you will not be doing evidence work. Your team is not trained or equipped to handle ice diving or contaminated water incidents. You would, in addition, like to do public education on water safety through talks and demonstrations.

Before you begin writing, there are two things to consider. A mission statement is not written in stone. As your abilities, funding and manpower change so may your mission statement. There is also a very good reason for updating mission statements.

Generally, a mission statement is considered a public document. It states what the public at large can expect from you. For that reason you should be in a position to deliver what you say you can. Several agencies have gotten into legal problems by overstating what they were capable of and what they were going to do in mission statements.

A mission statement, despite the above, is not a contract. You should keep it simple and in clear English so that anyone reading it will understand what you will do. With this in mind, let's write a mission statement for our hypothetical dive team.

> *The mission of the Our Town Dive Rescue Team is to provide divers and trained personnel at the scene of drowning incidents for the purpose of victim rescue/ recovery. In addition, the Our Town Dive Rescue Team will provide divers for victim recovery and operations outside our district as resources allow. In order to further public welfare, Our Town Dive Rescue Team will, when invited, provide informational seminars on water safety issues. Our Town Dive Rescue Team cannot respond to under-ice incidents, contaminated water, or evidence recovery situations.*

You will notice that this mission statement says you will respond to a drowning but it doesn't guarantee that you will recover a victim or how much time you will spend on a scene. The term, "as resources allow" gives you the flexibility to leave a scene if you need to. It also clearly states what you will not do.

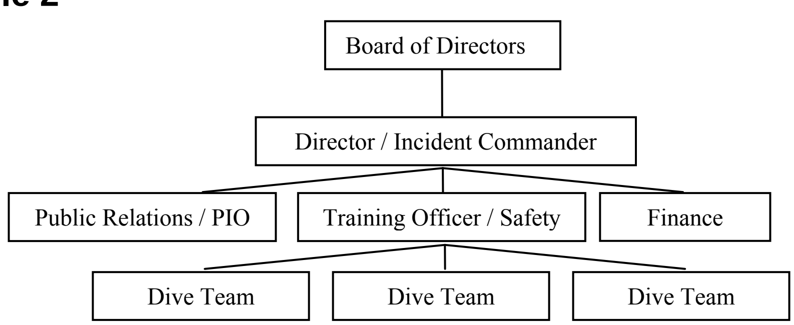
Another approach to mission statements is to simply list what you are going to do in a 1, 2, 3 manner. This method has the advantage of being easily changed and usually presents a very clear statement of intent.

## *Table of Organization*

A Table of Organization (T.O.) is a listing of personnel and offices within your team. A T.O. can be graphic, such as a chart, or descriptive in the form of paragraphs or both. A good T.O. will allow the reader to see what positions there are in the organization, what the functions of those positions are and also show the chain of command. For that reason most T.O's are a combination of charts and descriptive paragraphs.

A sample Table of Organization for a small dive team is shown in *Table 2.* In this organization, the Board of Directors is the top authority as demonstrated by its position at the top of the chart. The Dive Team Director reports to the Board of Directors. The secretary and treasurer report to both the Director and Board.

**Table 2**



The Public Relations Officer, the Training Officer, and the individual team leaders all report directly to the Director. In turn, each of the people on the same level are expected to interact directly as indicated by the horizontal lines.

The Team Leaders and Training Officer both have authority over the Divers. What that authority is would be spelled out in the job descriptions for those positions.

You could very easily insert your own titles into this chart such as substituting Chief for Board of Directors, Captain for Director and so on. Also, the relative authority of positions can be changed by raising or lowering them on the organizational chart.

Writing job descriptions will require time to think things through. A good job description will tell anyone who reads it what that person does, who they report to, who they supervise, what their responsibilities are and any specific limitations on their authority.

A sample job description for the Team Director might look like this:

> ***Our Town Dive Rescue Unit***
>
> ***Dive Team Director***
>
> *The Dive Team Director will have administrative and operational control over the dive team on a daily basis. The Director shall present projects involving long-term commitments to the Board of Directors for approval. The Director shall prepare for the Board of Directors a yearly written budget for the dive team. The Director, in conjunction with the Treasurer will disburse funds for team operation within guidelines set by the Board of Directors.*

In this job description the Director is the person in charge of day to day operation of the team. The position is similar to that of a corporate president or division manager. He or she is expected to prepare a written budget each year and present it to the board of directors for approval. The Director in conjunction with the Treasurer can write checks up to limits set by the board.

## *Administrative vs. Operational Control*

A question which arises in many established organizations which are beginning a dive team is who will be in charge at the dive scene. The divers are rightly concerned about having a non-diving person in charge of the operation. At the same time, administration is afraid of losing control of the situation and ending up with a loose cannon.

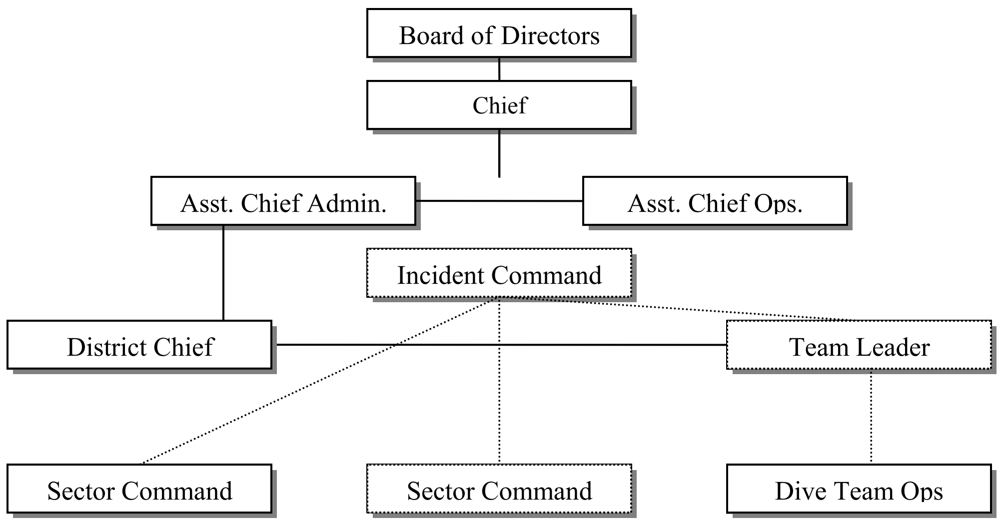
One method which has worked for several successful teams is a two tiered command system. For all purposes, other than at the scene of an emergency, normal administrative channels are followed. However, once the team is called into action a separate “command authority" structure goes into effect.

Most progressive departments, fire, police and EMS are enacting what is called the Incident Command System. Under the ICS, an Incident Commander is in charge and has authority over all action taken at the scene. The Incident Commander, or IC, has people under them which control individual or collective tasks. For example, at a fire an IC may have a person in charge of lighting, another in charge of people on the roof or in the building, crowd control, etc. These people are designated sectors such as roof sector, lighting sector and so on. ICS is an integral part of NIMS, and education in this system is often required for government funding.

Using the IC system, in conjunction with a dive operation, the diving sector remains under direct control of the dive team leader or diving sector command. The Incident Commander maintains overall control of the scene but not direct supervision over the diving operation. The IC for example, may suspend a dive operation, but cannot initiate a dive or order divers into the water.

This method has satisfied many problems which have come up due to conflicts in commands and makes for a smooth operation with few or no problems at the scene (See Table 3).

**Table 3**




Operational Line of Command
Administrative Line of Command

## *Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG's)*

SOG's serve several functions within an organization. First, they place in writing those procedures which are to be followed in any given situation. Secondly, they serve as a standard of performance for your divers, and lastly as a teaching tool and reference for your team members. Writing down procedures also ensures that any changes in those procedures will be made in an organized and thoughtful manner.

SOG's can be as complex and detailed or as simple as you care to make them. An SOG can be no more than a checklist or it can easily become a multi-volume document with hundreds to thousands of pages. Depending on your organizations view about SOG's, either could easily be true. In either event, there are several factors to consider before you develop SOG's:

1. You must have an idea of what procedures should be followed before you develop an SOG. Therefore, your operational SOG's will reflect your training and should be written after training is complete.
2. SOG's better serve those functions in which standardization is desirable or those tasks which can be easily overlooked.
3. Do not try to anticipate every situation which may arise in an SOG. This will result in an unwieldy document which no one will understand or care to read.

4. There should be a logical flow to the SOG. Try to keep similar items together in the SOG. Operational matters should be covered together and administrative matter; kept in their own section.

Let's look at two examples of an SOG, one covering service to equipment and the other call out procedures.

## Service & Maintenance

Date: July 5, 2006

Scope: Our Town Dive Team SCUBA Equipment

### Daily Maintenance:

Each day the duty divers will examine all team equipment to ensure proper function. All items on the dive equipment check list will be performed and signed off by the person doing the check.

### Monthly Maintenance:

On the first day of each month all items on the monthly equipment check list will be performed. The check list will be signed off by the senior diver present at the check.

In this SOG, the maintenance schedule is spelled out. If this had been an actual SOG, the annual schedule would have been included as well. Another item appropriate in this section may have been the updating of the checklists referred to and who was responsible for that action.

In the SOG on the following page, the procedure for calling out the team is shown. Although rather straight forward, it may involve another agency, which should be made aware of the procedures.

Once you start the process of writing SOG's, there are several pitfalls to watch for. The first of which is an unorganized SOG. First, develop an outline of sections. Sections can be such areas as Administration. Administration in turn can include sub sections such as job descriptions, budget, chain of command and the like. Administration can be followed by Operations and then Maintenance. Once the outline has been made, it becomes a matter of filling in the spaces.

**Diver Call Out**

**Date: July 5, 2009**

Scope: Our Town Dive Team

***Requesting Agencies:***

Any official government body may request the dive team to respond. Request for services outside the state must be cleared through a chief level officer and dive unit director. Request for services by nongovernment agencies or private individuals will follow the same requirements as out of state requests.

***Dispatch:***
During emergencies the dive team will be dispatched through normal County Central Dispatch channels.

During non-emergencies a call for divers through dispatch channels shall be made. A follow-up call to divers ' residences should be made also.

Working with sections and subsections also avoids the problem with page numbering. If each subsection is kept on its own set of pages, when the SOG is changed, you merely replace those pages and the document as a whole remains unchanged.

Another pitfall is a failure to review. The SOG outline should be reviewed, before going further, by as many people as possible. Once the SOG is developed, it should be reviewed, before implementing, by *everyone* for additional comments.

At the time of implementation of the SOG, it is vital that everyone is required to read it and document the fact that they have done so. The best plan in the world is only as good as the people who know about it.

After the SOG is implemented, it should be reviewed on a regular basis. It is not uncommon to find that a SOG will say one thing, but everyone does it a different way. This being the case, you either train everyone to the SOG standard or simply change the SOG to reflect the way things are being done.

## Why Bother With An SOG?

There are three basic reasons why you need SOG's. First, look at the SOG **as** a pre-game plan, because from an operational standpoint that's all it is. It allows the team leaders to develop plans of action, based on certain situations, and think them through before they happen for real.

An SOG, if done correctly, will take some of the burden off the team leader and increase safety during a call. For example, your SOG may specify that two divers are required on all dive calls. The SOG may specify that this rule is sacrosanct and not to be violated under any circumstances. In this case, the SOG would give the team leader an easy decision when faced with this situation. Without the SOG, the team leader may cave in under pressure to do something not safe.

SOG's may also specify that, under certain circumstances, specific things should be done. For example, if the call is a car in the water, a wrecker should be dispatched to the scene. This is one less thing for the IC or team leader to remember on their own.

Secondly, from an administrative point of view, SOG's help ensure that things get done the way they should. SOG's are an excellent way to make sure that equipment is checked regularly.

Thirdly, SOG's will serve as a guideline of performance and a learning tool. This is not to say that anyone who violates the SOG's during an operation should be hoisted from the nearest tree, but at a minimum anyone who deviates wildly from the norm should at least have a reason for doing SO.

You have undoubtedly noted that the term Standard Operating Procedure has been avoided. There are two reasons for this. First, it has been reported, that the terminology SOP has been used in a few court cases to show that an agency was derelict in its duties when a SOP wasn't followed. The SOP'S were presented as the way things had to be done, rather than the way they should be done. Secondly, the word Guideline actually does a better job of describing the intent of the document. It should, from an operational standpoint, be a guide, not a rule book.

## Budget

Money is the **#1** reason given by dive teams to explain their lack of success! At the same time, if you look at monetarily successful dive teams, you will find that their success is more often attributable to excellent planning and hard work than any mysterious secrets or luck. Many will tell you that financial planning and budgeting for steady growth was the key.

A budget is the monetary framework for the dive team, just as SOG's serve as an operational framework. The budget allows people to plan their expenditures and allocate money ahead of time. Good budgeting, along with insightful planning will go a long way toward ensuring a successful, long lasting dive team.

The budget process for most governmental agencies will generally follow a procedure similar to this. As department head you will prepare a budget for the dive team. Your budget will be incorporated into the agency's budget by the Chief and or Board of Directors. The agency then submits the budget to the local political authority which incorporates it into their overall budget. This budget is sent to a State Board of Review which has final approval on the budget.

During this process, budgets get cut by each succeeding level; your budget by the Chief, the Chief's budget by the political body, and their budget by the State Board. A successful department head is one who can keep his or her budget intact through the most number of layers.

An independent team has none of these concerns. However, the preparation and more importantly, the thought that goes into developing a budget will benefit independent and governmental dive units equally.

## Developing a Budget

When developing a budget for a new dive unit, the key is to properly balance expected income with a prioritized list of expenditures. This, along with thinking well into the future, is the only secret.

It is a common failing among many administrators to not look toward the future. Where you are today is not as important as where you plan to be this time next year. When budgeting for growth, the future may well be five years down the road. It is this looking down the road which is of particular importance to new dive teams.

## Budget Considerations

The Our Town Fire Department. serves a case study area of 35 square miles with a population of 25,000. A recent, highly publicized drowning has resulted in $5,000 being donated to the department as seed money to start a dive rescue unit. As a department officer, you are chosen to develop the dive team. You are told that the City Council has agreed to match the donation which makes $10,000 immediately available. However, the Chief tells you that he wants a 5 year plan for the dive team with a projected budget before any money is spent.

Your initial survey reveals that 18 drownings have occurred over the previous ten years. Most drownings occurred in lakes, but 3 occurred in a nearby river which required a boat to reach. In addition, you find that thee fatalities have resulted from people falling through ice. The police chief mentions that there have been 22 incidents of evidence suspected of being in the water.

Due to shift schedules, you will require that eight divers be trained to assure coverage and decide that no more than five will be available at any given time. Based on this, you decide to purchase 5 sets of gear.

You speak to the team leader of an established unit and based in part on his recommendations you estimate that it will cost $4000 to equip each diver. You post a note on the board asking for volunteers for the dive unit, 10 people sign up. Staying with the plan to train eight divers, you estimate that it will cost $400.00 per diver for the open water or Public Safety Diver certification, plus $375.00 each for Dive Rescue I certification for a total of $6200 for training.

After speaking to IADRS you estimate that team-based equipment will cost an additional $2,500 to get the team going, with additional expenditures of $10,000 for a Zodiac with motor and approximately $4,000.00 for lift bags and communication equipment.

The budget then, based on the information you have so far, looks something like this:

**Table 4**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Basic Scuba Equipment | 4,000 x 5 | $20,000 |
| Basic Training | 400 x 8 | $3,200 |
| Rescue Training | 375 x 8 | $3,000 |
| Basic Team Equipment | | $2,500 |
| Boat w/Motor | | $10,000 |
| Communication and Salvage Equipment | | $4,000 |
| Total | | $42,700 |
| **First Year income** | | ***$10,000*** |
| **Difference** | | **[-$32,700]** |

As you can see, this leaves you with a deficit of $32,700.00 which amounts to an additional $6540.00 per year over a five year period and $8175.00 over a four year period.

This base yearly budget to reach your goal in five years will need to have items such as maintenance, repair, replacement costs, inflation, and a buffer added to it. The buffer is merely extra money added to the budget for unexpected expenditures.

## *Prioritizing Purchases*

Before you can lay out a budget or a five year plan, you need to decide what items you need and in what order. Looking at our sample, you will first want to train all or some of the divers before you purchase full equipment. The reason for this is that after training, the divers will have an idea of what is really needed as opposed to frivolous accessories. This problem can be eliminated if you have someone who is demonstrably knowledgeable in the area. That is, a person who is running a successful team or involved in training rescue teams who can direct you in the right direction.

Secondly, you will need to purchase some equipment. The budget allocates $6200.00 for training which leaves you $3800.00 out of the $10,000.00. From that you will probably need to purchase basic snorkeling gear for the classes at approximately $250/diver or $2000.00,. As each diver will need their own for training, leaving you $1800.00!

If you take this approach then you will have eight fully trained divers and little equipment to speak of. This may be appropriate in the case of training the divers at the end of the fiscal year and purchasing equipment in the following years. Another approach is to train fewer divers and purchase equipment for them, say, three each year. Your choice will depend entirely on your own situation and short as well as long term goals.

Once your team is equipped and has trained personnel to become operational, you need to consider which expenditures need to be made to first maintain what you already have, secondly to increase the safety of operations, and thirdly to increase team capabilities in that order.

## *Types of Budgets*

### Line item.

Most agencies today use one of two methods for budgeting. Line Item Budgets or Program Budgets. A line item budget details expenditures in specific categories and accounts. Table 5 shows an abbreviated line item budget. Each line is preceded by an account number and each category is subtotaled. In this example all 1-accounts are employee expense related. All 2-accounts are operating supplies such as fuel and office supplies. The 3-accounts are utilities, service contracts etc. and the 4-accounts are capital expenditure accounts.

### Table 5 Line Item Budget

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1-111 | Salaries | $159,000 |
| 1-211 | Benefits | $87,500 |
| 1-311 | Personal Services | $5,000 |
| | **Total** | $251,000 |
| | | |
| 2-111 | Office Supplies/Forms | $1,500 |
| 2-211 | Fuel | $2,500 |
| 2-214 | Tools & Equipment | $1,000 |
| | **Total** | $5,000 |
| | | |
| 3-111 | Contract Services | $3,000 |
| 3-213 | Utilities | $8,000 |
| 3-411 | Insurance | $12,000 |
| 3-911 | Training | $6,000 |
| 3-913 | Award s | $800 |
| 3-914 | Subscriptions | $250 |
| | **Total** | $30,000 |
| | | |
| 4-411 | Machinery Equipment | $5,000 |
| | **Total** | $5,000 |

The benefit of a line item budget is the detail available. This detail allows for close examination by the people responsible for approving the budget and in certain cases it is easier to prepare after it's been done the first time. There are however several potential problems in using a line item budget. First is the initial time and effort to properly set it up. Secondly, in many jurisdictions, transferring allocated money from one account to another is very time consuming or not allowed. For this reason, many jurisdictions use an accounting system called Program Budgets for extensive or new programs.

## Program Budget

A program budget uses a descriptive paragraph to highlight the program and then a total figure for the entire program or sub-segment of the program. A program budget has several distinct advantages. The primary advantage is that a detailed line item accounting is not required. This keeps you from being locked into the program in such detail. Most Program Budgets however, use a separate and additional breakout of items to keep track of individual expenses. From a managerial standpoint however, review of expenditures can be more difficult and for that reason many managers and CPA's do not advocate it.

## *Sample Dive Team Start up Budget*

For Our Town Dive Team, we have decided to train all divers at once and then purchase the equipment the next fiscal year. Coincidentally, we expect training to end about the same time as our fiscal year. Therefore our budget might look like this:

### Table 6

| | |
|---|---|
| **Year One Budget** | |
| Basic SCUBA Training for 8 divers (8 x $400) | $3,200 |
| Rescue Training/Dive Rescue I Specialist for 8 divers (8 x $375) | $3,000 |
| Basic Snorkeling Gear for 8 divers | $2,500 |
| Appropriate to next year's equipment purchases | $1,000 |
| **Year One Total** | $9,700 |
| | |
| **Year Two Budget** | |
| Two sets SCUBA Equipment w/ Interspiro Masks | $5700 |
| Two Dry Suits | $6500 |
| Dive Team Equipment (search lines and rope) | $200 |
| **Year Two Total** | $12,400 |
| | |
| **Year Three Budget** | |
| Two sets of SCUBA Equipment (No Interspiro Masks) | $3,700 |
| Team Equipment | $2,000 |
| **Year Three Total** | $5,700 |
| | |
| **Grand Total** | $27,800 |

In actuality, you will need to incorporate maintenance and all the other various expenses associated with the team, but this illustrates the idea.

## Table of Implementation

The Table of Implementation is a timetable that you set up in advance which lists what tasks are to be completed by what date. The most straightforward way to write such a table is to use a day plus system. This avoids the problems associated with delays in starting the project. For example your TOI might look something like this:

**Table 7**

| | |
|---|---|
| Day 1 | Approval Given |
| Day 15 | Divers Selected |
| Day 30 | Training Begins |
| Day 60 | Basic Training Completed |
| Day 90 | Advanced Rescue Training Completed |
| Day 120 | First Equipment Placed Into Service |
| Day 150 | Team Activated |

## Program Presentation

By this time, you have assembled all the required paperwork, done the research and have made some initial approaches to whoever holds reign over your project. At some point you will probably be required to make a presentation on your ideas and although every situation will differ there are some mistakes which you should avoid.

- First, don't steal your own thunder. Keep the majority of your ammunition to yourself until the presentation.
- Know who you are making the presentation to and who has the power to make a decision.
- Type up and bind the presentation for everyone who will be involved in the decision making process.
- Do not place the budget in with the bound presentation. People will invariably go directly to the budget and will make up their minds without you having the chance to justify your project. When it's time to discuss money, hand it out at that time.

- Have one person make the presentation. It is very confusing when several people are presenting ideas.
- Do not allow yourself to be rushed. Sometimes people will try and rush you to present the budget and not allow you the time to make a case. Be watchful of this, but at the same time do not oversell your case.
- When asked a question, be aware that it is an objection in disguise. Answer all questions fully and to the best of your ability.
- After all the questions have been asked, work toward getting a commitment. If you walk out of the meeting without some form of commitment, you have probably already been turned down.

## Fund Raising

For many teams, fund drives are the sole source of income and if your community's elected officials fail to support your department's efforts, it may be your only source as well. If you are fortunate enough to have support from a tax base, then fund drives may provide additional money for buying equipment and training.

One issue to consider however, is when an agency seeks donations, it needs to ensure that it is allowable under the local and state laws to do so. In many states, the law requires that all donated funds be turned over to the general fund category of the local governmental authority!

A successful fund drive requires planning, a good deal of leg work, and depending on the particular approach, some money. However, successful fund drives can be conducted with virtually no money spent in the process. The particulars of how you conduct the drive are not as critical as following some very simple principles.

The basic concept of any fund drive is to get your message out to the public and then have the public give you money in return. Simple isn't it! Unfortunately, the average home receives three requests for donations per week and some businesses as many as fifty a week. It is very easy for your request or message to get buried in the pile. Getting the potential contributors' attention is more than half the battle.

There are a general series of principles which will work if you apply them to your situation. These principles cover the message, delivery, and follow up of the fund drive. Here they are:

***Message***
*Touch the Heart*
*Touch the Mind*
*Touch the Pocket Book*

***Delivery***
*Reach as many people as possible*
*for as long as possible.*

**Follow- Up**
*Make it easy to give you money*

Let's examine each of these and how they apply.

### *Message*

Gimme Money! Well, that's basically your message, right? Unfortunately, you will have to justify the expenditure for the person donating the money. The three keys are to appeal to the person's logic, their heart and ultimately their heart strings i.e. pocket book.

A lot of effective written appeals use the formula, emotional head line, followed by a logical explanation and ending with an emotional motivator to send money.

Examples of emotional appeals would be something like:

"Last year 1000 parents waited for a dive team to save their child." "The divers never came!" or "Don't wait until you're standing by the water's edge looking for a loved one who is not there!"

The logical explanation is simply a section which tells who you are, why you need money, and how it will be used. An emotional motivator is a section of text which is emotionally powerful enough to get the person to write a check. In the examples above, you could add the line. "Help us help you, please send us your donation today."

### *Delivery*

Getting your message out to as many people as possible will require real effort on your part. Fortunately, as a nonprofit, charitable organization or a good guys organization such as fire fighters and cops, there are lots of avenues available.

In the electronic media, radio and television, both run public service advertisements. Although they are no longer required to run these ads, most still do so and will be willing, if not happy, to help.

In print media, newspapers and direct mail, there are several options. Newspapers, as a rule, do not run public service ads, although it never hurts to ask. A better and more effective method however is to invite a reporter over for an interview. A nice feature article on your new venture will certainly help your fund drive efforts.

Direct mail email campaigns can be an extremely effective tool for a fund drive. The mass of requests landing on your front door is testimony to that fact. It is, however, not free and the US Postal Service donates nothing!

Email campaigns can also be effective.

A non charitable organization can currently mail at 23 cents per piece, so a 10,000 piece mailing would cost $2300 in postage alone. Add to that printing costs, mailing lists etc. and the cost can easily be 75 cents per piece.

Billboards are another print media available to you. Billboards in good locations are quite expensive, that's the bad news. The good news is that many billboard companies have a public service message policy in which they donate the billboard and all you pay is the production cost of the sign. Production costs are generally in the $500- $700 range.

Counter displays are another source of income which has several advantages. First, the counter top coin drop, if left out all year will provide some income all the time. On the down side, someone has to make the rounds and pick them up. Secondly, it isn't always easy getting them into stores which don't necessarily like their counters filled up with coin drops. Also to be effective, your coin drop will need other and fairly continuous advertising so people will recognize it. It should also have good graphics to get people’s attention.

Don't be put off by the fact that many of these methods require money to use. With a little bit of work you can probably get most, if not all, printing and production costs donated. One option that a volunteer fire department took to direct mail was hand delivery of their fund drive flyer. This was in an area with 8,000 addresses! The entire department of forty turned out and delivered all the flyers in one day! Their return was over $13,000.

Follow up is also very important. One extremely successful department maintains a computerized list of every business and homeowner in their district. They mail out their fund raising brochure to every address and then follow up with reminders to all addresses which fail to make a donation. They may repeat this process several times during the year.

## *Grants*

Almost every team in existence has at one time or another gone after a grant and yet only a few have been fortunate enough to get one.

There are several problems associated with grants. First and foremost is finding out who has them. There is no single source of information on grants. There are several publications which list grants and you should be able to find them at your local library. In addition there is a computerized database of grants which is more timely, but even that doesn't list all of them.

Some grants, particularly those of some corporations and private foundations, have a broad range of applications. One step while locating the several published grant guides is to contact all the major corporations in the area. Many of these companies have money ear marked for either straight donations or grants for a wide range of causes. Often the local manager is the ultimate authority on how this money gets spent! Contact the IADRS at (800) IADRS-911 for information regarding the availability of grants. Local civic organizations such as Rotary Clubs are a source of funds in addition to organizations such as Walmart and Sams Club who offer a Community Grant.

The second problem is that you will rarely find a grant designated for dive teams. Instead a grant might be designated for public safety, welfare and the like. The trick is in figuring out which grants are worded so that you can qualify. For example, one dive team located a grant designated for public education. Their grant application was for video equipment which they used to produce educational material. This in turn leads to the third problem which is the application process itself.

If you are lucky enough to find a grant for which you even remotely qualify, then you must begin the application process. From first contact to either being rejected or receiving the grant might well span several years. A person once stated that grants were awarded on the basis of endurance. That statement isn't far off.

In every government sector, there will be one person who everybody else considers their grant expert. Find this person and then beg, borrow or steal their services! If that doesn't work, then there are a few hints left.

First, when you request the grant application forms, ask if they have a copy of a successful grant application. Review the successful grant before you write your own proposal. Secondly, don't be shy and retiring in a grant application. Be honest, and under no circumstances falsify information.

Pay particular attention to how the grant money is distributed. Grants often are of a matching fund type. They pick up a percent of the total cost, you pick up the rest. A sixty percent grant for a hundred thousand dollars means you need to have $40,000. This could cause a lot of problems if you don't have the $40,000. One method used in several successful grant applications is to combine guaranteed donations with a grant.

Let's say your dive team wants to buy a $30,000 combination dive and fire boat. You request a grant for $15,000 and get a commitment from three corporations or individuals for $5,000 each. This demonstrates to the grant people a degree of community involvement, plus it appeals to those grant groups who don't like to be the only source of money on a project.

Another potential problem is when a grant specifies that it will reimburse you for purchases. This means that the items have to be paid for initially; and then they will send you that amount of money. Read the grant specifications closely. It might be possible to simply earmark expenditures without really issuing the money to the vendors.

## Public Relations

One area not to be overlooked as a potential fund raising tool is your public relations efforts. Good public relations can make or break your team. It will only take one or two bad situations for your money to dry up. Good public relations are everyone's job. It only takes one unwise statement to place your whole effort into a bad light.

Although acting in a professional manner will go a long way in how the public perceives you that is not enough. It is a common practice among the better dive teams that there is a uniform or dress standard. This can be as simple as an inexpensive jumpsuit with a department patch.

The appearance of your personnel on the scene and the impact that appearance has on bystanders should not be underestimated. Imagine the opinion a grief stricken relative will have of a person in a pair of cut offs and an old tee shirt who is supposed to be an authority on rescue. Your credibility and the team's credibility will be non-existent.

There are several public relations activities that you can participate in that will enhance your image and help the public as well. The easiest method is public speaking engagements. Most clubs and social organizations have regular speakers. Getting speakers can be a problem for these groups and they are always looking for people.

Another method is to develop a water safety program or purchase a readymade program such as "Water Proof Your Family" and present it to the local schools.

Most television and many radio stations will have a local public interest program that is also an excellent way to get your message out.

Public relations, no matter how you feel about the subject, cannot be ignored. To do so is to lose a valuable tool which can limit your ability to earn money as well as inform the public of important safety messages. As you develop your dive team, public relations should be an integral part of the planning.

## Training

Rescue/Recovery Diving is a hazardous undertaking. It is not just a specialty, it is a totally different type of diving, and as much different from sport diving as is commercial diving. For this reason, a standard Scuba certification course is inadequate preparation as are the majority of sport agencies "Rescue Diver" courses. These courses are primarily designed to train sport divers to rescue themselves and each other, not the public at large and not in the conditions agency divers face daily.

Sport divers are trained to dive in relatively clear water when and where they desire. Agency divers spend a great deal of their time in very poor to non-existent visibility and never choose where and generally do not have a choice of when. Sport divers are trained to enjoy the activity safely. Agency divers are working underwater and scuba is the tool that gets them to work! This, therefore, requires a diver with excellent water skills and who possesses a high degree of comfort in the water.

The most common training path taken by dive teams is to use a local resources for the initial or basic scuba training of divers or to contact Dive Rescue International to find out if there is a Public Safety Scuba Instructor in your area. Dive teams then use a firm such as Dive Rescue International Inc. to provide the specialized training through courses such as Dive Rescue I and II, Ice Rescue, etc.. There are also two other options available.

One is to have an agency, such as Dive Rescue International, come in and train the divers from the onset. This is perhaps the most desirable; however, it is more expensive. Another option is to train a team member to instructor level and then have them train the other members of the unit. This requires a person who is already an experienced, certified diver with 100 or more logged dives, and several other prerequisites.

If you decide to use local instructors for the initial training, there are several things you can do to improve the level of training your people will receive. First, talk to the instructor and dive store owner about your requirements. Insist on a class with just your people in it and tell them you want your divers trained to the highest possible skill levels. Once the basic certification class is over, your divers will then be ready for additional training in courses such as Dive Rescue International's Dive Rescue I.

# Equipment

One key to success in dive team operations is standardization. There are several good reasons for standardizing from administrative, operational and safety standpoints. From an administration standpoint, standardized equipment is cheaper to maintain and keep in service. Operationally, the divers will be intimately familiar with the equipment and its use which is a very important safety factor, and it will make it easier to field repair broken equipment. The worst case scenario for a dive team is where every diver either brings in personal gear or is allowed to pick out their own equipment!

There is a vast range of scuba equipment on the market and due to the nature of diving, very little can be described as junk. However some dive equipment is more suitable to rescue recovery diving than others.

If you look at the busiest dive teams around the country you will probably notice that they purchase the very best brands and that the models they choose tend to be simple with fewer bells and whistles than some other models. That is because the new super duper BC with twenty two adjustments can become a detriment when you're in a hurry to get into the water. When purchasing dive equipment for rescue teams, consider its simplicity and durability.

You may also wish to consider purchasing dry suits over wet suits. Dry suits have the advantage of being more durable, fitting a wider range of people and being a better long term investment. In addition, dry suits will allow your divers to operate with a greater degree of safety in cold and lightly polluted water, and contrary to popular belief, they are suitable for year round use.

Full face masks and communication gear are becoming defacto standards with dive rescue teams. The Interspiro MKII, and the EXO-26 are the two masks of choice. Both have features to recommend them and selection should be based after a thorough review of both including in-water testing.

Communication systems, which will increase the efficiency of your team greatly, have the added advantage of also increasing the safety of dive operations by several orders of magnitude. They come in two versions, wireless which operate on radio frequencies, and hardwired which uses the divers search line or umbilical as a link.

When selecting equipment, your best resource will be people already involved with dive teams or organizations such as The International Association of Dive Rescue Specialists. Seek their advice above that of sales clerks and people who are not involved with this very specialized form of diving.

# Conclusion

The longest journey in the world begins with a single step! The successful team and team manager will be the one that sets goals, plans for the future, keeps their priorities in line and delivers a quality service for their community.

The successful team will spend its money wisely, always with an eye to the future, rather than concentrating on just the present. It will benefit you and the team if you are willing to scale back and do it right rather than try to over-reach and in the process waste money.

Regardless of the amount of time it takes or the hurdles you will face, remember that the ultimate benefactor of your efforts will be the people of your community!

# Appendix

## Boating Accident Data Base

Contains information on recreational boating accidents. Data includes location, date, size and type of boat, cause of accident and operator age. Nominal fee charged.

**Contact:**
Coast Guard Headquarters
Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard,
2100 Second Street, SW,
Washington, DC 20593
202-372-2100

## Drowning Statistics

National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) develops the nation's official statistics for death.

National Center for Health Statistics
3311 Toledo Rd
Hyattsville, MD 20782
1 (800) 232-4636
http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/

# It's Time To Join the International Association of Dive Rescue Specialists

IADRS is a non-profit organization for the water rescue and recovery professional. To become a part of the lnternational Association of Dive Rescue Specialists is to forge an indispensable link between yourself and others solving the same problems you face everyday. Think of what you know, what you have learned. You aren't alone. All over the world we do everything we can to save lives. Since 1979 we've gotten together and pooled our combined experience and knowledge. Our shared expertise, ideas, and resources are tremendous. Join us, and bridge the communication gap by becoming a part of our international information, communication, and education network of water rescue professionals!

**The Benefits of IADRS Membership include:**

- Subscription to the Association News - the newsletter for all water rescue and recovery professionals
- Access to the 24-hour IADRS Help Line - (1-800-IADRS-911)
- Reduced tuition on IADRS Conference registration fees
- Reduced tuition on most Dive Rescue International Schools such as Dive Rescue I, Med Dive, and Ice Diving
- IADRS patch and ID card
- Access to online member forum

Types of Memberships Available:

**Individual:** Available to personnel involved in water rescue and recovery work. Annual dues are $25.00.

**Team:** Allows teams to join as a group and save money. When joining as at team, include a team roster. List the name, address, and phone of each member. This information will be used to generate your team ID cards and mail Searchlines.

<u>Annual dues are:</u>

4-10 members, $20.00/person;
11 -20 members, $18.00/person;
21-30 members, $16.00/person;
31+ members, $14.00/person.

For more information contact:
International Association of Dive Rescue Specialists
Post Office Box 877
Vero Beach, FL 32961
Tel. (800) IADRS-911