



## **Moalboal Dive Association Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic**

As the COVID-19 pandemic becomes more effectively managed, governments have to make decisions concerning which activities to allow their citizens to engage in and when it is appropriate and reasonable to do so.

While actually engaged in scuba diving, the participants are at very low risk of disease transmission. Each diver has their mouth and nose covered by a mask, and has a regulator in their mouth supplying breathing gas from a cylinder, so they are very well protected from infection.

Divers have always been required to be medically screened before starting their training, and so the awareness of the importance of personal good health is high in the diving community. Steps do need to be taken to minimise the risk of disease transmission before and after the dive, but as diving is predominantly an outdoor activity, these are relatively straightforward to implement.

**This document is a guideline protocol to Dive Operators within the Municipality of Moalboal to allow Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant and Timely safe-guard objectives to be made within their businesses during the recovery phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in-line with Cebu Province Executive Orders by Governor Gwendolyn F Garcia.**

- ❖ **Please Note – The last page of this document should be signed by the business owner/manager to confirm their understanding and commitment to abide by these guidelines, and by doing so confirm their business will meet the required Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and Health Regimen Plan (HRP) objectives as specified in latest Cebu Province EO dated July 9<sup>th</sup> 2020.**
  
- ❖ **The signed original should be delivered to the Tourism Officer - Moalboal Tourism Office for their records. This should be completed before any operational activities resume.**



# Moalboal Dive Association

## Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic

Please note the following steps are considered base requirements that all Moalboal Dive Association members should implement to reduce risk to their customers and staff.

### 1. Reception

- Upon arrival to Dive Centre each day, both customers and staff should be checked to ensure their body temperature is no greater than 37.5°C. Anybody displaying a temperature 37.5 to 38°C the test should be repeated. Anybody displaying a temperature higher than 38°C or have fever or cough should be told to return to their respective accommodation for self-isolation.

Advise if symptoms persist (typically after 2 days) they should seek medical attention.

- In addition, to avoid groups gathering within the dive centre, it is advisable to ask non-diving family members or friends (of diver) to remain outside.
- Staff present on the premises should be limited to those strictly necessary to carry out activities.
- It is recommended that customers fill out registration forms online, before visiting the Dive Centre.
- If this is not possible, please make sure that correct personal hygiene procedures are respected, before completing the forms.
- Regarding payment, it is preferable to use online methods (bank transfer, PayPal or similar) or credit cards, rather than using cash.

### 2. Physical/Social Distancing

- The WHO (World Health Organisation) recommends that people keep at least **1 metre / 3 feet distance** from each other. This also applies to Dive Centres, including classrooms, Dive Boats, Briefing and Wash areas.
- Wherever possible, e-learning or remote teaching should be preferred to reduce Face to face time in a classroom. Use outdoor areas as an alternative to enclosed classrooms.



## **Moalboal Dive Association**

### **Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic**

#### **3. Personal Hygiene**

- COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that spreads mainly through contact with droplets of infected people, for example when they sneeze, cough or blow their nose.
- Correct personal hygiene measures include:  
Wash hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds.  
Keep physical distancing, avoid direct contact with other people.  
Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Practice respiratory hygiene. This includes covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Dive Centres should provide hand sanitising products or suitable facilities where washing hands as recommended.

#### **4. Face Shields/Masks**

- The WHO advises that masks should only be used if customers/staff are coughing or sneezing. Given that persons displaying those symptoms should already have been screened and removed from Dive Centre environment, it is at the discretion of the Dive Centre or customer if they wish to wear face masks.
- However at any time LGU may insist mask wearing is mandatory.

#### **5. Disinfection Operations**

##### **Surfaces**

- Studies of other coronaviruses have shown their infectivity can be reduced by Heat, UV light and alkaline or acidic conditions. Because of this, surfaces can be Disinfected using household cleaning products.
- It is not clear how long the virus can survive on surfaces. According to the WHO, preliminary information suggest that it may persist for a few hours or up to several days, depending on type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment. It is therefore necessary to clean all surfaces and disinfect them frequently, especially those that could be touched by several people: door and Window handles, light switches, taps, keypads, etc.



## Moalboal Dive Association

### Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic

- Among the products that are useful to eliminate the virus there are both alcohol based disinfectants with an **alcohol** percentage (ethanol/ethyl alcohol) of 70%, and products with **sodium hypochlorite** as the primary agent (such as bleach).
- The percentage of sodium hypochlorite capable of eliminating the virus without causing irritation to the respiratory system is **0.1%** for most surfaces. For CR, toilet, shower and washbasins a higher percentage can be used: **0.5%**.
- **Please note:** Particular care is required when using alcohol-based disinfectants, including hydro-alcoholic hand solutions. A small percentage of alcohol, a highly volatile and flammable substance even at relatively low temperatures, can cause fire or explosion.
- Avoid direct or indirect contact with equipment, cylinders and filling hoses used for oxygen-enriched air.
- Wherever possible, it is preferable to use simple soap and water to clean hands.
- The Dive Centre premises should be disinfected daily. Common, more frequented areas should be disinfected whenever used by different people.

#### Diving Equipment

- There are still no specific tests carried out regarding the survival of the COVID-19 virus on diving equipment.
- It is therefore strongly advisable that diving equipment is disinfected after use in order to neutralise the virus. Some products, such as quaternary ammonium compounds, are effective and highly compatible with typical diving equipment materials (rubber, neoprene, plastics, metal, etc.), however difficult to source or harmful for the marine environment.
- Other products, such as bleach (sodium hypochlorite), are easier to find and cheaper, but must be used in accordance with the guidelines for COVID-19.
- Common **bleach**, marketed under different brands and with variable percentages (5-10%) of its active ingredient, **sodium hypochlorite**, is among the products



## Moalboal Dive Association

### Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic

able to neutralise the virus. It is important to read the product label carefully, check the percentage of active ingredient, and dilute it in clean water in the right measure.

- Recent scientific studies suggest a **1:50** dilution of bleach containing **5%** of sodium hypochlorite (concentration of **0.1%** or **1,000 ppm** of active ingredient), with complete immersion of the objects for at least **5 minutes**.
- Here's a practical example of how to dilute the product in clean water, to obtain **5 litres** of solution containing **0.1%** of active ingredient:

5% sodium hypochlorite bleach // 100 ml of product in 4900 ml of clean water, or  
10% sodium hypochlorite bleach // 50 ml of product in 4950 ml of clean water

- Precautions:
  - ✓ Perform dilution operations wearing gloves, mask and eye protection.
  - ✓ Mix solutions in well ventilated areas.
  - ✓ Prepare solutions using cold clean water, as hot water damages the active ingredient.
  - ✓ Never mix bleach with other products or chemicals.
  - ✓ Avoid splashes during cleaning.
- Rinse all gear with fresh clean water and allow to dry before next use.

#### 6. Rental Equipment Care

Equipment rental should be handled with particular care, especially considering the responsibility of Dive Centre owners in case of possible contamination. Here are some recommendations:

- Rental equipment should be disinfected as mentioned above, after each use, paying particular attention to regulators, BCDs, snorkels and masks.
- Customers should be encouraged to purchase or supply their own mask.
- Ideally keep areas for used rental equipment separate from areas where disinfected equipment is stored.
- Limit customer's access to areas where disinfected equipment is stored.



## **Moalboal Dive Association**

### **Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic**

- Transport rental equipment in individual containers, marked with customer's name, and remember to disinfect these after use.
- Once disinfected, handle the equipment safely, keeping items together in each customer's container.
- Replacing Regulator mouthpieces after use is at the discretion of the Dive Centre.

#### **7. Customer-Owned Equipment Care**

- If the Dive Centre does not have appropriate facilities to allow individual rinsing with running water, customer-owned equipment should be rinsed elsewhere.
- If the Dive Centre provides an area to customers for the drying of their equipment, enough spacing between sets should be provided for.
- Always remind customers to disinfect their equipment as soon as possible after use.

#### **8. Dive Boat Protective Measures**

- Dive boat operations should be handled with care. Where people come into closer contact with each other, any risk of infection increases significantly.
- To help ensure physical distancing (as mentioned above) Dive Boats should operate at 50% of their designed/specified Passenger Capacity.
- Avoid taking any unnecessary material on board that is not needed for safety reasons or underwater operations.
- Discourage the use of buckets to rinse masks, rinse them in open water instead.
- Avoid the use of saliva to defog masks, preferably use defogging products.
- Even when distancing rules are respected, while the boat is moving and due to the effect of the wind, droplets may travel a longer distance. It is therefore advisable that all passengers wear their scuba (or protective) mask.
- Remind them not to touch other people's equipment.



## Moalboal Dive Association

### Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic

- Try to ensure distancing rules are respected also when divers enter and exit the water. Respecting distance on surface may be difficult in the presence of current: the use of tag lines or lines secured to a floating buoy, with spacing indicated with tape or colour bands may assist in maintaining the appropriate distances.

#### 9. Buddy Checks and Gas Sharing.

- Distancing rules should be respected also in relation to the following operations:
- Buddy Checks: divers should be reminded to avoid touching other divers' equipment, especially those parts that come into close contact with the diver's face and mouth. A visual buddy check should be carried out, with Self-demonstration and verbal confirmation.
- Gas sharing: both in case of emergency and when performing drills, it is recommended to use an alternative gas source and avoid donating the regulator from which the diver is breathing.
- **Please note:** Guidelines provided by dive training agencies on these subjects may vary. Dive Operators should follow the latest guidelines issued by their respective training agency.

#### 10. Gas Compressors and Safe Cylinder Filling

- Theoretically, the virus could enter the compressor through the air inlet, as the inlet filter is not able to block smaller droplets. The breathing air filters after the compression will also not provide assurance that small particles will be caught.
- It is therefore necessary that the inlet to the compressor is located in a safe place to avoid any contamination. It has been shown that the virus is sensitive to high temperatures. When warm, a compressor can generate a gas temperature of more than 120°C, and in addition to this, very high temperatures are reached at the peak for compression, well above the virus resistance threshold. It is therefore unlikely that a virus can remain active after passing through the compressor. The



## **Moalboal Dive Association**

### **Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic**

risk however exists when it comes to handling cylinder valves and refill hoses, through the possibility of contamination by infected operators. Therefore those carrying out refilling operations should follow good hygiene procedures.

#### **11. Gas Filling Areas**

- Personal hygiene and physical distancing procedures should also be observed in gas refill areas.
- Only authorised people should be allowed to be in the immediate vicinity of compressors, the filling station, and the storage area for filled cylinders.
- Particular care is required when using alcohol-based disinfectants, including hydro-alcoholic hand solutions. A small percentage of alcohol, a highly volatile and flammable substance even at relatively low temperatures, can cause fire or explosion. Avoid direct or indirect contact with equipment, cylinders and filling hoses used for oxygen-enriched air.
- Wherever possible it is preferable to use simple soap and water to clean hands.

#### **12. First Aid and CPR – Handling an Emergency**

Some useful recommendations on how to intervene, whilst protecting both victim and rescuer from potential infections:

- Ensure that the rescuer, the victim and all other people on site are safe.
- Ensure that appropriate PPE is being worn and that protective barriers are used.
- Evaluate consciousness by shaking or stimulating the victim without approaching the face.
- Determine if the victim is breathing by simply observing chest movements.
- The rescuer's face should not come close to the victim's face.
- If the victim is unconscious and not breathing, alert Emergency Medical Services (EMS) describing the situation, and start chest compressions without rescue breaths/ventilations.
- Use an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), if available.
- Continue with rescue operations until the victim has resumed normal breathing, the rescuer is exhausted or EMS arrive.



## **Moalboal Dive Association**

### **Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic**

- Once rescue activities are completed or the victim handed over to EMS, properly remove PPE and dispose of these according to local instructions.
- Wash hands carefully. Medical devices used on the victim should be disinfected after use, if possible, or disposed of following correct procedures.

#### **13. Can the COVID-19 Virus survive in Water?**

- Research is still ongoing, and it is not clear how long the COVID-19 virus can survive in water. Studies on previous SARS/COVID viruses have shown that it remained infectious for long periods on the surface (lakes, rivers, wetlands, etc.). It appears that sea water is not able to neutralise the virus. In properly chlorinated or bromated pools and hot tubs, the CDC (Center for Disease Control) specifies that SARS/COVID would be inactivated after a period of time. According to current evidence, it is therefore recommended that care is taken both when in the water and out of the water. This includes respecting distancing rules and properly washing and disinfecting equipment.

#### **14. Modified Emergency Action Plans and additional Information Signage.**

- The Dive Centre should update its Standard Operating Procedures, taking into account the recommendations provided in this document, together with other national rules, regulations and their respective training agency advice. In particular Emergency Action Plans for suspected infection, infected staff or customers as applicable, should include specific instructions to maintain infection control and commence with immediate isolation of suspected infected persons.
- This document, along with each dive centres revised policy/ procedure, training agency recommendations and provincial and local Executive Orders, should be made readily available to their customers and staff to reference.

Compiled by

John Dutton (Secretary)

Moalboal Dive Association



## **Moalboal Dive Association Dive Operation Guidelines During Recovery Phases of COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **Agreement of Implementation.**

- ❖ We understand the specified practices and agree to implement the base requirements of the MDA Covid-19 guideline document.
- ❖ We accept that by abiding this protocol, we are meeting our Business Continuity Plan (BCP) objectives and by making provision and encouraging our staff to observe Section 7 – Health Regimen and Safety Measures (as detailed in latest EO July 9<sup>th</sup> 2020) we will meet the Health Regimen Plan (HRP) requirements.

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

Print and Signature

Business Owner/Manager

**On behalf of:** .....

Business Name.

**This signed original should be delivered to the Tourism Officer - Moalboal Tourism Office for their records. This should be completed before any operational activities resume.**

**Received by:** ..... **Date:** .....

On behalf of Moalboal Tourism - Municipality