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SCUBA Diver Study Results Announced

VANCOUVER - The Underwater Council of British Columbia is proud to announce the completion of the Abacus Project. Abacus counted recreational air fills as a measure of the level of diving activity in the province between October 1999 and November 2000.

“This study is the first concrete attempt by any jurisdiction in the world to capture the level of diving activity and, as a result, measure the relative risk of sport diving,” said Underwater Council of British Columbia President Tom Beasley. “We hope that the study will be copied by other jurisdictions around the world, giving comparative measures of diving risk in different regions and under different conditions.”

“The Abacus Project has established a baseline for estimating the risk for recreational diving in British Columbia,” said Dan Orr of Divers Alert Network. “This is the first time a reliable method has been used to track recreational diving activity in a specific geographic area over an extended time period,” added Orr.

In May 1997, the Coroner’s Jury on the Inquest into a triple scuba fatality at Whytecliff Park in West Vancouver recommended that the UCBC review and monitor diving practices in British Columbia, and that a mechanism be implemented for collecting statistical information on dives. Abacus was the UCBC’s response to that recommendation.

A copy of the ***Abacus Project: Provincial Report*** has been posted to the UCBC website: www.ucbc.bc.ca. Dr. Gary Ladd, Dr. Victor Stepan and Ms. Linda Stevens, the principle investigators, today presented the study and its results at the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medicine Society’s Annual Scientific Conference in San Diego, California.

A summary of the results is attached.

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Abacus Project: Results Summary



The Abacus Project is the effort of many, especially the principle investigators - Dr. Gary Ladd, Dr. Victor Stepan and Ms. Linda Stevens, as well as key industry volunteers such as Dr. Michael Lepawsky of the Division of Hyperbaric Medicine, Vancouver General Hospital (VGH), Ms. Donna Ugucioni of Divers Alert Network (DAN), Ms. Tej Sidhu of the BC Coroners Service and Mr. Bill Klikach of Dive and Sea Sports. This Project was made possible through financial and services support from many sponsors including DAN, the Vancouver Aquarium and Marine Sciences Centre, PADI Canada, SSI Canada, Hendry Swinton Insurance Ltd., Pacific Northwest Scuba Challenge Association, and private donors. Special thanks to Donnie Reid for his assistance in producing this report. To all of them, divers in BC owe our profound thanks for this groundbreaking study.

Results

Area of Study: Province of British Columbia, Canada

Study Period: October 1, 1999 to November 30, 2000 (14 months)

Percentage of provincial fill stations that reported: 65%

Average number of fill stations in operation each month: 78.43 (range 76-84)

Number of tank fills: 146,291

Number of recreational scuba divers treated for non-fatal DCI*: 14

Number of recreational scuba diving fatalities: 3

Risks of DCI* Injury and Death

Incidence of DCI* injury: 0.010% (9.57/100,000 dives)

· **14 injuries for 146,291 fills**

Incidence of Death: 0.002% (2.05/100,000 dives)

· **3 fatalities for 146,291 fills**

Incidence of DCI* Injury or Death: 0.012% (11.62/100,000 dives)

· **17 injuries or fatalities for 146,291 fills**

* Decompression Illness (DCI) refers to both decompression sickness (commonly referred to as the bends) and lung overexpansion injuries (commonly referred to as an arterial gas embolism or air embolism).

Related weblinks:

Underwater Council of British Columbia: www.underwatercouncilbc.com

Diver's Alert Network: www.diversalertnetwork.org