Incident Review #1 and #2

- Two adults and several youth from a Venturing crew, all certified scuba divers, went diving in a quarry with depths ranging from 25 to 85 feet and visibility reported to be 5 to 10 feet. A 16-year-old failed to surface after the third dive of the day.
- A scuba instructor was conducting a training exercise for three Scouts in a roped-off area at a camp waterfront with depths up to 15 feet. The group returned to shore when a strong wind arose, but a 12-year-old Scout went missing.

Key Points

- The buddy system is a common dive practice, crucial for safety. All divers and snorkelers should stay close to their buddy and do visual checks every few strokes.
- Scuba instructors should constantly monitor everyone in the water, particularly during introductory classes or in adverse conditions.

Incident Review #3 and #4

- A 13-year-old diver's eardrum was ruptured after a descent that was apparently too quick without adequate pressure equalization.
- A 53-year-old adult leader dove while congested. He suffered a reverse block on ascent and ruptured an eardrum.

Key Points

- During training, divers are cautioned against starting a dive while congested or continuing a dive when they have difficulty clearing their ears.
- Snorkelers and scuba divers need to understand and respect the effect of water pressure. Pressure equalization of the ear and sinus cavities is critical.
- It’s also important for scuba divers to keep breathing air that is pressurized to match the pressure of the surrounding water. A mistake as simple as holding their breath during an ascent can be fatal.

“Dive buddies should constantly monitor one another.”
Incident Review #5 and #6

- A 57-year-old adult leader was scuba diving with his troop at a quarry as part of a scuba class. He suffered a medical emergency in the water. His death was attributed to natural causes.

- A troop attending a BSA sailing program anchored to snorkel at a reef. The boat captain was responding to a participant having difficulty returning to the boat when the son of a 55-year-old leader called for help for his father floating unresponsive at the surface. Occupants of a nearby boat helped pull the man from the water. He was transported to shore by the Coast Guard but pronounced dead at a local hospital.

Key Points

- Scuba training agencies and the BSA have policies regarding pre-activity medical checks. BSA policies on medical restrictions for diving may be viewed as conservative. Even so, such checks cannot always anticipate or prevent medical emergencies such as strokes and heart attacks.

- Activity leaders for all events should have plans in place for the most common emergencies.

- Emergency action plans should include continued surveillance and supervision of participants not directly involved since other problems may arise.

Discussion Questions

- What training is required for unit members snorkeling in open water?

- What training is required for unit members scuba diving in open water?

- If you have participated in a snorkeling or scuba-diving activity, were all training protocols observed? Were you adequately instructed on what to do during an emergency?

- Discuss the effects of submersion on the body and how to handle potentially dangerous situations.

- What information in the Annual Health and Medical Record could be relevant to potential health risks when snorkeling or scuba diving?

Resources

- The Guide to Safe Scouting sections on snorkeling in open water and the BSA scuba policy—https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss02/#q

- Aquatics Supervision, No. 34346

- Scuba Diving merit badge pamphlet, No. 35969

- Annual Health and Medical Record—https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/