Better Plan Ahead – The Emergency Assistance Plan (EAP) or Contingency Plan

An **Emergency Assistance Plan** (EAP) or **Contingency plan** is a prerequisite for the successful rescue of an injured diver. This includes immediate on-site first aid and emergency treatment as well as the fastest possible transport to the closest and most adequate medical facility. Redaction of an EAP falls under the responsibility of the local dive operator.

As a diver, you can do a lot for your own safety, however some things are out of your hands and you have to rely on the dive operator. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the safety awareness of a live-aboard operator, dive center or dive boat owner, dive instructor, dive master or other staff. The choice of the holiday destination can also be decisive. In a country where general safety standards are poor, also dive operations may lack safety regulations and requirements.

Safety gaps are lurking everywhere and their consequences are more serious in diving than they would be on land. A divemaster guiding a group of novices without computers to their limits; a dive boat owner without emergency equipment such as an oxygen unit able to deliver 100% medical oxygen to at least two divers and for sufficient time; a liveaboard safari whose staff is not trained in first aid and emergency treatment; dive shops that rent poorly maintained equipment with defect valves or missing o-rings, or who "forget" to change compressor filters: they all belong to the **grossly negligent** category.

As beautiful as an out-in-the-ocean, away-from-civilisation liveaboard safari may seem, as ugly it could turn when there is no radio connection, cell phones aren't working and the crew forgot satellite phones (or even first aid equipment on board). No chance to get any prompt help in case of emergency in that unfortunate case.

Be it a dive business on land or a liveaboard, everybody – also dive guests – should get access to info such as current telephone numbers of the closest hyperbaric chamber. This includes contact numbers of dive medical specialists of the nearest facility, emergency doctors and emergency services. Keeping those information current is something of the utmost importance, as addresses, phone numbers, contact persons or access routes are often subject to variations. If there is a missing link, the chain will break.

The crew needs to know what to do in an emergency. The fastest transportation and the logistics need to be clear. In case an operator has several boats, each boat may have its own EAP and a different one for the base on land.

To raise awareness about safety and make diving even safer, DAN has developed the **DSP (Diving Safety Partner) programme.** The DSP is made of 3 levels, with an associated **Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA)** component. This initiative is specifically addressed to dive operations, helping businesses to identify and improve the areas where they lack safety. Dive operations fulfilling all requirements gain visibility and recognition within the recreational diving community and, ultimely, more clients. For a professional assessment conducted by one of our experts, requests can be sent to dsp@daneurope.org

Instructions and warnings for conducting dives

Briefings and debriefings, information on getting in and out of the water, safety stops, meeting points and procedures in case of separation, as well as instructions and warnings for post-dive activities: these are all

elements that should be considered.

Briefing before the dive is of enormous importance for the divers to assume their own capability to take up the dive and to know what to expect during immersion. A good briefing includes details about navigation, currents, depth and duration of the dive, and surely not only the marine life that you will probably see.

The crew should inform divers, especially the inexperienced ones, that no free-diving activities should be carried out after SCUBA diving. Deeper successive dives on the same day are not recommended either, due to nitrogen bubble formation and increased DCS risk. Advise is to wait for at least 24 hours before engaging with such activities.

Both professional and recreational divers taking care of safety aspects prior to a dive may soon benefit from their farsighted approach, as they will know what to do in case of an emergency or may even prevent it.

Let’s keep diving a marvelous adventure, as it should always be!

Online DAN resources

- **How to make an EAP**
- **Apply for the DAN Diving Safety Partner programme**