DAN HIRA Programme

DAN is putting safety first with the HIRA programme, which is quickly gaining in popularity.

Since the introduction of the DAN Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) programme, a lot of interest to engage in this preventative approach to dive safety has been shown by those in the diving profession. This primarily South African-born initiative, fully supported and endorsed by the IDAN fraternity, is rapidly spreading through the US as well as Europe. This is largely due to our dedicated team of experienced assessors who are committed to making DAN's mission of preventing incidents and accidents a key priority by promoting "Safety First". The initiative is carried through to all aspects of dive operations, from the health and safety of staff members to boat operations, training, gas refills and equipment, to name a few. Apart from promoting and supporting a culture of safety amongst participating diving service providers, we aim to empower dive operators to identify hazards which may pose a health and/or safety risk to either diving clients or staff, to control and mitigate these risks and ensure that their Activity s are undertaken with appropriate awareness. The DAN HIRA programme, brainchild of Dr Alessandro Marroni (DAN Europe) and Francois Burman (DAN-SA CEO), and developed firstly by Dr Jack Meintjes, and eventually brought to fruition by Dr Cecilia Roberts, was first trialled in Cyprus with the assessment of Dive-In, Larnaca – a fully-equipped and well-established dive business.

DAN HIRA was introduced in South Africa with the assessment of Sodwana Bay Lodge Scuba Centre in 2011. Here we were presented with the opportunity to spend a few days discussing policies and procedures, and to observe the operations of the dive centre, appraising the pre-emptive safety of this set-up and suggesting recommendations where necessary and applicable. This provided an excellent opportunity to start fine-tuning the approach and structure of the assessment and reporting thereof, to improve assessor expertise, as well as empower and educate the participating operators in their everyday operation safety.

Next up was launching DAN HIRA in the Cape Peninsula with the assessment of four dive centres: Underwater Explorers in Table View, Pisces Dive Centre in Glencairn, Dive Action in Paarden Eiland and Alpha Dive Centre in Somerset West. This intensive week of evaluation posed the ideal opportunity for our new Southern African assessor, Morné Christou, to refine his skills and knowledge, as well as strengthen our already exciting business partnerships. It also provided us with the opportunity to realise the challenges and issues each operator faces, while being able to reassure them of our support and ongoing service.

In January 2012 the DAN HIRA programme was presented to keen assessors in the US. After a visit to the DAN America offices in Durham, North Carolina, it was off to Blue Stone Quarry in Thomasville, about an hour and a half's drive from DAN's offices, to commence training and practise the HIRA assessment skills. This was followed by a visit to Horizon Divers in Key Largo, Florida Keys, for the first formal assessment as part of the HIRA implementation process in this region. It was agreed that this was an exciting new undertaking enforcing the DAN mission of preventing diving and non-diving related incidents and accidents and being able to identify and manage them should they arise. A visit to DAN Europe was the next step in advancing the HIRA programme internationally. The more theoretical and formal part of training was done at the DAN offices in Roseto, Italy, with a very motivated group of assessors eager to promote the programme to interested dive partners. For practical training purposes, a visit to the nearby coastal town of Pescara (a popular holiday destination of Italians on the Adriatic Coast) was first on the map. An assessment of Acquatica Scuba, led by our team of professionals, was done and it emphasised all the important aspects that need to be considered and how the process is executed in reality. The next two

days were used for the new “recruits” to strut their stuff and practise their skills on HIRA assessments. A visit to Gruppo Nasim Dive Centre at Riva di Traiano, just outside of Rome, posed the ideal venue as this incorporated recreational and specialty diving, as well as technical diving and all the aspects thereof. The use of an air-testing kit to evaluate air quality was one of the highlights for both the staff and new assessors. The ease with which the tool can be used, as well as the short time it takes to extract vital information and results, will lead to the tool becoming part of the standard HIRA programme in future.

Last up was the very well-organised dive training and research centre, Scuba Dolphin, in Rome. Firstly, the school itself was assessed, followed by a dive with the charter used to take out divers at Torvaianica. This provided the ideal opportunity to witness their boat and dive operations. During our visits to all the different facilities, each one unique in their configuration and services on offer, we have come to appreciate that each assessment and the subsequent report need to be tailor-made and individualised to fit the specific centre. The DAN HIRA programme has been accepted with open arms in all areas visited thus far and everyone involved in this initiative agrees that it is definitely a highly valuable step forward in preventing diving as well as non-diving related accidents and incidents, through empowering staff and operators with the knowledge to recognise and address possible hazards and the risks they may pose. This all works towards a better, safer and more assured diving experience.