

Covid-19 Guidance on Medical Assessments for Commercial Divers

Please read all the information within this guidance note

Advice to Divers

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is aware that people holding certificates of medical fitness to dive, might experience disruption in access to Approved Medical Examiners of Divers (AMEDs) for renewal medical examinations as a result of events or circumstances generated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Regulation 15 of the Diving at Work Regulations 1997 (DWR) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1997/2776/regulation/15/made> requires that the certificate of medical fitness to dive shall state that the period of validity of the medical which can be a maximum of 12 months, and any limitations or conditions that may apply. These limitations or conditions may relate to the type of diving, or the period that the certificate is valid for, eg it may be a shorter validity than 12 months.

If a diver is unable to undertake a medical re-examination with an AMED for reasons associated directly with coronavirus or as a result of complying with related government advice, HSE will accept the validity of current certificates up until 1st June 2020 provided that the diver's current certificate of medical fitness was issued with a full 12 months validity. Anyone taking advantage of this extension should be able to describe clearly their reasons for delaying undertaking a medical examination, and demonstrate the steps that they have taken to try to obtain a medical examination, if required. They should also be able to confirm that they have not been diagnosed with, or suffered any illness or injury that could impact on their medical fitness to dive. If there is any doubt about their medical fitness, they should seek further advice from their AMED.

This guidance comes into effect for certificates expiring on or after 16th March 2020, and any diver who wishes to dive at work but does not hold a current certificate of medical fitness to dive issued by an AMED on or before this date must undertake the full examination as required by DWR.

HSE will review this matter over the coming months and will issue further statements as necessary.

Advice to AMEDs

Where a diver's review medical is due, the AMED who issued the current certificate can assess them by telephone. The AMED should remind the diver that under regulation 13 of DWR, the diver must not dive in a diving project if they know of anything, including any illness or medical condition, which makes them unfit to dive. Providing there are no problems or new health issues and the last certificate issued was for 12 months, the full assessment can be postponed for three months with a 3 month MA2 certificate being issued. Where there is a problem, a judgement can be made on whether to see the diver face to face and, if so, how to do so safely. If a face to face assessment is justified, then it must be undertaken safely i.e. having undertaken a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and putting in place appropriate controls, taking into account PHE advice regarding COVID-19.

Questions

If you have any questions please email amed@hse.gov.uk

Issued 24 March 2020