

# CADC

# Magazine

Winter  
2025-2026

The official  
magazine of  
the Canadian  
Association of  
Diving Contractors

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## INSIDE:

Diving in a Digital  
World: The  
Importance of  
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Beneath the  
Surface –The  
Evolution of  
Canadian Diving

Contingency  
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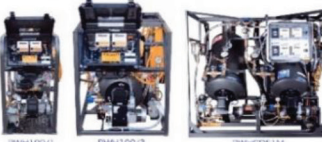
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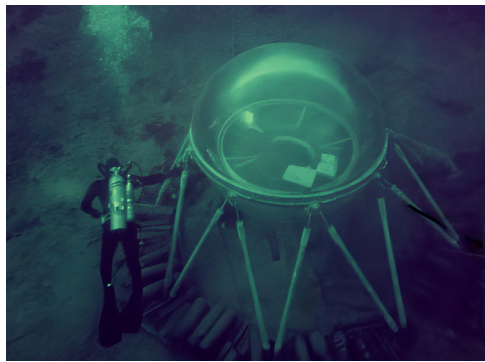
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**ON THE COVER:** The diving industry has evolved greatly under the watch of the Canadian Association of Diving Contractors (CADC), and CADC Executive Director Doug Elsey has been through it all. Turn to page 15 to hear his thoughts about his time in the water.

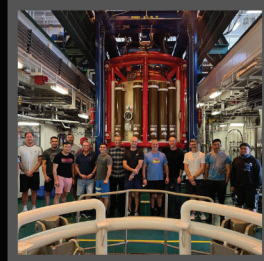
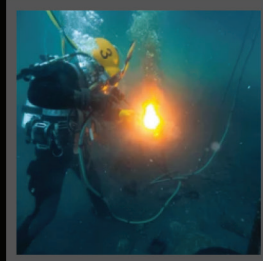
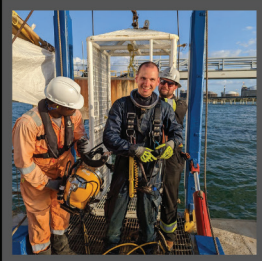


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Ryan Anderson, CADC President

## A Message from the President of the CADC

Canada's commercial diving sector over the last year can be summed up simply: a lot happened and most of it moved us in the right direction.

Our biggest national effort gained real traction, which is harmonizing the CSA Z275 dive standards across the country. One province confirmed that our submission will guide their next regulatory phase, and a major national committee has added harmonization to its workplan.

In government time, that's the equivalent of a full sprint.

We also had to navigate Ontario's screen-industry exemption – a reminder of what happens when diving rules get carved up by sector, by province, or by the mood of the day. The Canadian Association of Diving Contractors (CADC) pushed back firmly and consistently, all the while reinforcing our core message: If someone is going underwater for work, they deserve the same level of protection regardless of where they work in Canada.

Inside CADC, we modernized membership tiers, stabilized our dues system, and kept the financials steady. Our communications sharpened, UnderwaterJOBS.com 2.0 continues to grow, and our CADC Magazine deepened its editorial content, while showcasing photos of divers doing heroic things in places most sane people avoid.

We also continued building strong relationships with regulators, training organizations, and industry partners across the country.

And let's be honest – none of this happened quietly. Our members were vocal, engaged, and unfiltered in the best possible way. The emails that begin with 'You're not going to believe this...' continue to fuel much of our work (and occasionally our blood pressure). Keep them coming.

Looking ahead, our direction remains clear:

- Push toward a nationally consistent regulatory framework.
- Reinforce competency and safety grounded in the CSA Z275 standards.
- Advocate for professionalism in every sector that puts people underwater.
- Support our members as industry conditions continue to evolve.

Commercial diving is a small, highly specialized world filled with people who do hard work in hard places. Our role at CADC is to help make sure that work is recognized, properly regulated, and backed by the standards and oversight it deserves.

To all our members – thank you for your commitment, your resilience, and your steady voice throughout the year. The work we do is serious, but it doesn't hurt to smile once in a while as we push forward together.

Here's to a safe, steady, and harmonized year ahead.



If someone is going underwater for work, they deserve the same level of protection regardless of where they work in Canada.

## Update Your Mailing Details!

CADC members, you can update your mailing details to receive upcoming issues of CADC Magazine by emailing [distribution@matrixgroupinc.net](mailto:distribution@matrixgroupinc.net).

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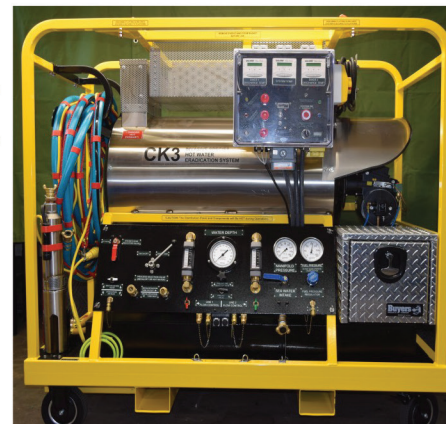


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Doug Elsey, P.Eng.  
CADC Executive Director

A national industry deserves national rules anchored to the CSA Z275 Standards – not because it's tidy, but because it's fair, protective, and necessary.

## Notes from the Executive Director of the CADC

**Every so often, we put** out an issue of *CADC Magazine* where all the articles seem to talk to one another. An honest alignment of people who care about this industry. The issue you hold right now is one of those moments, and everything in these pages reflects a single, gritty truth: our industry only stays safe when we refuse to take the easy way out.

We open with our cover story, *"Beneath the Surface – Five Decades in Canada's Diving Industry."* While the article is built around pieces of my own history, what matters isn't nostalgia – it's the reminder of where we came from. In the early days, the work could be rough and the structure almost nonexistent. You learned by watching, listening, and sometimes absorbing lessons the hard way. My story illustrates the transition from those unpredictable beginnings to the standards-driven world we have now. It's a reminder that none of this – the protocols, the training, the procedures – appeared without cost. We built it all because we had to.

Diver Certification Board of Canada CEO Tracy Childs' timely article, *"The Reality of the Digital World in the Diving Industry: The Importance of Validation,"* we see how the digital age has made things faster, but also easier to fake. Tracy brings us a simple, human message: if we care about the people stepping into the water, then we must take the time to validate who they are, what they hold, and whether they're competent to be there. This isn't about suspicion. It's about responsibility.

In *"One Country, One Standard, One Regulation: Why Canada Can't Keep Playing Patchwork with Diving Safety,"* I tackle an issue that's been quietly weakening our industry for years. Exemptions, carve-outs, and regional interpretations might look harmless on paper, but underwater they turn into risks. The water doesn't care what province you're in. A national industry deserves national rules anchored to the CSA Z275 Standards – not because it's

tidy, but because it's fair, protective, and necessary.


Anyone who's supervised divers knows the truth behind Aaron Griffin's hard-hitting piece, *"Contingency Plans: You've Planned It, But Did You Drill It?"* Written plans collapse fast if they're never tested. Stress changes everything. Equipment behaves differently. People freeze. Aaron's examples hit close to home because they reflect the real-world scenarios we've all seen unfold – the kind that turn into tragedies if crews aren't prepared. Drills aren't bureaucracy; they're lifelines.

We round out the technical side with Jonathan Chapple's detailed breakdown, *"In Depth: Major Revisions in the 2026 Edition of CSA Standard Z275.2."* Jonathan cuts through the complexity and explains the major updates of Z275.2: risk management, SCUBA limitations, reinforced crew minimums, human factors. These aren't just rule changes. They're reflections of how our work has evolved and what we've learned along the way, and they make the standard more realistic, more usable, and more human.

Our Member Spotlight, *"Canpac Marine Services: Quality Beneath the Waves,"* showcases a company that represents the kind of professionalism I respect most: steady, competent, reliable. No shortcuts. No theatrics. Just good work done properly.

When you pull all these articles together, the message is unmistakable:

- Competency is earned.
- Standards are built from experience.
- Preparedness is non-negotiable.
- Safety is personal – because the work always is.

I've spent my life in this industry, and I know how quickly things can go wrong when we stop paying attention. The strength of Canada's diving community comes from people who care enough to do the work properly. This issue is a reminder of that – and a reminder of the people we protect when we get it right. 

## Why You Should Be a Part of the CADC

“CADC is the glue that binds the occupational diving community across Canada,” says Doug Elsey, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Diving Contractors (CADC).

CADC was formed in 1982 because regulators and government legislators did not and do not want to talk to individuals – they want to talk to organized groups representing the industry. The safety standards that govern your operations today are a result of past CADC members doing their job in “getting it right” so that we have a safe and workable industry today.

Safety, according to Elsey, is one of the most important issues in an industry that can be both dangerous and physically demanding. The CADC acts as a unifying body, able to communicate effectively across Canada and beyond. The CADC acts as a watchdog for the diving industry and keeps a constant eye on regulations and standards. Because

of its diligence in monitoring these standards and regulations for commercial diving across Canada, the industry has become a much safer place.

As a member, you are adding to the voice that is the CADC, effectively allowing the industry to be heard, especially when it comes to lowering insurance rates.


Some of the benefits CADC membership offers are:

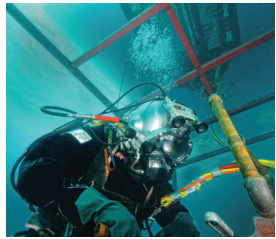
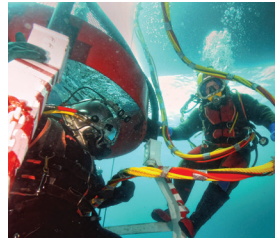
- Constant communications on jobs coming up that you may be interested in bidding on. This is done weekly or biweekly as we send out tender information across Canada.
- Information available on our website ([www.CADC.ca](http://www.CADC.ca)) and the CADC-sponsored website, [www.UnderwaterJOBS.com](http://www.UnderwaterJOBS.com).
- The JOBS website ([www.UnderwaterJOBS.com](http://www.UnderwaterJOBS.com)), where you can post jobs and look for qualified people.

Check out our members at [www.CADC.ca/members](http://www.CADC.ca/members)

- The members’ mail-list server that allows you to instantly contact ALL of the members when you need advice, gear, personnel, etc.
- Diving insurances exclusively for CADC members – backed by Lloyd’s Brokers and others who know the diving industry.
- Reduced rates on gear from our associate members.
- This very magazine, with articles on companies, jobs, safety, etc., to keep you informed.

Not everyone can join CADC. Those members who apply have to agree AND demonstrate that they operate in a safe working environment. One cannot join by simply filling in the form – you have to have a demonstrated level of safety and competence in operations to CSA Standards 275.2 (Operations) and CSA 275.4 (Competency).

For more information, please check out our website at [www.cadc.ca](http://www.cadc.ca) or e-mail: [info@cadc.ca](mailto:info@cadc.ca). We look forward to hearing from you! 



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Company: \_\_\_\_\_

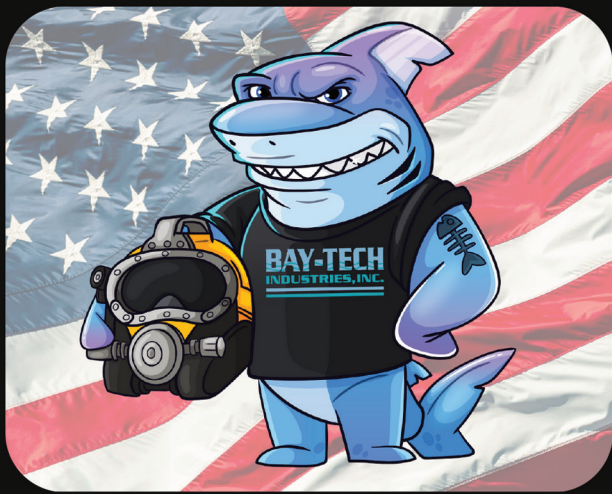
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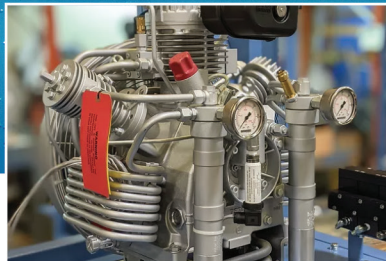
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# Beneath the Surface

## The Evolution of Canadian Diving

With Expertise from Doug Elsey, P.Eng, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Diving Contractors (CADC). Compiled by Paul Adair, Staff Writer

**F**rom the Arctic ice to offshore construction and national safety reform, few people have witnessed the evolution of Canada's commercial diving industry as closely as Canadian Association of Diving Contractors (CADC) Executive Director, Doug Elsey.

Elsey has spent over 50 years helping to strengthen the framework that today defines professionalism and safety in Canadian diving. We connected with him to talk about where the industry began, how it has changed, and where it needs to go next.

*Editor's Note: This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

**CADC Magazine (CM): Doug, you've spent a lifetime underwater, both literally and figuratively. Where did it all begin?**

**Elsey:** It started out of curiosity and the need for tuition money. Like many people of my generation, I was influenced by Jacques Cousteau and began diving recreationally in the early 1960s. I became an instructor with the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI Worldwide) and gradually moved into commercial work while studying engineering.

That led me into Ocean Engineering, which was a new discipline at the time, as was the idea of living and working under the sea. In the early 1970s, I joined Dr. Joe MacInnis on the SUBLIMNOS project in Georgian Bay – Canada's first underwater habitat – where we lived and worked beneath the surface, testing both physiological and engineering limits.

From there came the Arctic expeditions – Sub Igloo, the world's first polar undersea station, and the Arctic III and IV programs – where we pushed the limits of under-ice operations and mixed-gas diving. Those experiences shaped how risk, design, and teamwork came to be understood in some of the most challenging environments imaginable. It wasn't just adventure; it was applied engineering under extreme conditions.

**CM: What was the commercial diving world like when you started out?**

**Elsey:** It was frontier work. There were no national standards, no formal training systems, and very little regulation. You learned from whoever had survived the last job. The equipment was heavy and unforgiving, and the conditions demanded endurance and judgment that couldn't be taught in a classroom.



Doug Elsey's photography has helped archive the people, conditions, and work that make up the Canadian diving industry. Photos courtesy of Doug Elsey.

Under Doug Elsey's watch, CADC Magazine not only highlights the work being done beneath the waves, but also advocates for a safer diving industry.

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But it was also the period when Canada's commercial diving identity was being formed. Major infrastructure projects were underway, and often in places no one else wanted to work.

By the time I joined Can-Dive Oceanreering (later Can-Dive Services) in the early 70s, the work had scaled up significantly. It was highly technical and professional, and safety procedures were becoming more structured. Still, it became clear that without agreed-upon national rules, companies trying to operate safely were often at a disadvantage. The industry needed a foundation; a set of standards that everyone could trust their lives to.

**CM: Is that what led you toward standards development?**

**Elsy:** Yes. I joined the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) in 1974 at a time when the industry was beginning to recognize the need for formal, national standards. But what started as participation quickly became a long-term commitment because the impact was tangible. You could see standards change behaviour and save lives. I had no intent in serving at CSA for as long as I have, but it was – and continues to be – the way to make a difference in diver safety.

The CSA Z275 series became that foundation: operational standards through Z275.2 and competency standards through Z275.4. Before that, safety relied heavily on 'common sense,' but common sense isn't enough when something goes wrong at depth. Standards define what safe looks like – not just for divers, but for supervisors, contractors, and clients.

Over time, those standards have reshaped the culture of Canadian commercial diving, created accountability and professionalism, and established a level playing field where safety wasn't optional.

**CM: What were some of the major turning points for the industry?**

**Elsy:** The first would be the move from SCUBA to surface-supplied systems for commercial work, which brought reliable communications, proper surface supervision, and operational control, as well as clearly separated occupational diving from recreational diving.

Another turning point was the creation of the Diver Certification Board of Canada

(DCBC) – a spin-off from CADC – which certifies divers to the CSA Z275.4 Competency Standard. This is what finally linked training, certification, and safety under a single national framework.

Then there was technology. We went from handwritten logs to digital systems, real-time video, and remotely operated vehicles, and supervisors today have access to information we couldn't have even imagined in the 1970s. The industry matured from muscle to method.

**CM: Despite this progress, however, you've said standards still face resistance. Why?**

**Elsey:** Because standards force responsibility – and responsibility costs time and money.

But the alternative costs lives. Every serious accident I've witnessed or reviewed came down to someone ignoring a rule or cutting a corner. That's why CADC insists on a four-person dive crew: diver, standby diver, tender, and supervisor. We have more than 18 documented cases where a standby diver directly saved a life.

The CSA standards aren't red tape – they're lifelines. Under *Bill C-45*, supervisors and employers can face criminal liability for negligence. Standards protect people – legally, ethically, and operationally.

**CM: You've been involved with CADC for most of its history. How has the association evolved?**

**Elsey:** CADC was founded in 1982, and I have been involved with the association as a member from the outset during its formative years. I later served two terms as President before becoming Executive Director in 2009, when CADC had an established history and a clear mandate.

The focus moving forward was modernization, strengthening advocacy, improving communication, and reinforcing CADC's credibility as the national voice for commercial diving safety. We made CSA compliance a condition of membership, rebuilt *CADC Magazine* as a serious communication platform, and worked to ensure CADC was engaged not only with contractors, but also with regulators, insurers, and clients.

Today, CADC functions as more than a trade group. It is a community of like-minded companies focused on safety, and it reflects the shared conscience of an industry that takes safety and professionalism seriously.

**CM: You've been quite outspoken about Ontario's film industry diving exemption. Why does it concern you so much?**

**Elsey:** Because the exemption undermines everything we've built, and allowing uncertified divers to work in paid diving roles – regardless of the sector – creates a dangerous precedent.

The argument that film diving is 'low risk' doesn't hold up. Water doesn't care about choreography or scripts. Whether it's entrapment, blackout, cardiac events, or anything else that can go wrong – the risks are the same. If one sector can opt out of safety standards, others will follow.

CADC's position is simple: no one should be paid to dive in Canada without meeting CSA competency standards. This isn't about bureaucracy. It's about survival.



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**David V. Lewis, P.Eng.**  
President  
Canadian Association of Diving Contractors  
(CADC) member



**CM: What challenges does the industry face going forward?**

**Elsy:** Consistency and continuity. Canada still operates under a patchwork of provincial regulations where some jurisdictions adopt CSA standards directly and others reference them loosely. We need consistency nationwide.

And we need to pass on experience. A lot of seasoned divers are retiring and, if we don't mentor properly, we lose hard-earned lessons. Experience can't be downloaded. It must be shared.

**CM: You've also spent decades documenting the industry through photography. How has that influenced you?**

**Elsy:** Documentary photography taught me that a pretty picture doesn't matter if it isn't honest. The goal was never beauty – it was truth and showing what it really feels like when the water closes over you and the work begins or when you're on deck as the diver starts his task.

A commercial dive demands bravery and – at times – delivers fear. There are

successes and failures, pride in the wins, and a respect for those who didn't come back. Commercial divers are also a tight-knit breed. Professionally trained divers know exactly what they're up against, both on the surface and – even more so – below it.

With documentary photography, that split second matters. No posing. No added drama. The work is real. The risk is real. The camera is just another tool that's there to document what happens when nobody's watching, and those considering the trade for what lies ahead.

When the image conveys the reality, it helps us all understand the risk and take the right steps to manage it. My goal was to get it right. My hope is that the work does justice to their experience.

**CM: After all these years, what keeps you engaged?**


**Elsy:** It's the people. You trust the person next to you with your life, and that kind of bond doesn't change with time. Commercial diving also builds Canada. Whether it's bridges, pipelines,

environmental projects, or Arctic research, it is all work that matters.

**CM: Do you have a message for the next generation of Canadian divers?**

**Elsy:** You need to earn your competence. Never take shortcuts. Know the standards. Respect your crew. Speak up when something doesn't look right. Every rule in the book is written in blood. Learn from those who came before you and do better.

For many of us in this industry, diving isn't just something we did – it's who we became. What stays with me aren't the titles or the projects. It's the sound of air hissing through a helmet, the calm voice on comms, and the moment a diver breaks surface after a hard job. Doing it right, so we can do it again.

If the work I've been part of has helped make the industry safer for the next generation, I'm satisfied with that. In commercial diving, nothing is ever done alone. It's a team effort that is built on trust, competence, and the shared understanding that everyone goes home safely at the end of the day. 


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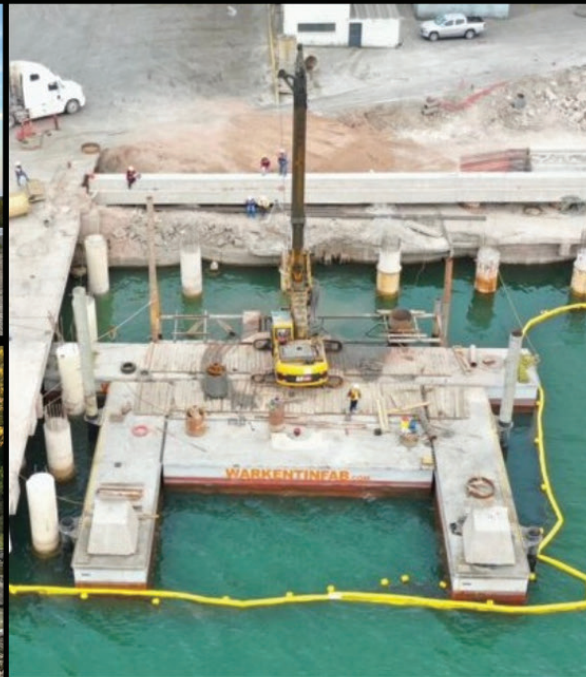


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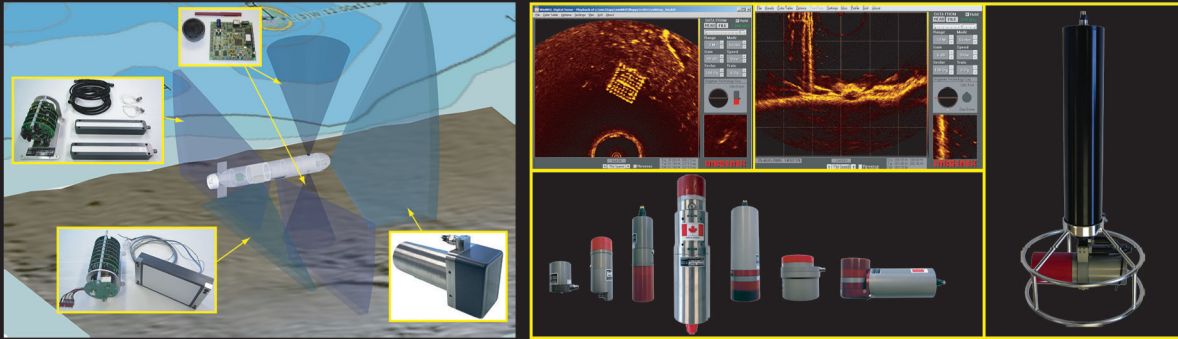
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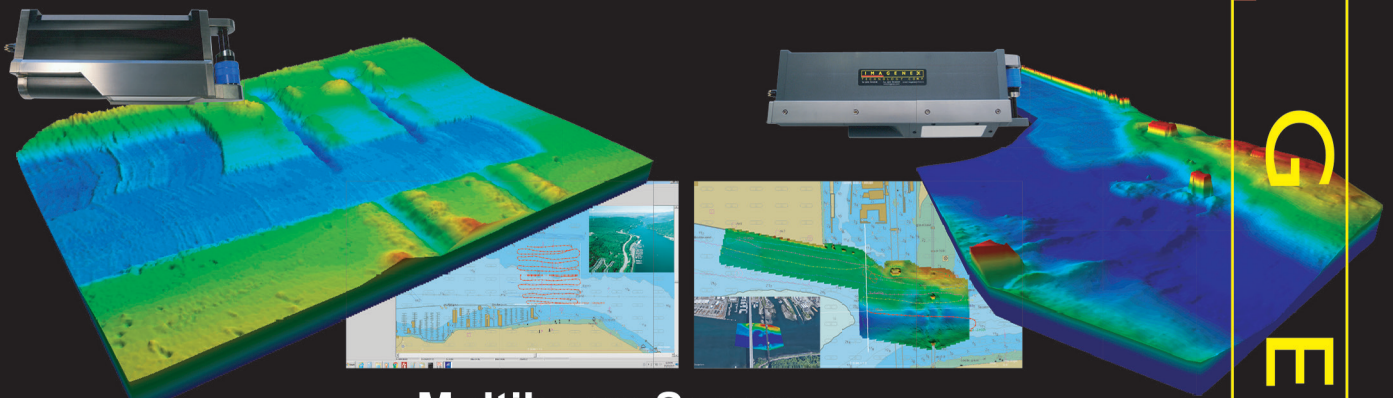
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# Diving in a Digital World: The Importance of Validation

By Tracy Childs, Diver Certification Board of Canada

**I**n an era where technology has become predominant, the Diver Certification Board of Canada (DCBC) finds that dive companies are developing robust electronic logs, diving physicians are issuing medicals with electronic signatures, and dive plans can now be submitted via email. Even at DCBC, we have moved towards becoming mostly digital, including the submission of applications through a cloud-based platform.

However, while it's great to see technological advances creep into the diving world, we have also begun seeing a negative impact of this change. There seems to be a sense of security and legitimacy with information provided electronically. Unfortunately, this sense of trust has led to complacency and potentially catastrophic results.

This digital shift in the diving industry has created heightened urgency when it comes to verifying any information provided, as well as the validation of credentials. Any diver that has graduated from a DCBC accredited school has an electronic file within our records, which contains everything from where they went to school to any upgrades they've earned throughout their diving career. Quite literally, anything that has been provided to us – paper or electronic – we will have preserved digitally, which makes it easy to verify who they are and what they have done. This has proven to be very useful for contractors looking to hire and inspectors visiting job sites.

## **International opportunity**

Canada and DCBC are members of the International Diving Regulators and Certifiers Forum (IDRCF). This

means divers who are trained by DCBC accredited schools as an Unrestricted Surface Supplied Diver have the ability to take their careers overseas and work in the jurisdictions of other IDRCF member countries, so long as they offer certification based on mutually accepted training. It has become standard protocol for other certification bodies to validate certifications before allowing them to 'cross-over' – for example, the Australian certification body, Australian Diver Accreditation Scheme (ADAS).

While it is not yet common practice, we are seeing an increase in validation of diving personnel holding DCBC certificates by international contractors, and there have been very interesting findings through these verifications.

For instance, many of you know that Canadian Standards Association (CSA) used to have a category for Unrestricted

Surface Supplied Supervisor (USSS). On the international scale, there are few known occasions where people have used this inshore certificate to work in the offshore as a supervisor, even though the USSS certificate is not an equivalent qualification to Offshore Air Diving Supervisor. It takes very little imagination to create the hypothetical scenario – and the ramifications – of an offshore incident due to the actions of an unqualified supervisor.

That is why, to eliminate ambiguity, a decision was made at the CSA level to rename the category to Inshore Air Diving Supervisor. Since the renaming of the category, there have been additional cases where holders of a USSS certification were misusing their qualification to work in the offshore. Regardless of their work experience – qualified or not – their only option for renewal was for that of Inshore Air Diving Supervisor.

So, how does this heightened awareness impact Canada and what is the DCBC doing to help?

DCBC ensures that, with every application that is received, information is validated diving medicals are confirmed to have been conducted by a qualified diving physician, and logs are validated by contacting employers / contractors when they are incomplete.

But even with DCBC updating the application process to an online platform,

we still require a signature. Signatures are unique and we have thousands of them in our system, which we use as a resource in our validation process. In the event of ambiguity, we verify the information with employers, something that has been common practice of the DCBC office for many years. Fortunately, there have been very few instances of false information being submitted, but it has happened.

While these procedural practices may not seem relevant to those applying for certification, they have proven to be incredibly helpful for both inspectors and contractors alike by allowing contracted operations to continue without interruption.

**Raising the standard**

While these procedural practices may not seem relevant to those applying for

certification, they have proven to be incredibly helpful for both inspectors and contractors alike by allowing contracted operations to continue without interruption.

The impact of validating credentials extends far and wide, but it starts at the top by requiring all occupational diving personnel to prove competency in some tangible form. If all provinces were to adopt the CSA Z275 family of diving standards, provincial regulators would be working from the same playing field. CSA would become the gold standard for Canada’s diving industry removing any ambiguity of what is required of contractors from one province to the next.

Being proactive does not end there, however. Contractors across Canada who are members of the Canadian Association of Diving Contractors (CADC), have each agreed to accept and run their businesses in accordance with the CSA family of diving standards, including CSA’s Z275.4 *Competency Standard*. For many, this commitment to industry surpasses that which is outlined in their respective provincial regulations. This means validating that each diver hired holds a certificate of competency such as that issued by the DCBC, thereby demonstrating that they have been trained and are competent to work as a diver in Canada. In most provinces, the same holds true for diving supervisors. If we were to become lenient with this standard, we expose the Canadian industry to an increase in diving incidents. Experience without training is simply not enough.

It is imperative that we continue to work together, use the resources that are available, validate where possible, and do what we can to ensure everyone goes home safely at the end of the day. 🍁

Tracy Childs has been with DCBC since 2008. Originally from Newfoundland, she moved to Nova Scotia with a BA from Memorial University. Eventually she went on to complete further training in Business Administration. Tracy’s positions within DCBC have evolved from Executive Assistant to Certification Manager, and now CEO. Tracy has also been instrumental in hosting the CUCE since its inaugural year in 2008, a Canadian conference that continues to move across the country.

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# One Country. One Standard. One Regulation.

## Canada's Commercial Diving Safety Shouldn't Be Provincial

By Doug Elsey, P.Eng, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Diving Contractors

Spend enough years in this industry and you learn one thing fast: the water doesn't care about jurisdiction. It doesn't lighten up because you crossed from Manitoba into Ontario. It doesn't become more forgiving just because the job happens to be a movie set or an aquarium. Depth and pressure play by their own rules and they always have.

That's the exact reason why Canada needs a single harmonized national diving regulation that is anchored directly to the CSA Z275 Standards – not a dozen interpretations or political carve-outs. We need one rulebook that is built around what keeps divers alive.

**The water doesn't care who hired you. It only cares whether or not you got the standard right**

The Z275 standards we use today were shaped by people who've been there, who have taken the hits, and who have walked the bottom long enough to know what failure looks like. The standards are updated when they need to be, and are driven by incident data, engineering, and lived experience. They are our national safety baseline – recognized in court and trusted in the field.

But without harmonized adoption, provinces can – and do – wander off in their own direction. Ontario is the clearest example of how fast that drift can happen.

**Every exemption widens the cracks – and divers live in those cracks**

For many years, Ontario had one of the strongest diving regulations in the country, with solid crew requirements, strong

supervisor obligations, and clear alignment with CSA. Then came the cracks. First, a carve-out for aquarium diving in 2014. Then came another exemption for the film and television sector in 2025. Neither of these exemptions were done with stakeholder or industry consultation and both were done by lobbying and the politics of convenience. What's more, neither were supported by CSA Dive Standards, neither aligned with national best practice, and neither created with the industry at the table.

Just like that, two sectors were handed permission to work under standards the rest of us would never accept on our own job sites.

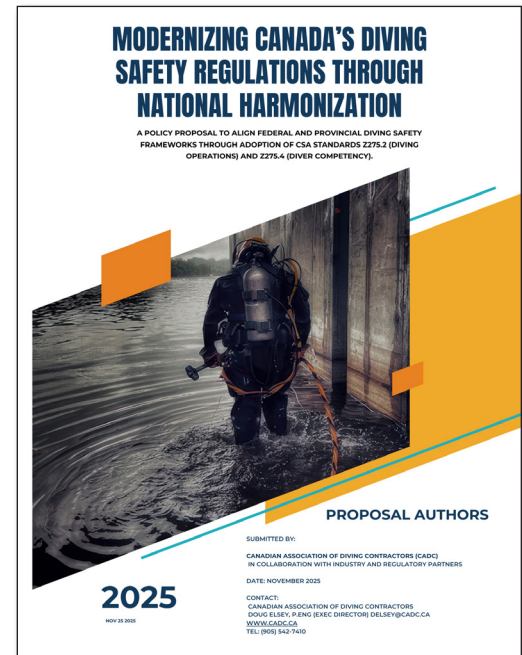
Here's the plain truth: exemptions don't make diving safer – they make it cheaper, faster, and more convenient for someone who isn't the one taking the risk. The water doesn't change because the sector does. A diver performing a stunt or scrubbing a tank faces the same physiological hazards as the diver inspecting a dam. When provinces start carving holes in the safety net, it's only a matter of time before someone falls through.

This is exactly what national harmonization is meant to prevent.

**One country. One standard. Anything less is a gamble**

A single national regulation would keep the baseline consistent – from coast to coast. It would give inspectors one clear yardstick. It would support interprovincial mobility, so a diver doesn't need to relearn the rules every time they cross a border. It would stop political shortcuts from eroding the foundation of our safety culture.

Most importantly, however, it would put every diver – no matter where they're working – under the same minimum protections.



That's the point of harmonization. Not paperwork. Not bureaucrats pulling strings. Harmonization means safety – consistent, predictable, and non-negotiable safety.

Those of us who've done this work for a lifetime know exactly how little margin for error there is underwater. You don't rise above your training in a crisis – you fall straight to the bottom of the minimum standard you were given. And if that minimum shifts with politics or convenience, we haven't built a system. We've built a liability.

Canada needs to fix that.

Going forward, the CADC will continue to push for 'One Country. One Standard. One Regulation.' All of this is based on the standards written in the blood of those who didn't make it. Everything else is just luck – and luck is a safety plan for fools. 🍁

Doug Elsey is the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Diving Contractors. He has been working in the commercial and military diving industry for more than 50 years.



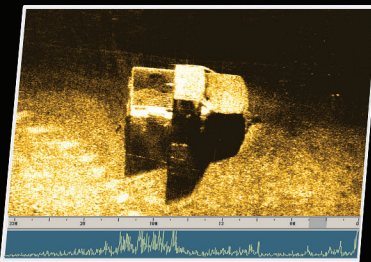
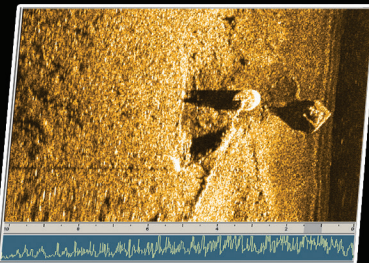
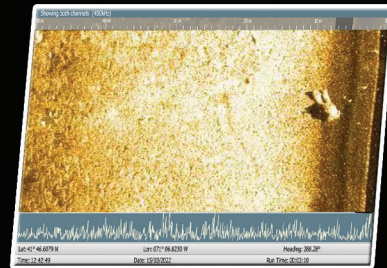
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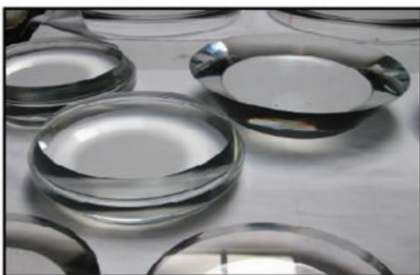


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# Contingency Plans: You've Planned It, But Did You Drill It?

*Drilling can make all the difference between planning and having that plan work out when you need it to. Photo courtesy of JF Brennan.*

CAUTION, NITROGEN BLANKET

By Aaron Griffin, President, Underwater Skills Institute

**A** critical component to planning diving tasks is emergency contingencies. Time is of the essence in a situation where a dive crew has to recover an injured or unconscious diver, and it is obvious that having an effective site-specific extraction plan is a vital part of all diving activities.

But how do you know your plan will work?

There is a big difference between planning and proving readiness and, while many plans look great on paper, it's not until they have been attempted can a Dive Supervisor say with any real authority that it's an effective emergency plan. All it takes is one seemingly small part of the plan to be problematic and everything can unravel. More often than not, these flaws are only discovered at the worst possible time – right in the middle of an emergency.

Having worked for years at a dive school, I have supervised hundreds of rescue drills, and I have seen it all. Whether it's that hoisting D-ring on the diver's harness is inaccessible under their bailout, the height from the water

surface to the deck is a little bit higher than last time, the basket is too small to accommodate the diver as well as the standby, or that stretcher doesn't have the best straps for securing a diver – the list goes on. Basically, whatever can happen, will happen.

Practical drills are the best way to reveal the hard truth about your plan and will immediately draw attention to areas that simply won't work. Drills can reveal holes in communications and gaps in assumed competency, equipment suitability, and equipment readiness.

They also clearly demonstrate that, while some procedures sound great, they simply won't work in the field.

### Real-world examples

Case in point: While doing some rescue / standby drill training with a crew on a supervisor's course, we drilled using procedures and contingency plans the candidates developed, and those procedures drew heavily on procedures their teams used operationally.

One procedure was to load the victim into a stretcher basket and hoist them on to the deck. For anyone who has done this, they know that the diver's helmet

and bailout bottle are problematic and can create breathing and/or neck injury issues. It's also painfully slow and incredibly complex to load a diver onto a stretcher in while in the water.

When I questioned the candidate about this, I was told his team's procedure was to simply 'cut the harness and bailout off.' Seems easy enough, right?

But have you tried it? Have you ever before tried cutting straps? Not many people are willing to trash a perfectly good harness to try. I will tell you that I have, and that it takes a fair bit of care and time. Have you tried jumping in the water as a standby to rescue a diver, brought them to surface, pulled out your knife, and found the right straps to cut – all without cutting the wrong ones and releasing topside's control of the umbilical?

How long does it take to cut those straps and – hopefully – not inadvertently slit the diver's throat? Tick-tock, time's a-wastin'. You have to get that diver on deck.

And remember; you're doing all this while gassed out from the actual

rescue, mid-water with a foot or two of chop beating you against the side of the wharf or vessel and then putting the victim in the basket before hoisting them out.

Sounds easy enough, doesn't it?

On paper, the procedure looked fine and reasonable, but a drill clearly demonstrated multiple 'small' issues that added up into a less-than-ideal outcome. Luckily, we found this all out as part of a drill, and not during an actual incident.

One last example – and this one is on me.

Many moons ago, our extraction plan at Seneca for an unconscious diver from our bell was simple: bring the divers up, pull the unconscious diver out, put them on a backboard, straight to the chamber. Easy enough. We have lots of personnel on deck, great conditions, what could go wrong?

So, we tried it. The bell arrived on surface with the unconscious diver lying on the bottom of the bell. However, the bellman was stuck, as there wasn't enough room to get him out over the victim. Strike one. Because of this, there

was no room to get a tender in to deal with the victim. Strike Two.

We finally managed to extract the bellman to make a bit more room. However, pulling an unconscious diver in full kit out from a bell and up the two or three ladder steps was simply not possible. Strike three.


Then, removing the helmet and gear from the diver crumpled in a ball on the floor of the bell took over five minutes. The total elapsed time from the divers arriving on surface to diver in the chamber ready to travel was twelve minutes! Twelve minutes to move a diver from the bell to the chamber 25 feet away. How many strikes is that?

Once again, multiple little stumbling blocks combined / clustered into one of the most eye-opening and frustrating drills I've ever participated in.

Following this debacle, our procedure was immediately amended, and the new procedure was thoroughly drilled to uncover more weak points, resulting in our extraction procedure now being virtually seamless. But without trying it first through a drill, none of these flaws would have been exposed.

**Conclusion**

I'm sure many of you have had similar experiences. Procedures can seem very reasonable and look great on paper; tick off that box and move on. But you can't move on. A plan that hasn't been proven to work in the moment is just window dressing. Don't wait until it's too late to find out your carefully laid out emergency plan doesn't work when you need it to work.

Prove your plan is good by drilling it. It's the only way to be certain your procedures can protect your team. 

Aaron Griffin is the President of the Underwater Skills Institute based in Stouffville, Ontario, where he is engaged in the training of all categories of diving including Occupational SCUBA, Restricted Surface Supplied Diver (RSSD), Unrestricted Surface Supplied Diver (USSD), Supervisors as well as Diving Medical Technician (DMT) Clinical Hyperbaric Chamber Operator (CHCO). He is a Diver Certification of Canada (DCBC) Inshore Diving Safety Specialist and Red Seal Millwright, as well as holds a Director's seat on the DCBC Board and is the current Chairman of CSA Z275.4.

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## Canpac Marine Services: Quality Beneath the Waves

By Paul Adair, Staff Writer

### **Founded in 1965, Canpac Marine**

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CanPac's focus over the last 50 years has been to deliver safe, high quality, and cost-effective solutions for the inspection, repair, maintenance and construction of marine assets from surface to 6,000 metres of water depth. Today, the company is one of Canada's leading commercial diving and Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) contractors and it offers a wide range of marine and subsea services to the inland, coastal, and offshore sectors from the Port of Vancouver.

Starting out providing coastal towing services and installing submarine communication cables along the coast of British Columbia, Canpac is the company responsible for laying the cables British Columbians have relied on for decades.

In 1980, Canpac's Diving division was formed to provide construction diving services in the Port of Vancouver. Since then, the company has conducted thousands of dives – and logged a significant amount of man hours underwater – performing salvages, marine terminal construction, ship husbandry, and air and mixed gas diving for the oil and gas sector. Canpac Robotics Division was later formed in 1991, and the company started offering Work Class ROV (WROV) services to depths exceeding 4,000 metres along the Pacific Northwest.

"In 2005, we purchased our first supply vessel to better provide offshore services on the west coast," says CanPac Marine CEO, Ryan Anderson. "Since then, we have expanded the fleet to four dynamically positioned vessels



*Canpac divers specialize in the inspection, repair, maintenance, and construction of marine assets, and provide quality service second to none.*

and are conducting subsea operations around the world."

### **The Canpac difference**

Canpac's customers include local and foreign ship owners, local, provincial and federal governments, universities, marine terminal operators, and dam owners, along with a multitude of sectors and industries working in or around the water.

"We have always relied on new and emerging technologies, whether it be robotics, custom tooling, or just simple 'thinking outside the box' to get projects completed, as well as an exceptional safety culture," says Anderson. "This is what sets us apart from the competition and why our customers choose us – and keep calling back."



*Canpac is one of Canada's leading commercial diving and ROV contractors, and the only contractor submarine cable layer in the country. Photos courtesy of Canpac Marine.*

To serve its customers better, Canpac keeps offices in both Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia. The company also employs more than 55 personnel in a variety of positions, ranging from divers and mariners to ROV pilots and office staff. Canpac is proud of its employees, recognizing that commercial diving is an industry that needs young enthusiastic personnel, and that – because it is challenging today to attract and keep skilled talent – it is critical to hold on and develop the workforce it already has.

“We are only as good as the divers on the end of the hose, the marine crews working the vessels, and the ROV pilots running the machines, and we know these are the people who keep our business running,” says Anderson. “We have employees who have been working for us more than 40 years and divers who have been with us for over 20 years. This doesn’t happen by accident – it happens by ensuring each employee has tools and support they need.”

Canpac is the only submarine cable layer in Canada, and, to date, the company has competed more than 250 cable laying projects, as well as pioneered a number of technologies that support cable laying operations. In 2023, Canpac began designing and manufacturing a 6,000-metre-rated WROV called ‘Mantis’ to support deep water projects, and the company has so far used Mantis to complete projects for multiple universities, Ocean Networks Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

“In early 2026, we were contracted to begin the recovery of gold bullion, estimated to be worth over \$60 million, from the wreck of the S.S. Pacific, in 1,200 metres of water off the United States’ west coast,” says Anderson. “We are lucky to conduct some of the coolest subsea projects around, whether it’s air diving and WROV ops in the Arctic or deep-water salvage in the Pacific – it’s never a dull day at Canpac.”



**The value of membership**

Canpac has long been a member of the Canadian Association of Diving Contractors (CADC) and appreciates the efforts of the association on its behalf. The company recognizes the value CADC membership brings, such as providing a unified voice, promoting safety standards, and offering essential industry resources that cannot be received anywhere else in Canada.

“The CADC is our industry representative and acts as a powerful collective voice for all Canadian divers and contractors,” says Anderson. “The CADC has been – and remains – our voice in ensuring that safety standards are developed and implemented on a national level. Most importantly, being a CADC member also signals to clients, regulators, and other industry stakeholders that a company is committed to professionalism, safety, and adhering to the highest operational standards in Canada.”

Looking ahead, Canpac will continue seeking to dive further into the offshore wind and oil and gas markets, and continue its legacy in providing submarine cable, air diving, and WROV services.



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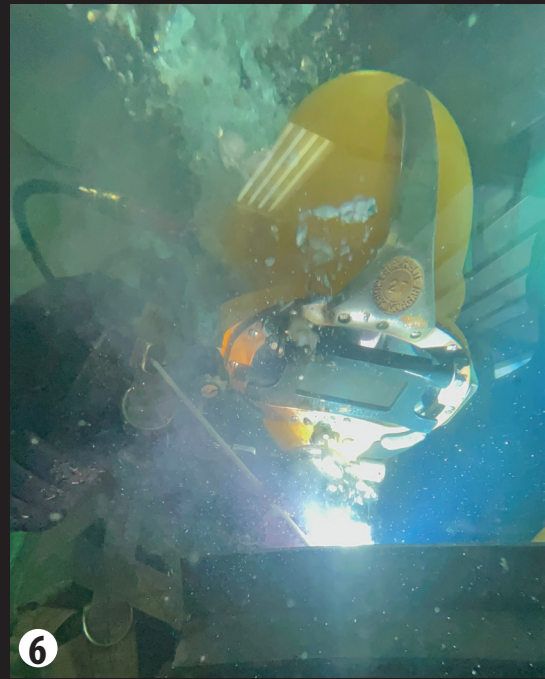
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## Our Members at Work

1. Divers at JF Brennan are always ready to step into the water, regardless of the season. Photo courtesy of JF Brennan.
2. A thumb's up from a diver as they recover a sensor for an eelgrass study. Photo courtesy of Fraser Burrard Diving Ltd.
3. DiveSafe always goes the extra mile to ensure its students are ready for the realities of the job. Photo courtesy of DiveSafe International.
4. It might be cold on the dock but, on either side, the water's fine. Photo courtesy of Canada Pump & Power.
5. The team at Dominion Divers has been providing marine services to clients throughout Canada since 1965. Photo courtesy of Dominion Divers.
6. A student working on their underwater welding skills in a dive tank located in ACDC's workshop. Photo courtesy of Atlantic Commercial Diving Centre.
7. The Baileys crew pumping out the 42-foot seiner fishing vessel, Miss Jenna C, after patching a hole in the hull. Photo courtesy of Baileys Marine Service.
8. Demonstrating the use of a verticality tool in Toronto, ON. Photo courtesy of Canadian Underwater Inspection Services Ltd.
9. A little snow squall while getting ready to do a ship inspection. Photo courtesy of 3D Marine.

If you're a member of the CADC and have some great shots of your crew at work (in and out of the water), we want to see them! Showcase what you do. Send images (with captions) for consideration to [delsey@cadc.ca](mailto:delsey@cadc.ca).

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## In Depth: Major Revisions in the 2026 Edition of CSA Standard Z275.2

By Jonathan Chapple, Five Bells Consulting

**At the time of this** writing, I have finished compiling the running draft of the Z275.2 Standard, *Occupational Safety Code for Diving Operations*, 2026 edition and, by the time you are reading this, the new edition of this National Standard of Canada should be at – or past – the public review stage and progressing towards publication.

### What new items will be in the new edition of Z275.2?

There is a total of 38 change proposals – some large, some merely clarifications – that have received CSA Z275 Technical Committee (TC) approval for inclusion. To assist contractors, supervisors, divers, and regulators to prepare, we are going to focus on some of the most important subjects, including:

- **Risk management:** This is perhaps the most important subject to be included. The risk management (RM) process is used by numerous industries worldwide, including diving, and implementation for all diving operations is now mandatory. There are new definitions and clauses that explain the need for, and detail the steps in, the RM process. An informative annex provides guidance for those completing Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (HIRA), possibly for the first time – although if your company or organization is using a RM process already then you should continue to do so without change. The relationship of the process to the Standard is explained as such: a HIRA cannot be used to reduce the minimum levels set by the Standard, but it can be used to increase them.
- **Underwater construction site:** A clear definition for 'underwater construction site' has been included, aligning with existing federal and provincial regulations that define above-water construction or construction sites, which helps to eliminate confusion.



CSA Z275 is being updated to provide clarity and better reflect how work is being done in the water. Photo courtesy of Expertech.

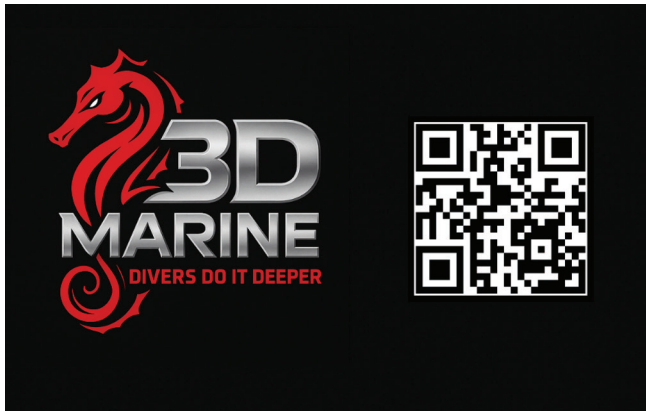
- **Use of SCUBA:** A clean and updated task-based list of prohibited SCUBA operations is also included, and diving in SCUBA on an underwater construction site is now one of the prohibitions. The only exceptions are narrow and technical exceptions such as for archaeological, forensic, scientific and Unexploded Explosive Ordinance / Improvised Explosive device (UXO / IED) diving tasks, which are conducted under strict rules.

- **Minimum SCUBA crew requirements:** A four-person crew is stated as the default minimum number and the conditions for using a reduced minimum SCUBA crew of three (including the diver) have been tightened up, with a reduction permitted only in controlled, low-risk environments. In addition, the depth must be less than 18 metres (60 feet), diving must not be in contaminated water, a documented HIRA must be completed, and an extraction capability must be demonstrated practically. Only when these conditions are satisfied can a reduced SCUBA crew be considered. An additional non-diver may assist in an emergency but must be named in the HIRA. Diving supervisors must also justify their decisions in the HIRA and be prepared to defend them, so the

inappropriate use of three-person SCUBA crews is reduced considerably.

- **Lifeline and umbilical strengths:** The minimum tensile load that lifelines and umbilicals must withstand has been reduced to 1,100 pounds (from 2,000 pounds). This change reflects reality and is more than sufficient for in-water use and safety. The Standard refers to a study that shows that applying a load over 370 pounds may cause human spinal injury. The minimum tensile load for a diving recovery harness and recovery points remains unchanged at 2,000 pounds – the amount considered necessary for recovery of a diver from the water in an emergency. It is emphasized that an umbilical is not to be used for diver recovery from the water.

A four-person crew is stated as the default minimum number and the conditions for using a reduced minimum SCUBA crew of three (including the diver) have been tightened up, with a reduction permitted only in controlled, low-risk environments.



  
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- **Human Factors in Diving (HFID):** HFID is recognized as having a major influence on the safety and success of a diving task. Diving is not just about the technical or ‘hard skills’ associated with diving equipment, physics and standard operating procedures (SOPs). HFID includes non-technical skills, such as communication, teamwork, situation awareness, leadership, as well as Diving Crew Resource Management, such as group cohesion, communication, and risk management. These ‘soft skills’ must be considered during occupational diving, and guidance is now available in the form of a new clause and informative annex.
- **Definitions:** For the first time, definitions from the entire Z275 series are included to form a harmonized list of definitions – a recognition that all the diving Standards are inter-related.

These items, and many more, have been subject to an immense amount of discussion by committee members over the last five-plus years. I re-emphasize that our sole objective is to make occupational diving easier and safer and, accordingly, the committee members support wholeheartedly the push (spearheaded by Canadian Association of Diving Contractors), for a national harmonization of Standards across all jurisdictions.



Jonathan Chapple is the President of Five Bells Consulting and chair of the CSA Z275.2 Technical Sub-Committee. A former United Kingdom Royal Navy Mine Warfare & Clearance Diving Officer and the former VP of Aqua-Lung Canada Ltd., Jonathan is an experienced dive supervisor, diver and technician instructor.

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