



ASK DAN

Does gear maintenance affect dive safety?

BY DIVERS ALERT NETWORK

Just as you shouldn't skip an oil change for your car, you shouldn't skip maintenance for your dive gear—routine maintenance ensures catastrophic problems are kept at bay. Most divers understand the importance of preventive maintenance, but not everyone services their gear according to manufacturers' recommendations. Proper gear maintenance and care will reduce the risk of incidents and injuries, protect your investments and ensure equipment durability for years to come.

INCIDENT INSIGHTS

Gear-related incidents are generally the

result of inadequate servicing or improper care; instances of manufacturing defects are extremely rare. Primary contributing factors are lack of proper maintenance, inadequate training and skills, minimal awareness of risks or simply bad luck. These user errors can and do lead to incidents, injuries and even fatalities.

While not everything is under your control, you can control your gear's maintenance schedule.

MAINTENANCE FOR GEAR

Every piece of scuba equipment can benefit from at least a yearly checkup—and

maybe a couple of adjustments or tune-ups in between. When it's time to service personal equipment, check manufacturer's guidelines for care instructions; below are some suggestions to get you started.

REGULATORS While very active divers might need to overhaul their regulators more often, once per year is generally sufficient for most divers. Just be sure to check the manufacturer's recommendations for special applications or heavy-use situations.

Between annual servicing, post-dive care for regulators is critical. Always use the dust cap, and soak both the first and second stage regulators in clean water after diving. The submersible pressure gauge (SPG) should also be inspected annually.

DIVE COMPUTERS Don't wait for a low-

battery warning to service your dive computer. In fact, many dive computers require annual or even twice-yearly service. Batteries do need replacing, but more than that, O-rings need to be checked, and the entire unit should be inspected for signs of salt buildup.

BUOYANCY COMPENSATION DEVICE

Your BCD should be serviced annually, probably at the same time as your regulator assembly. The low-pressure inflator and bladder are susceptible to deterioration; if either were to fail during a dive, a serious accident might result.

DRYSUIT Drysuit maintenance involves an annual inspection and pressure test to ensure there are no small leaks. Even a pinhole leak could lead to a dive-ruining flood.

TANKS Each year, a scuba cylinder should be visually inspected for dents, corrosion, pitting and valve damage. Hydrostatic testing should be completed every five years, or as determined by local regulations and cylinder type.

MASK, SNORKEL AND FINS While snorkeling gear does not require complicated maintenance, it should be rinsed thoroughly after each dive. Proper storage ensures it does not get crushed or damaged when not in use. Periodically check fin straps, mask straps and the snorkel keeper for signs of wear.

OTHER ACCESSORIES Items like dive lights, surface marker buoys, dive watches, strobes and other accessories should be visually inspected and their O-rings and batteries checked and replaced when necessary.

CHECK YOURSELF

When you're performing equipment checks, it's important to check all your gear—and your pride too. Human errors are all too common, so be sure you have the required knowledge and training and fully understand the risks. Should you have questions, ask your local dive center about a gear-maintenance course or tips for simple at-home repairs.

Regardless of whether you dive every weekend or only on vacation, scuba gear requires regular service. With properly maintained gear, you are less likely to be involved in a dive incident.



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