



## Ask Dr. Debbie...

### Gearing up our Gear:

By Debra A. Hill, MD

**I**T'S NEARLY SUMMER now, and we are all beginning to think of diving more right here in our own backyards and some are getting ready for dive trips as well. So, if you haven't been diving much all year and are getting back into it now that the weather and water are warming up, it's a good idea to make sure your gear is in good condition. *Remember our sport involves life support equipment—that means it is what keeps us alive during our sport!* As such, it's necessary to be certain our dive computers, regulators, BC's, mask, fins, weight belts, gloves, booties, wetsuits, dry suits, and even lights are in great shape. **Any one of these items if not functioning well can cause a domino effect of one little problem causing a next and so on leading to panic and a dive accident.**

**Wetsuits, booties, and gloves** need to fit well. Wetsuits that you have to struggle too much to get into or that are too tight can cause circulation problems and limit your ability to maneuver in the water and potentially cause trouble. Wetsuits that are too loose pose a problem in terms of not keeping you warm enough and could lead to unsuspected hypothermia.

**Dry suit** divers should check the seals for oxidation and wear, and get their suit checked once a year for leaks. Make sure

that the inflator hose valve is functioning properly. Dry suit malfunctions can have the same impact as buoyancy compensator malfunctions.

**Buoyancy compensators** can fail in one of two ways, either it won't inflate or it inflates without you inflating it. Either way, you can run into trouble. Yes, it is important to be up on what to do in either situation. Have you gone over this in your mind, or

**If you have a ScubaPro X650 Regulator...see the info in this article about the ScubaPro RECALL. WARNING !!! Do not use that model of regulator!**

practiced what to do in these situations in a pool or calm environment lately? Having these skills such as *remembering to drop your weights if you're BC is not working, being able to auto inflate your BC if needed, and remembering to disconnect your inflator hose if your BC is auto-inflating are important, but prevention is much safer.* We all know to check our BC's by inflating them prior to a dive to make sure they are functioning well, but **remember to get your gear checked by a professional at your local dive shop at least once per year—and more often if you dive frequently.**

**Weight belts** are so varied in

style these days, the key is to make sure that the buckle holds adequately and can be released easily as well. For those with weight harnesses and integrated weight systems, make sure that you and your buddy know how to release the weight in an emergency. It is so easy to forget to do a buddy check when you dive a lot and become comfortable with your gear and diving in general. But, **remember everyone has their own way of configuring their gear—so gear up to do a buddy check each time before you dive.**

**Mask and fin straps** should be inspected for wear and if necessary replaced. Losing a mask due to an old strap breaking underwater could definitely cause panic when you are not expecting it. And, *panic is a known killer underwater.* You might think you could get away with losing one fin strap underwater, but try finning in a current with just one fin, so check those fin straps, and consider the new metal spring fin straps that go with the Scubapro fins, they offer even a bit more safety due to durability.

**Dive computers** are definitely worth checking for battery life and functionality especially before a dive trip. For those traveling abroad it's a good idea to dive with two dive computers from the start, in case one fails, at

least you can continue your trip with the other. The alternative is to dive tables and use your computer as a back-up. Carrying waterproof tables with you on a dive is a good idea too. I recall on our third day of decompression diving in Bikini Atoll that my computer failed. It was a rather new computer that had deco capability, but it failed just as I was about to begin my deco stops. Fortunately, I had plastic deco tables in my pocket and was able to complete the dive safely. Remember when traveling abroad obtaining replacement dive gear is often next to impossible. So make sure your gear is in good working condition, that it's been serviced recently, and that you have essential backup equipment such as extra O-rings, extra fin straps and mask straps, or the ability to make simple repairs.

***Of note, even though you may do all that you can to have your gear in good working condition, by cleaning it regularly, storing it well, and servicing it regularly, there can be other problems—manufacturer errors.*** One such case is that of the Scubapro X650 Regulator, which recently has voluntarily been recalled because of the potential to malfunction over time and result in the diaphragm failing which would result in inhaling of water instead of air. This could lead to drowning. For

more information on this, check the following website: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prhtml06/06177.html> and [http://www.scubapro.com/recall\\_x650\\_popup.asp](http://www.scubapro.com/recall_x650_popup.asp)

**Lights** are also important to check for evidence of corrosion and functionality. When traveling be sure to bring spare batteries and bulbs as they are often not available for purchase abroad. Diving at night one should always have at least one back-up light. Even a light, is a source of life support when diving. If your only light went out on a night dive, you could become disoriented and panic, and as we all know, panic can be a serious threat to life while diving.

So, let's all make sure our gear is in it's best working condition to support our lives while we pursue one of the coolest sports on the planet!

Happy Diving!

All the Best,

*Debbie Hill Titus, MD*

## JUNE RAFFLE

**Hello Divers,  
Well first off, if you missed the Stateline bus trip you really missed out. Lots of fun, lots of friends.... Next SOCDC event you should try to show up. We played bingo on the way up and watched 2 newly released movies. Snacks, drinks, a wild roller coaster ride, free lunch, shopping and of course gambling....**

**Anyway, on to the raffle. Not sure what all is going to be in the raffle this month. However, I do have a 7" portable DVD player with case & headphones. I also have a Copper Chiminea for outdoor firewood burning. (A \$260 value item)... Some special drawings for the dads in the club (ok, all guys)...there will be some dive related items as well. You'll have to show up to check them out. A DIVE KNIFE is a "must-have" for our pre-Father's Day meeting.**

**See ya all there.....**

*Don*