

Divers and company director receive police cautions for fraud

Two offshore commercial divers and the director of a diving company have been sanctioned for exaggerating credentials.

Investigators from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have slammed the trio for false claims of diving experience that could have jeopardised their own and other divers' lives in an offshore incident.

Following a HSE investigation, two divers from the Portsmouth area have had their diving qualifications withdrawn. The two men and the director of a commercial diving company have also received police cautions for fraud.

In December 2022 HSE received information that two divers may have obtained their closed bell qualifications without having the necessary prior diving experience.

There was concern that their lack of experience could result in a diving incident offshore as both divers had worked for contractors in the North Sea.

In order to work in the UK as a saturation diver (also known as a closed bell diver), a diver needs an approved qualification. There are only two dive schools in the world that currently offer the qualification – INPP in Marseille, France, and the Commercial Dive Academy in Tasmania.

HSE contacted both dive schools and obtained details of the dives submitted to the schools by the divers as part of their enrolment.

Inspectors then followed this information up with several UK diving contractors to check on whether the claimed diving experience was genuine. Due to the legal requirement for diving contractors to retain records of dives for two years, the contractors were able to provide accurate details of dive depths and times for the individuals concerned.

The director of the diving company in question was unable to provide records, despite having signed and stamped the diver's logbook himself. HSE went to the location of the claimed diving, and with the assistance of the harbourmaster was able to demonstrate that no diving had occurred on the dates recorded in the diver's logbook. The diver had forged 10 at this location in order to demonstrate he had 20 dives over 15m deep. These had been fraudulently stamped and signed by the director.

The other diver was very short of experience and HSE could only find records that he had carried out around 28 dives, only one of which was deeper than 15m. He declared to the dive school he had 106 dives, 26 of which were deeper than 15m.

HSE worked closely with the Fraud Investigation Team of Hampshire Police. All three individuals admitted that they had made false entries into logbooks and

received police cautions for fraud by false representation under the Fraud Act 2006.

HSE diving inspector Phil Crombie said: "You need diving experience to become a qualified closed bell diver and making it up could put your life and other divers at risk.

"Offshore diving contractors need to use qualified divers and these men could have worked anywhere across Great Britain.

"If we hear divers have made up their experience in order to get onto a closed bell course, we will look very carefully at all of the records available.

"A logbook is a document required by law, and making false entries is a criminal offence. The police cautions issued meant that we were able to have the qualifications withdrawn quickly by the relevant authorities.

"Closed bell courses cost over fifteen thousand pounds for a diver – and these divers have ended up losing that without gaining a qualification. It's just fortunate that they weren't involved in any accident or incident."

Hampshire Police PC Alam Mahmmed said: "The men involved in this case did not have the requisite experience to undertake dive work of this nature, posing a serious risk of harm to themselves. This is in addition to their actions which clearly amounted to criminal offences.

"We take any aspect of fraud seriously and we were pleased to collaborate with HSE to achieve a suitable outcome in this case. We hope this will in turn reduce the likelihood of any further offending. If offending continues, then these individuals face severe consequences in the criminal courts."

Notes to editors:

1. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
3. The Diving at Work Regulations 1997 require that divers at work maintain a log of all of their dives and keep that log for at least 2 years. There is a similar requirement on the diving contractor to keep records of diving for at least two years.
4. The International Diving Regulators and Certifiers Forum (IDRCF), of which HSE is a founding member, sets the competencies and pre-requisites for those attending closed bell courses. The pre-requisites currently require at least 100 dives and 100 hours of diving work experience once qualified as a surface supplied diver. No dives shallower than 6m depth are counted, and at least 20 of the dives must be deeper than 15m.