



Refreshing teaching skills and emergency procedures is time and effort well spent for staff.

Motivating Your Teams Through In-Service Training

Rewards for time spent training include tuned-up skills and employees who are confident they can respond to any challenge.

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You're exhausted, a little embarrassed about some parts, but quite pleased to have worked through some unexpected tricky areas of a mock dive rescue. Now you're sharp and know your teammates are too. Moreover, you feel more confident than ever should you need to perform a diver rescue. What a good day!

This is not an uncommon reaction to in-service training for dive center or resort instructional staff. Fine-tuning teaching skills and refreshing emergency procedures is time and effort well spent. The training can be flexible, taking as little as an hour to a full day or more, depending on what is covered and what works logistically for everyone involved. When done with clear goals and enthusiasm, the result is a sharp instructional team that is effective, updated and has improved performance.

Dive centers and resorts that make in-service training a priority send a message to instructors and divemasters that they're willing to invest in them. One reason this training is so effective is that staff learn peer to peer, which promotes teamwork. Through staff education, a dive operation can improve quality and reduce inconsistencies in course conduct, course documentation and administration, and in how store policies are carried out. The ultimate outcome is providing divers with a best-in-class customer experience from a team that truly works together.

Get Started

- ▶ Plan ahead and get training dates on the calendar. For example, schedule at least one session per quarter.

- ▶ Ask your staff about what they are interested in learning or refreshing. You might be surprised by their requests.
- ▶ Announce dates and topics to store staff, but also include contracted instructors and divemasters.
- ▶ Be prepared and make it fun with prizes for best results, best teamwork, etc. and include lunch or snacks and treats.

Training sessions are also a good time to recognize individuals for excellent work, great ideas, environmentally-friendly projects, most new course signups, new pro-level certifications earned, cost savings and customer recruitment initiatives, etc.

Training Ideas

Consider all resources because in-service training can be conducted by anyone who has the expertise and initiative. Choose people who excel in an area and have them showcase how they do it and why it works. Don't forget to ask your PADI® Regional Manager or Regional Training Consultant for tips and support. Here are a few potential topics:

- ▶ **New/revised PADI course immersion** - Conduct a course standards question-and-answer competition. Ask staff to list courses that link with the new or revised course. Spend time in confined or open water practicing course skills and review local logistics for the course.
- ▶ **Dive center/resort course of the month** - Discuss tips for consistent course conduct and strategize how to promote continuing education

connections along with related equipment and travel purchases.

- ▶ **Go green** - Workshop ideas to strengthen conservation-minded initiatives for courses and dive trips.
- ▶ **Rescue skills/EFR®/emergency oxygen refreshers** - Go over emergency readiness and what steps to take after a dive accident. Update contact numbers and inspect first-aid kits and oxygen units. (See Fortifying Competence.)
- ▶ **Standards update** - As a group, attend or view a *Training Bulletin* LIVE presentation, then discuss how you'll implement any course or standards changes locally.
- ▶ **Try freediving** - Conduct a PADI Basic Freediver course for all staff. Introduce freediving continuing education requirements, and explain how pros can earn new credentials to diversify their training opportunities while sharpening their own skills.
- ▶ **Stay fit** - Organize a challenge using the water skills exercises in the divemaster course to promote general fitness and readiness to respond in an emergency. Keep it light and fun, give staff a few weeks to prepare and issue prizes for good performance.
- ▶ **PADI online resource primer** - Provide tips and techniques for using PADI Pros' Site resources and review PADI Online Processing Center updates.
- ▶ **New dive operation assets** - Bought a new boat, new rental equipment or a new piece of emergency equipment? Go over features, operation and proper maintenance.
- ▶ **Application perfection** - To avoid processing delays, review how to complete PADI applications, such as

verifying all information is complete and equivalencies are checked *before* submitting.

- ▶ **Adaptive awareness** - Conduct PADI's Adaptive Techniques Specialty course for all dive professionals, and take time to brainstorm how logistics at the dive center, confined water site and open water site might be improved to meet customer needs. Share adaptive techniques that have helped individual students overcome training challenges.

Fortifying Competence

Because properly handling diver emergencies is so important, it's a good idea to regularly conduct rescue preparedness in-service training. One technique is to conduct a team workshop of a high-stress diver rescue scenario followed by a peer-to-peer evaluation. You can base the scenario on exercises from the PADI Rescue Diver course or on situations that apply locally. Conclude with a post-incident analysis to reveal strengths and weaknesses of current systems while providing the opportunity to develop appropriate best practices for the team.

Have goals for dive professionals. For example:

- ▶ Gain an understanding of your response to acute stress both in the water and out.
- ▶ Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses with regards to your personal fitness and ability to work with peers.
- ▶ Increase team coordination and cooperation.
- ▶ Develop superior rescue skills that require little to no thought to execute.

Have goals for the dive center or resort. For example:

- ▶ Define best practices for maintaining diver safety at the pool, boat, lake, classroom, etc.
- ▶ Reduce risk and liability exposure by working toward a solid team rescue response.
- ▶ Increase team coordination and competence by promoting training and procedural consistency.

Steps for Conducting In-Service Rescue Training

- ▶ **Appoint leaders.** Ideally, have two evaluators or leaders, such as the dive center owner/manager, training director, boat captain or senior staff instructor. PADI Course Directors are well suited for this role.



In-service training for staff can be conducted by anyone with the expertise and initiative.

- ▶ **Customize a scenario.** Design a dynamic real-world scenario that uses all emergency equipment and resources typically available to staff. Refer to the PADI *Rescue Diver Manual* and *Rescue Diver Instructor Guide* for ideas and rescue skill information.
- ▶ **Make it brisk.** The scenario should include some physical activity, such as a swim, a diver tow or a fast-walk to gather equipment, to elevate the heart and breathing rates. The physical activity should be realistic and typical of the situation.
- ▶ **Brief the team.** Present the rescue objectives to the team before the clock starts. For example, surface with an unconscious diver, call for help, remove the diver from the water, initiate CPR, work with the lifeguards or boat crew, control remaining student divers, and work as safely as possible within an expected time frame.
- ▶ **Identify roles.** Describe the roles and responsibilities to those involved in the rescue. Scenario may have a primary rescuer, support rescue team (if appropriate for the site), concerned students, injured divers, EMS personnel, annoying bystanders, anxious family members and so on.
- ▶ **Make it realistic.** Have staff deal with conditions and whatever resources are available at the scene.
- ▶ **Have leaders take notes.** Leaders should have clipboards and stopwatches, agree on notable rescue steps and be ready to record the time each event occurs. They should also note key decisions made by the rescuer because each step is a learning opportunity that is open for discussion in the debriefing.
- ▶ **Prepare a mock incident report.** Provide the team with a PADI Incident Report Form (10120) and have them complete it together.

Be prepared to observe and learn from the team, as new techniques often emerge. It's these "aha" moments that are so powerful.

Post-Incident Analysis and Debrief

Although leaders should highlight strengths and weaknesses of the team's performance, the debriefing should be a collaborative event. The conversation should foster positive teamwork and the desire to improve the rescue readiness of the group. It's often at this point that ideas and suggestions come forward that can alter standard operating procedures for the better. Best practices frequently emerge as situational awareness increases. A discussion about responses to both the physical stressors as well as the physiological stressors will also reveal areas for recognition and improvement.

Analysis Questions

Use questions like these to provoke thought and discussion:

- ▶ What if [name a variable] occurred, how would you handle it then?
- ▶ Are there better solutions to the problems encountered?
- ▶ If you could repeat the scenario, what would you do differently? What are the changes that you would recommend making to improve it?
- ▶ What was your "aha" moment?
- ▶ Are you glad you went through that scenario?

Emphasize the importance of taking care of the rescuers when a diver emergency results in severe injury or death, despite best practice efforts by the team. As discussed during the PADI Rescue Diver course, post-incident stress may not occur until much later.

Other Considerations

- ▶ Participation in an in-service training session should result in a personal reflection of abilities to positively contribute to the team effort in a rescue.
- ▶ A well-run diver emergency training session will allow the team to try the same scenario again to reinforce competence.
- ▶ Consider conducting at least one in-service training session per year at each of your primary teaching locations or before the dive season officially starts.
- ▶ In-service training sessions are great for bringing a new employee up to speed while fortifying existing staff's skills, in addition to building a stronger, more cooperative team.
- ▶ Have a duplicate set of rescue equipment to use for training sessions so you don't damage or deplete your rescue emergencies supplies.