
Diving deaths downunder – An analysis of 34 years of scuba diving deaths in Australia

John Lippmann¹

Divers Alert Network Asia-Pacific¹

A sequential analysis was conducted of all compressed gas diving fatalities that occurred between 1972 and 2005 as recorded on the DAN Asia-Pacific database. This included 351 cases, of which 283 involved scuba, 62 surface-supplied breathing apparatus (SSBA), five rebreather and one with which the breathing apparatus was unknown. Each incident was examined and an attempt was made to determine the trigger, disabling agent, disabling injury and cause of death. Equipment problems, breathing gas management, rough water, anxiety and exertion were common triggers to fatal dive accidents in this series. Problems with gas supply were thought to have been the disabling agent in almost one quarter of incidents, and ascent issues in almost 20%. Cardiovascular disease was believed to be the disabling agent in 14% of cases. The predominant disabling injury was asphyxia from the inhalation of water although there is an increasing rate of cardiac-related disabling injuries.

Corresponding Author

John Lippmann
Executive Director
Divers Alert Network Asia-Pacific
PO Box 384
Ashburton Victoria Australia 3147
Email: johnl@danasiapacific.org
Website: danasiapacific.org
Telephone: +61 3 9886 9166