ASF CAVE DIVING - CODE OF PRACTICE (2004)

IMPORTANT CAUTIONS

Please read EACH of the following important messages BEFORE reading this code of practice:

LIABILITY OF ASF INC., ETC.

* **If you visit any cave, canyon, cliff or karst area or feature,**
  YOU DO SO ENTIRELY AT YOUR OWN RISK.

* **Caving, cave diving, canyoning, Single Rope Technique and other like activities are** ***INHERENTLY DANGEROUS AND RISKY ACTIVITIES.***

* ***YOU SHOULD NOT RELY ON THIS CODE OF PRACTICE.***

* **Notwithstanding anything in this code of practice or any other guidelines or document, any representation or anything else, the Australian Speleological Federation Inc., its servants, officers, members and agents SHALL NOT BE LIABLE for any of the following:**

  (a) any NEGLIGENCE in the preparation, adoption, publication, re-publication or other promulgation of this code of practice;

  (b) any loss, damage, injury, death, accident or other misadventure arising out of, sustained during or as a consequence of, or in any way relating to any act(s) or omission(s) occurring during or prior to any visit to any cave, canyon, cliff, or karst feature or area; or

  (c) any consequence of any failure properly to have regard to and understand these important cautions.

* **In each of these important cautions, "this code of practice" shall be deemed to include every copy, draft or revision of this code of practice, and any copy or part thereof.**

* **If you do not completely understand these important cautions, you should seek your own,** ***INDEPENDENT LEGAL ADVICE.***

1. BREATHING SUPPLIES

1.1. Is to be SCUBA or if using an alternative supply, the diver must have an immediately accessible self-contained supply which can enable safe exit from the dive in an emergency situation.
1.2. A solo diver must have at least two independent breathing gas supplies; or
1.3. If buddy diving, each diver must have at least one breathing gas supply with a redundant breathing apparatus which can be provided to the buddy and has a sufficiently long hose to allow exit from the cave.
1.4. Every breathing apparatus must have a contents gauge.
1.5. Breathing apparatus must have suitable performance to supply demand at the intended depth of the dive in normal and emergency situations. (ie. buddy breathing)
1.6. The breathed gas must not be toxic or excessively narcotic at the intended depth of the dive.
1.7. Breathing supplies (see 1.2 and 1.3) must be worn or attached to the diver.
1.8. Additional breathing supplies may be independent of the diver (ie. supplies attached to sled or diver propulsion vehicles, etc.). The assembly must have a suitable buoyancy arrangement so as to be easily manoeuvrable by the diver.
1.9. Divers must be able to operate the valves of the breathing supplies.

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1.10. Equipment should be used within manufacturers recommendations or local regulations.

1.11. If using breathing apparatus in accordance with 1.3 (buddy divers) the divers must be in close proximity to each other at all times during the dive. If the passage is so confined or conditions are such as to make buddy breathing awkward, then the divers should use breathing apparatus in accordance with 1.2 (solo diver).

2. CONSUMPTION RULES

2.1 When diving without access to the surface divers should carry enough breathable gas to exit the cave safely after the failure of a breathing or propulsion system. Generally this means that at most 1/3 of the breathing gas should be consumed on the way into the dive before turning around, but this will vary depending upon the cave, visibility, air chambers or other entrances, current, propulsion method, isolation, buddies, distance, equipment configuration, breathing mixtures, or experience.

3. BUOYANCY

3.1 Every diver must have a means by which neutral buoyancy can be achieved at any depth or time during the dive.

3.2 If divers are heavily laden a second, independent buoyancy device should be worn.

4. LIGHTING

4.1. At least one primary (4.2), and two back-up (4.3) light systems should be carried.

4.2. A primary light system can consist of one or more light sources which must have adequate light intensity, and have a burn time greater than the maximum possible dive time. ie. on a long dive two primary sources may be necessary to last the duration of the dive. These two sources constitute only one system.

4.3. Back-up light systems must provide adequate light and duration to exit the cave safely.

5. LINES, REELS

5.1. Line, whether permanently fixed or retrievable, (or reels), can be floating or non-floating, but must have a breaking strain of greater than 100 kg.

5.2. Some cave environments will require a more substantial line, and one must be used accordingly.

5.3. Every diver or diving group must have a continuous line leading back to the start of the dive.

5.4. Markers should be used as necessary to indicate the nearest exit direction of the cave, usually near alternative routes or side passages. A mark must be placed at every junction so as to define the nearest exit direction of the dive.

5.5. All permanent lines should be single continuous lines. The main line should follow the most accessible route through the cave system.

5.6. Alternate routes to 5.3, or side passages should also be single continuous lines, and not be connected to the main permanent line or other lines.

5.7. A 'jump line' should be used to provide a continuous line for the diver if using alternative routes or side passages. The 'jump line' is to be a retrievable line and must be removed when the diver returns to exit from the cave. (Note the use of markers 5.4.)

5.8. All lines whether permanently fixed or retrievable must be secured within the cave at regular intervals, including:

a) just inside the entrance cavern of the dive;

b) where there is risk of the line being swept or pulled into narrow fissures;

c) distinct changes in the passage direction;

d) where there is risk of the line fraying due to abrasion from sharp or rough rock, especially where there is strong flow.

5.9. Reels must be used as necessary to connect:

a) entrance of a cave dive to the start of the permanent line;

b) bridging a gap between permanent lines (see 'jump line' 5.7);

c) any other diving or exploration where there is no permanent line.

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5.10. A reel containing approx. 30 metres of line should be carried as a safety reel capable of performing the following functions:

a) as a line to search for a buddy who has strayed from a permanent line;

b) as a line to search for the permanent line if for any reason the diver has become separated from it;

c) as a source of line so that a repair to a permanent line can be made.

6. DECOMPRESSION

6.1. Dive timers, depth gauges and decompression schedules must be carried whilst diving

7. DIVE LOCATIONS

7.1. Divers must follow land owner requirements to gain permission for access and diving. (Refer also to the ASF Code of Ethics and Conservation)

7.2. Divers should adhere to the ASF Code of Ethics and Conservation, Minimal Impact Caving Code, and the ASF Caving Safety Guidelines.

7.3. If necessary, an authority or certification from an organisation should be sought if the dive location is so controlled.

8. DIVER STANDARDS

8.1. Cave diving should only be attempted by competent and suitably certified divers who are also competent cavers.

8.2. Cave diving must be conducted only by suitably qualified divers holding a cave diving qualification from a recognised Australian cave diving training agency or from an equivalent foreign agency. All divers must be competent for the type of cave diving conducted, as described in the current National Outdoor Recreation Industry Training Package.

8.3. Techniques and equipment must be thoroughly practiced in a safe underwater environment before attempting their use in a cave.

8.4. All diving must be conducted within a diver's personal limits.

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