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Diving around public wharves, marinas and boat ramps

After a series of near misses between vessels and occupational divers this bulletin provides guidance for working around public wharves, marinas and boat ramps.

Vigilance is needed around public wharves, marinas and boat ramps

WorkSafe New Zealand's recent probe into near misses between dive operators and vessels at boat ramps, wharves and marinas highlights the need for all working divers to stay alert and make sure other users know they are working in the water.

This technical bulletin clarifies the safety practices expected when divers work in these areas.

What are the main risks?

Public wharves, marinas and boat ramps can be busy hubs of aquatic activity with the risk of workers and other people being harmed in or around the water.

Divers hit by watercraft could get cut by propellers – or suffer severe head trauma, serious injury or death.

Vessels may need to take evasive action to avoid resurfacing divers – which could lead to collisions or other dangerous incidents.

Undertaking recreational diver training activities where direct ascents may be required poses extra risk to all participants and should be avoided around any active public boating area.

What should you do?

- Before diving, conduct a risk assessment and apply appropriate controls as outlined in chapter 3.0 of WorkSafe's [diving guidelines](#)
- Use a regulation dive flag for all diving operations. The flag should be visible to vessels from at least 200m. Consider a bigger flag to ensure maximum visibility.
- Have a supervisor/lookout on the surface to monitor the site and warn other users when divers are in the water.
- Where possible, conduct diving work outside of navigable areas.
- Where diving work requires obstructing navigable areas, use warning marker buoys and floating safety barriers.
- Display hazard information boards and other signage to alert other users and the public.
- Conduct any recreational or non-essential diving work away from the areas used for boating traffic (refer below Maritime Rule 91).
- If the diving involves the use of a vessel, the operator must meet the requirements of [Maritime Rules Part 40A](#)

PCBU duties

As a person conducting business or undertaking (PCBU), you must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers, and that other persons are not put at risk by your work.

PCBUs must consult, cooperate with, and coordinate activities with other PCBUs who share the same duties in relation to the same matter, including managing shared risks.

While commercial ports and private jetties may pose similar risks to public facilities, access to private and commercial areas must be arranged with the PCBU responsible for their safe operation.

PCBUs must comply with all relevant central and local government requirements including relevant Maritime Rules and must get Harbourmaster approval and/or access permits from local authorities where needed.

Further information

[WorkSafe occupational diving guidance](#)

[Health and Safety at Work \(Adventure Activities\) Regulations \(2016\)](#)

[Maritime Rules Part 91 - Navigation Safety Rules](#)

[Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#)

[Health and Safety at Work \(General Risk and Workplace Management\) Regulations 2016](#)

Acknowledgement

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