

# Occupational Diving Safety Strategy



## The Opportunity

Several hundred Nova Scotians work as divers in industrial, commercial, scientific and seafood harvesting activities. Diving for a living can be dangerous if proper safety precautions are not taken. In fact, three divers working in the seafood harvesting industry have died in Nova Scotia in the last three years – and there have been a number of close calls. Until recently, Nova Scotia had no specific regulations for commercial diving. Some industry players followed the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Diving Standards. These are nationally approved diving standards, but they are not law.

Nova Scotia occupational divers needed safety laws similar to those protecting other Canadian divers. So, Nova Scotia Environment and Labour teamed up with the province's occupational diving industry to develop such laws. The new Occupational Diving Regulations, enacted through the Occupational Health and Safety Act, take effect on May 1, 2006.

The Occupational Diving Regulations set minimum health and safety standards for Nova Scotia's occupational diving industry (they do not apply to recreational diving). The regulations address such key areas as: dive planning; medical certifications; crew size; limits on SCUBA diving; equipment examination; testing, maintenance and repairing equipment; and record-keeping.

## The Response: The Occupational Diving Safety Strategy

With new Occupational Diving Regulations ready to go, Environment and Labour developed a strategy to support the regulations. The Occupational Diving Safety Strategy emphasizes communication and education, to ensure the industry is well informed about the new regulations before they come into effect.

The strategy takes a three-pronged approach: advertising the new regulations in all provincial daily, weekly and monthly newspapers; holding widely advertised public information sessions; and sending targeted information packages directly to members of the diving industry.

Public information sessions were held in Dartmouth and Sydney in mid-December 2005. Some of the above information activities may be repeated in the spring of 2006 before the regulations come into effect.

In a further effort to inform the diving community, Environment and Labour has placed copies of the CSA Diving Standards in all regional libraries.

Environment and Labour is also working on a new diver training program with its educational partners, the Nova Scotia Community College and the Nova Scotia Department of Education. This training was previously unavailable in Nova Scotia.

The proposed occupational diving course will be one of the first in the province. Service Canada may subsidize a number of places in this course for Employment Insurance (EI) recipients.

These are the first of many steps the department is planning to protect occupational divers.



## Improving Competitiveness and Compliance

The Occupational Diving Safety Strategy enables compliance first by creating laws for the industry to follow. Secondly, the strategy communicates those laws clearly and thoroughly before they come into force. Environment and Labour is further promoting diving industry compliance by creating a new occupational dive training course – which will teach safe diving techniques to new divers. These steps will help create a ‘culture of compliance,’ reducing injuries and improving the safety record.

The occupational diving safety initiative enhances Nova Scotia competitiveness in several ways. For example, the new diver training program means Nova Scotians can now obtain nationally recognized credentials in their home province. These credentials will allow Nova Scotia divers and contractors to bid for diving contracts across the country. Now, all diving companies in Nova Scotia must conform to standards similar to those in other provinces and territories. In this way, the legislation creates a level playing field and renews the provincial diving industry.

The new training program may also create new careers. For instance, Nova Scotia divers harvest sea urchins as a delicacy for the Japanese market. Some of these lucrative fishing licenses now go unused due to a shortage of qualified divers. New safety standards and training may attract more people to sea urchin and seafood harvesting.

## Where can I get more information on the Occupational Diving Safety Strategy?

The new regulations and other information can be checked at the following Web site: <http://gov.ns.ca/enla/healthandsafety> (Check under “Feature Items”)

You can get hard copies of the Occupational Diving Regulations and related documents from the Information Specialist, Occupational Health and Safety Division, Environment and Labour. Phone: (902) 424-5400 (Toll-free 1-800-952-2687)

For further information, contact Sergio Greguoldo, Occupational Health and Safety Division, Environment and Labour. Phone: (902) 424-1742 (Toll-free in Nova Scotia – 1-800-952-2687) E-mail: [greguoss@gov.ns.ca](mailto:greguoss@gov.ns.ca)

## About the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative

The Occupational Diving Safety Strategy supports the objectives of the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI). The CCI is a key part of *Better Regulation – Everyone’s Business*, the Government of Nova Scotia’s far-reaching plan for improving regulation in the province.

Environment and Labour is the main regulatory department in Nova Scotia. Through the CCI, the department is changing the way laws are designed, communicated and enforced in Nova Scotia.

The CCI is a multi-year and systematic approach to making sure that our regulatory programs meet the needs of Nova Scotians. In short, the CCI is working to make a brighter future for our people, economy, environment and communities.

## Where can I get more information on the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative?

Find out more about the CCI at its Web site at: [www.gov.ns.ca/enla/cci](http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/cci)



**Environment and Labour**  
Occupational Health and Safety