

COVID-19 AND FREEDIVING OPERATIONS

5 STRATEGIES FOR RISK PREVENTION AND
MITIGATION AT FREEDIVE NI



With the support of





This document provides some useful strategies on risk prevention and mitigation procedures that Freedive NI is putting in place when national, regional or local authorities officially allow the reopening of diving activities.

PLEASE NOTE

The epidemiological and regulatory situation is constantly evolving. As a result, this document may be subject to changes and updates.

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1. MEASURES FOR THE SAFETY OF CUSTOMERS

- RECEPTION
- PHYSICAL DISTANCING
- CHANGING ROOMS
- PERSONAL HYGIENE
- USE OF PPE



SAFETY MEASURES FOR CUSTOMERS

1.1 RECEPTION

Customers should be reminded not to enter the Dive Centre if they have symptoms related to COVID-19 infection. In addition, it is advisable to deny access to non-diving family members or friends accompanying the divers, in order to reduce assembly of people in the dive centre. Staff present on the premises will be limited to those strictly necessary to carry out activities. The prevention measures taken by the Centre should be displayed on public signs and made clearly visible. For further information, please see below **Freedive NI Prevention Measures** (Attachment 1).

Customers can fill out all registration forms online, before visiting the Dive Centre. If this is not possible, correct personal hygiene procedures are respected, before completing the forms (masks, gloves, alcohol wipes for all shared writing instruments, hand sanitiser, etc.).

1.2 PHYSICAL DISTANCING

The **UK** Government recommends that people keep at a **2 metre / 6 feet distance** from each other. This also applies to Dive Centre premises, including classrooms and changing rooms. Wherever possible, e-learning and remote teaching are the preferred option to reduce face to face time in a classroom until a further lifting or restrictions.

1.3 CHANGING ROOMS

Changing rooms may be among the areas most subject to risk of infection. All customers' personal items, including clothing, towels and bathrobes should be stored in a way that avoids contact with common surfaces. Customers can store their items in special containers kept on the floor, well spaced from each other. Containers are being properly sanitised after each use.

1.4 Personal Hygiene

The new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is a respiratory virus that spreads mainly through contact with droplets of infected people, for example when they sneeze, cough or blow their nose.

Correct personal hygiene measures include:

Wash hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds. Keep physical distancing, avoid direct contact with other people. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Practice respiratory hygiene. This includes covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Freedive NI provides hand sanitising products and suitable facilities for washing hands as recommended.

1.5 USE OF PPE

MASKS

The **WHO** advises that masks should only be used if you are coughing or sneezing, or if you are taking care of a person with COVID-19. Follow instructions of local authorities, as well as your own best self-interest in this regard.

Which masks should you wear? There are primarily three types of appropriate protective masks, and the choice depends on their use:

Medical masks reduce the possibility that an infected person ejects droplets, but do not protect the person wearing them. They only offer a degree of protection if everyone in a given environment wears them. FFP2, KN95 and FFP3 **filter masks** are effective personal protective equipment and, if correctly fitted, protect both others and the person wearing them, as they block up to 99% of infected particles.

Please note: some FFP2, KN95 and FFP3 masks have a **valve** on the front, which is not a filter but only facilitates exhalation. These only protect the wearer, but would not protect others from what is exhaled. Their use in diving centres is therefore not recommended.

Before putting on the mask, hands should be sanitised. The mask should not be touched while wearing it. It should be removed from the back and eventually disposed of in closed containers. For more details, see the infographic **How to Put on, Use, Take off and Dispose of a Protective Mask** (Attachment 2)

1.5 USE OF PPE

GLOVES

Single-use gloves (e.g. latex gloves) only protect the hands of the person wearing them while handling materials, equipment, etc. However they do not protect other people and the surrounding environment from contamination. Before using, check their integrity. While in use, disinfect them regularly. After use, they should be removed and disposed of in closed containers, avoiding skin contact with the outside of the gloves. For more details, please refer to the infographic **Practical Guide for the Correct Use of Single-Use Gloves** (Attachment 3).

PLEASE NOTE

Single-use gloves often imply a false sense of security, and people tend to contaminate much more surfaces and perform hand hygiene more rarely when they wear them. As a result, they should be changed regularly, and good hand hygiene should be performed while wearing them and after doffing.



2. MANAGING DISINFECTION OPERATIONS

- SURFACES
- DIVING EQUIPMENT



MANAGING DISINFECTION OPERATIONS

Studies of other coronaviruses have shown their infectivity can be reduced by heat, UV light and alkaline or acidic conditions. Because of this, surfaces can be disinfected using household cleaning products.

2.1 SURFACES

It is not clear how long the virus can survive on surfaces. According to the WHO, preliminary information suggest that it may persist for a few hours or up to several days, depending on type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment. Surfaces, especially those that could be touched by several people: door and window handles, light switches, taps, keypads, etc. are disinfected frequently. Wherever possible, it is preferable to use simple soap and water to clean hands.

2.2 DIVING EQUIPMENT

INTRODUCTION

There are still no specific tests carried out regarding the survival of SARS-CoV-2 virus on diving equipment especially where it has penetration cavities or threaded sections. We therefore put special care in disinfecting diving equipment after use in order to neutralise the virus. In Europe, the ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) has published some [guidelines](#).



3. EQUIPMENT AND INFECTION CONTROL

- RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO MANAGE INFECTION CONTROL OF RENTAL EQUIPMENT?

3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

We pay particular care to the infection control of our equipment. Our equipment is disinfected as indicated, after each use, with particular attention to snorkels and masks. Rental masks need to be fit-tested by each diver before use, which implies disinfection after each test.

Returned rental equipment is kept separate from areas where disinfected equipment is stored. We will bring the gear out to customers and only staff is allowed access to stored disinfected material. If the Rental equipment is being re-used, they will be stored in individual containers, marked with customer's name, and disinfected after use.



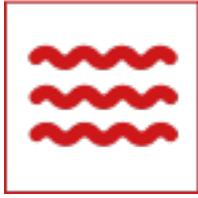
4. PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN ON OUR DIVE RIB



PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN ON OUR DIVE RIB

Physical distancing is respected also when on board. This will be achieved by our one to one policy.

Staff handling materials and equipment wear gloves and a protective mask. Ensure that masks, snorkels and second stages of preassembled equipment are protected, e.g. protecting them with bags to be removed only before use. Do not use buckets to rinse masks: rinse them in open water instead. Discourage the use of saliva to defog masks: preferably use defogging products. Even when distancing rules are respected, while the boat is moving and due to the effect of the wind, droplets may travel a longer distance. It is therefore advisable that all passengers wear a protective mask. Remind them not to touch other people's equipment. Make sure you have hand sanitisers available on board. Make sure distancing rules are respected also when divers enter and exit the water. Respecting distance on surface may be difficult in the presence of current: the use of tag lines or lines secured to a floating buoy, with spacing indicated with tape or colour bands may assist in maintaining the appropriate distances.



5. CAN THE VIRUS SURVIVE IN WATER?

Research is still ongoing, and it is not clear how long the SARS- CoV-2 virus can survive in water. Studies on the SARS-CoV-1 virus (2003 epidemic) have shown that it remained infectious for long periods on the surface (lakes, rivers, wetlands, etc.). It appears that sea water is not able to neutralise the virus. In properly chlorinated or bromated pools and hot tubs, the CDC (Center for Disease Control) specifies that SARS-CoV-2 would be inactivated after a period of time (3).

According to current evidence, it is therefore recommended that care is taken both when in the water and out of the water. This includes respecting distancing rules and properly washing and disinfecting equipment.



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PUBLIC NOTICE

COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES AT FREEDIVE NI

1. Public access to the Dive Centre is limited to diving customers only.
2. Do not enter the Dive Centre premises if you have any of the following symptoms, which could be related to a COVID-19 infection: Fever, Cough, Tiredness or muscle pain, Difficulty breathing, Sore throat, Lung infections, Headache, Loss of taste, Diarrhoea.
3. If you have travelled in the last two weeks and or if you have been in contact with people affected or potentially affected by COVID-19, please contact health authorities or your treating physician before going to the Dive Centre.
4. Entering the Dive Center may be limited to a specified number of people at any one time.

HOW TO PUT ON, USE, TAKE OFF AND DISPOSE OF A PROTECTIVE MASK



1

Before putting on a mask,
**clean hands with alcohol-based
hand rub or soap and water**



2

Cover mouth and nose with
**mask and make sure there are no gaps
between your face and the mask**



3

Avoid touching the mask while using it;
if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based
hand rub or soap and water



4

To remove the mask: **remove it from behind** (do not touch the front of mask);
discard immediately in a closed bin;
clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water



GUIDELINES ON SINGLE-USE PROTECTIVE GLOVES



BEFORE WEARING PROTECTIVE GLOVES

1

Remove any jewellery, and make sure nails don't damage gloves



2

Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water



3

Choose the proper glove size for you



4

Replace if damaged, dirty or sweaty



HOW TO SAFELY REMOVE GLOVES

1

Pinch and hold the outside of the glove near the wrist area



2

Peel downwards, turning the glove inside-out and holding it with the gloved hand



3

With your ungloved hand, slide two fingers under the wrist of the remaining glove, and peel downwards



4

Turn the glove inside-out, leaving the first glove inside the second



5

Dispose of the gloves in a closed bin



6

Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water

