



Generic Open Water Snorkelling Risk Assessment

This document should be read by all snorkellers taking part in snorkelling trips organised by Totnes Sub-aqua Club, and will be made available to all club members via an annual distribution and on the club website.

It is the Snorkel Manager's responsibility to carry out a risk review prior to every snorkelling trip/expedition, based on this generic risk assessment, plus consideration of prevailing conditions. If conditions change such as to be significantly different from those applying at the time the original assessment was undertaken, then the Snorkel Manager shall reassess the plan accordingly.

Hazards should be continuously monitored during any snorkeling trip or related activity. The Snorkel Manager/boat handler should be prepared to put any contingency plans into place at any point during the trip.

Standard Controls

Snorkellers shall snorkel within the restrictions of their training and experience and all snorkelling shall be carried out in accordance with BSAC Safe Diving Practices and TSAC Branch Rules.

It is the responsibility of each individual snorkeller to undertake personal risk control measures as befits their level of training and experience and, if appropriate, the Snorkel Manager/Instructor shall brief the snorkeller/trainee on the risks associated with the snorkelling trip.

The Snorkel Manager or designated boat tower shall ensure that the boat is properly equipped (refer to the boat checklist on the back of the boatshed door for equipment list).

Anyone managing a branch snorkelling trip must obtain the Diving Officer's consent to the planned trip. On completion, the Diving Officer shall be advised of the safe return of all snorkellers, or of any accidents or incidents, at the earliest opportunity.

An approved boat handler must be present in the boat at all times, and only persons having undertaken a recognized boat handling course and subsequently satisfied the Diving Officer of their competence may handle the boat unsupervised. The boat handler shall wear a lifejacket while operating in that role. The engine kill cord should be attached to the boat handler at all times when the boat is underway.



All persons in the boat must be in possession of a buoyancy device and if a dry-suit is to be relied upon in this role the zip must be completely closed before leaving shore.

The A flag should be flown at all times that snorkellers are in the water and should be taken down once all snorkellers have been recovered.

All snorkellers must have completed a medical self-declaration form.

Snorkellers should ensure that their equipment is properly maintained and functional. Snorkellers to carry appropriate surface detection aids.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Currents	Diver(s) swept away from marked site or losing contact with boat cover	High	Snorkel Manager to use tide tables where appropriate and brief snorkellers on tidal information. Have contingency exit points available for shore based trips. snorkellers to agree plan with boat handler/skipper. Where required, set maximum dive times. All snorkellers to carry surface detection aids such as SMB, torch, strobe, EPIRB, flag, flares, whistle, etc.	Snorkellers to use surface detection aids to attract assistance.
Poor weather conditions	Snorkeller separation	High	Snorkellers should dive in buddy pairs if at all possible. Groups of three should consist of experienced snorkellers who are self-reliant. If training, the normal student-to-instructor ratio of 2 students to 1 instructor should be reduced to 1 to 1 if possible, except in the case where the 'students' are experienced snorkellers involved in supplementary training.	Snorkellers abort trip and return to boat using surface detection aids to attract attention of boat handler.
Boat propeller	Serious injury to snorkellers or swimmers/death	Medium	Only a competent skipper to operate boat while snorkellers are in the water; a competent skipper is defined as a Diver Cox'n, and experienced BSAC/SAA Boat handler or a less experienced boat handler under supervision. While on the surface all activities are controlled by the skipper. Snorkellers to be aware of boat entry and exit procedures.	First Aid to be administered. Snorkel Manager/boat handler (or other snorkellers) to contact emergency services, as required. Hospitalise, as required.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Unfavourable weather	Lost snorkeller/Injury to snorkeller	High	<p>Snorkel Manager to plan dive using latest weather forecast, and to have contingency dive site. Continuously monitor conditions prior to and during trip and abort if necessary. If diving from a boat, notify coastguard of position in advance. Skipper to be aware of snorkellers planned times and watch for snorkellers arriving at the surface. Make sure a proper watch is kept at all times. All snorkellers to carry surface detection aids such as SMB, torch, strobe, EPIRB, flag, flares, etc. Boat handler to agree recall system with snorkellers prior to entry (e.g. engine revving).</p> <p>NOTE: Unfavourable weather would include rough sea, poor visibility (fog or rain), low sun preventing boat from seeing snorkellers or onshore wind preventing the pick up of snorkellers</p>	<p>Snorkel Manager to cancel trip or change to back-up site. Recall snorkellers if snorkelling is in progress. Advise coastguard of change of plan/returning to base.</p>



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Cold water and/or wind chill	Hypothermia	Medium	Snorkellers to choose appropriate, well fitting exposure protection in good condition, including wind-proof coat to wear on boat if required. Snorkellers to be prepared to exit water early if cold. Snorkellers to monitor buddies, and in particular trainees, for early signs of cold.	First Aid to be administered. Snorkel Manager/boat handler (or other snorkellers) to contact emergency services, as required. Hospitalise, as required.
Deteriorating weather	Risk to boat and passengers	Medium	Snorkel Manager to plan trip using updated weather forecast, and to have contingency site. Continuously monitor conditions prior to and during trip and abort trip if necessary. If snorkeling from a boat, notify coastguard of position in advance.	Snorkel Manager to cancel snorkelling or change to back-up site. Recall snorkellers if snorkelling in progress. Advise coastguard of change of plan/returning to base.
Snorkeller falling from ladder when exiting water or generally during entry/exit	Serious injury to snorkeller beneath them	Medium	Snorkellers to ensure they are never beneath a snorkeller who is climbing up a ladder or entering/exiting water	Recover casualty from water and administer first aid. Hospitalise, as required.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Snorkeller influenced by drugs or alcohol	Injury to snorkeller	Medium	Snorkel Manager/skipper to stop anyone believed to be under the influence drugs or alcohol from snorkelling. Snorkeller to advise Snorkel Manager if concerned about fitness of buddy.	Snorkel Manager/skipper to stop affected person from snorkelling.
Drowning	Serious injury/death of snorkeller or boat passenger	Medium	Snorkellers in drysuits to have zip closed when aboard boat. Non-snorkellers/boat handler to wear life jackets when aboard boat.	First Aid to be administered. Snorkel Manager/boat handler (or other snorkellers) to contact emergency services, as required. Hospitalise.
Ear damage	Injury to diver	Medium	Trainees to receive specific instruction on ear clearing. snorkellers to avoid snorkelling when suffering from a cold.	Assistance from Instructor/buddy.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Engine failure	Risk to boat and passengers/separation from snorkellers	Medium	Engine to be serviced regularly. Snorkel Manager to ensure that the boat is carrying sufficient fuel for the planned voyage. Boat to carry toolkit, VHF radio, oars, flares and other emergency equipment. Notify coastguard of position/estimated duration in advance.	If unable to repair, seek assistance from other boats in vicinity. If no immediate assistance available, advise coastguard of problem – Mayday if imminent danger to boat/snorkellers. Recall snorkellers if snorkelling in progress/arrange for other boat(s) to pick-up snorkellers if possible.
Fishing line, nets, kelp, and other underwater obstructions.	Panic, entrapment or entanglement, injury to snorkeller, serious injury to diver/death	Medium	Snorkel Manager to brief snorkellers of any known obstructions or if the site is know to be prone to collecting nets & fishing lines. Change sites or dive plan if necessary. Snorkellers should aim to have their equipment streamlined and avoid dangling equipment as far as is possible. snorkellers must have diving tool/knife for cutting.	Assistance from buddy.
Heart attack	Death	Medium	Snorkellers to complete medical self-declaration/referral to medical referee.	BLS to be instigated. Snorkel Manager/boat handler (or other snorkellers) to contact emergency services. Hospitalise.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
New location	Unknown risks	Medium	Snorkel Manager to plan diving at site with knowledge from charts, guides and local knowledge (e.g. from local dive clubs/shops). Diving Officer to approve all dive plans in advance.	Snorkel Manager to cancel diving or change to back-up site.
Night	Lost snorkeller on surface	Medium	Make sure a proper watch is kept at all times. All snorkellers to carry surface detection aids such as torch, strobe, EPIRB, flares, etc. All snorkellers to carry spare torch.	Snorkellers to use surface detection aids to attract assistance, e.g. illuminate SMB with torch.
Boat launching/recovery	Injury to diver/general public	Low	Snorkel Manager to ensure that everyone is familiar with procedures for launching and recovery of boats. General public to be kept clear of immediate area during these operations.	First Aid to be administered.
Debris at entry/exit site or otherwise unsuitable	Injury to snorkeller	Low	Snorkel Manager to consider whether snorkellers can enter/exit water safely. Snorkel Manager to check that entry and exit are possible at all states of the tide during the trip. Snorkellers should only enter water if easy to do in full kit and exit is possible.	Change sites or dive plan if necessary, or abort trip. Snorkellers to change method of entry or abort trip.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Hot weather	Hyperthermia/sunburn	Low	Snorkellers to take precautions against over-heating/sun. Snorkellers to avoid dehydration. Water to be carried on boat.	First Aid to be administered. Snorkel Manager/boat handler (or other snorkellers) to contact emergency services, as required. Hospitalise, as required.
Mask squeeze	Injury to snorkeller	Low	Trainees to receive specific instruction on mask equalisation. Only masks which enclose both eyes and nose in same airspace to be used.	Assistance from Instructor/buddy.
Other boat traffic/water users in trip location, e.g. fishermen	Serious injury to snorkeller/death	Low	Boat cover to monitor other surface traffic while snorkellers are in water. Snorkel Manager/skipper to avoid placing snorkellers in shipping lanes. Manager to have contingency site and to be prepared to cancel snorkelling or change to back-up site if necessary.	First Aid to be administered. Snorkel Manager/boat handler (or other snorkellers) to contact emergency services, as required. Hospitalise, as required.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Radio failure	Risk to boat and passengers	Low	Carry hand-held radio or mobile telephone as back-up. Flares to be kept in boat box. If possible, boats to travel in pairs.	In emergency use flares or alternative means of communication to summon assistance from emergency services.
Seasickness	Injury to diver	Low	Snorkellers to take precautions against seasickness, or to avoid diving if they consider that conditions are such as to make them likely to be ill. Trainees to be made aware of the risk of dehydration. Water to be carried on boat.	Snorkeller to abort trip if necessary.
Sharp objects	Injury to diver	Low	Snorkellers to avoid touching jagged/rusty edges of metal on wrecks unless wearing gloves. Knives to be kept in sheath unless in use.	First Aid to be administered. Snorkel Manager/boat handler (or other snorkellers) to contact emergency services, as required. Hospitalise, as required.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Sharp objects	Damage to RIB/injury to snorkeller or boat passenger	Low	Snorkellers to ensure that any sharp equipment is stowed safely while on the boat.	If unable to repair, seek assistance from other boats in vicinity. If no immediate assistance available, advise coastguard of problem – Mayday if imminent danger to boat/snorkellers. Recall snorkellers if snorkelling is in progress/arrange for
Wet decks	Injury to diver, e.g. slipping/damage to equipment	Low	Snorkellers should be aware that wet decks are slippery. Snorkellers not to put fins on feet until at or very near to water entry point - this must not involve snorkellers being exposed to a risk of falling in without having fins on. In the case of cold weather, extreme caution should be exercised by all snorkellers as there is a risk of icy walking surface.	Remove casualty from danger and administer first aid. Hospitalise, as required.



Hazard:	Risk of:	Risk Evaluation:	Controls:	Immediate measures to deal with consequences if risk does occur:
Trips, slips and falls	Injury to diver/damage to equipment	Low	<p>Brief trainee/inexperienced snorkellers to be aware of and look out for possible obstacles while walking or moving around the boat.</p> <p>While on boats all snorkellers must keep their equipment tidy and secure. Snorkellers not to put fins on feet until at or very near to water entry point - this must not involve snorkellers being exposed to a risk of falling in without having fins on. In the case of cold weather, extreme caution should be exercised by all snorkellers as there is a risk of icy walking surface. snorkellers should be aware that wet decks are slippery.</p>	Remove casualty from danger and administer first aid. Hospitalise, as required.