

## **Diving in the Off Season**

Some of you may not be aware or trained that there are many things you can do to ease the hassle that could arise during your transition into the next season of diving. Unless you own and are trained in Dry Suit Diving or have a trip scheduled you may wonder, "What's Next"? During the off season, here are some things you may think of doing.

### **Equipment:**

If you own your own equipment, now is the time to have it serviced by a professional. Most regulator and BC manufacturers recommend a yearly checkup. Since you may not be diving, it will give the service professionals at your local dive shop time to perform in a not so rushed and increased cost to you (at peak season) time to perform a superior service on your equipment. Tanks need to have hydrostatic testing every 5 years (DOT 29 and 49 Code of Federal Regulations) and visual cylinder inspections (Using PSI protocol/CGA procedures) yearly. When you bring your tanks in, do this at least 1 month prior to the diving season. For those trained in Nitrox, yearly tank cleaning (O<sub>2</sub> service for some regulators too) is also required. Take time to inspect all your equipment for cuts, cracking, and tears in the materials and repair and or replace. Wet suits, wash in Sink the Stink to get rid of the unwanted odors you may have done or encountered during your travels (You can also use a very dilute mix of Simple Green for suits and interiors of BC's). Dry Suits, Wash at least once a year inside and out with warm soapy water (I sometimes take a shower with my gear, but I'm also still diving). If your suit has a P-valve, use 50% hot water and vinegar (1% acetic acid) and then rinse. Clean your zipper with a soft toothbrush and then make sure you wax up the zipper. Store per manufacturers recommendations. Repack your equipment making it ready to go unless otherwise instructed by the manufacturer. Remove batteries from your lights during long storage and leave semi-open (un-swaged) to protect from dust and dirt. I sometimes remove the o-ring to inspect for nicks, cuts, and depending on the material, which could develop a memory, can cause leakage (before the dive I re-inspect and use the manufacturer's specified lubricant for the o-ring). Store in a cool, dry place away from ozone producing equipment. Garages may be cool now but they may not be dry and cars produce ozone. In basements, keep your equipment away from hot water heaters, electrical motors, and furnaces (ozone producers). Don't forget to inspect your 1<sup>st</sup> Aid equipment for expired medications (that you use for you and loved ones) and medical devices. Review your emergency procedures protocol (stored inside your kit?) for any changes. You should have learned all this in your entry-level course to save you time and money in this life long activity. I can provide tank service and training. Please give me a call for pricing.

### **You're Fitness:**

Push yourself away from that table and get your mask, fins, and snorkel and practice skin diving skills and swim in a local pool. Take up underwater hockey (a great cardiovascular game I teach and Olympic Sport). If you can, practice with your new gear you may have received during the holidays and see what buoyancy changes you may have to consider while diving with your new gear. If you change you equipment configurations you may change your buoyancy characteristics. You may consider doing this under the guidance of an instructor who can help you get towards your goal and increase your comfort underwater. Again this is an entry level of skill you should have learned. Why not give me a call?

### **Continuing Education:**

Now is the time for courses like 1<sup>st</sup> Aid/CPR, DAN Courses (DEMP, O2 Provider, Hazardous Marine Life, Advance O2, AED and others) that can be taught inside when the weather isn't cooperating. Many of the courses I offer can be started by conducting the classroom portion of the course and taking the open water when the weather cooperates (see brochure of courses I can offer you). With the right number of people or pricing (private lessons, my specialty), I do travel to other locations. Remember not all agency standards are the same and so are the instructors. Ask questions, let me be your guide, and give me a call: 847-702-0790 (cell) or email me at [ghawk@charter.net](mailto:ghawk@charter.net). Yours in safe diving. George