



CDAS SAFETY FLASH 2023-09 |

Dear Members,

Pair of North Sea divers have been stripped of their qualifications after getting a police caution for fraud.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) said two offshore commercial divers, both of whom had worked for contractors in the North Sea, had lied about their experience.

They, along with the director of a diving company, have been sanctioned. HSE said they couldn't be named, at request of Hampshire Police, but both divers are from the Portsmouth area.

The regulator received word in December 2022, that two divers may have obtained their closed diving bell qualifications without the right experience.

That sparked fears of a North Sea diving incident taking place offshore. It comes as efforts were launched last week for a [statue](#) commemorating North Sea divers in Aberdeen, 79 of whom have lost their lives over the last 50 years.

Police said their closed bell courses cost £15,000 each, and they've now been stripped of that without gaining a qualification.

Further offences will lead to "severe consequences in the criminal courts".

Catching North Sea diver fraud

To work in the UK as a saturation diver, they need an approved qualification from one of two dive schools globally which offer it – INPP in Marseille or the Commercial Dive Academy in Tasmania.

Tracking their enrolment details, HSE spoke to several UK diving contractors to find whether their claims were genuine.

The director of the diving company which has been sanctioned did not provide records – despite it being a legal requirement for two years after dives, and despite signing the logbook himself.

Inspectors then went to the locations where diving was claimed to have taken place. One diver had forged 10 dives at this location, signed by the director.

The other diver only had records for 28 dives, one of which was deeper than 15 metres – he claimed to have a total of 106 dives, 26 at depth greater than 15m. HSE worked with the fraud investigation team of Hampshire Police.

All three admitted to false logbook entries and received cautions for fraud by false representation under the Fraud Act of 2006.

HSE diving inspector Phil Crombie said: “You need diving experience to become a qualified closed bell diver and making it up could put your life and other divers at risk.

“Offshore diving contractors need to use qualified divers and these men could have worked anywhere across Great Britain.

“If we hear divers have made up their experience in order to get onto a closed bell course, we will look very carefully at all of the records available.

“A logbook is a document required by law, and making false entries is a criminal offence. The police cautions issued meant that we were able to have the qualifications withdrawn quickly by the relevant authorities.

“Closed bell courses cost over fifteen thousand pounds for a diver – and these divers have ended up losing that without gaining a qualification.

It’s just fortunate that they weren’t involved in any accident or incident.”

Hampshire Police PC Alam Mahmmued said: “The men involved in this case did not have the requisite experience to undertake dive work of this nature, posing a serious risk of harm to themselves.

This is in addition to their actions which clearly amounted to criminal offences.

“We take any aspect of fraud seriously and we were pleased to collaborate with HSE to achieve a suitable outcome in this case. We hope this will in turn reduce the likelihood of any further offending. If offending continues, then these individuals face severe consequences in the criminal courts.”

Kindest regards Taira

[Taira Caton](#)

Secretary, ADC

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