

BORACAY SCUBA DIVING EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Note: Boracay Scuba Diving Safety and anyone connected to the site does not guarantee the accuracy of the info provided here. As such, this scuba diving emergency action plan only serves as a reference. Our position is that dive centers should have an updated plan on hand. As for scuba divers, it is in your best interest to ask about an emergency response, among others, before choosing a dive center and engaging in any scuba diving activity.

The clear and calm waters of Boracay are often cited as one of the reasons why it is a safe diving environment. Due to its complexity, scuba diving is unique compared to many other activities. As such, handling an emergency involves far more processes.

The local hospital or private clinic can treat most common injuries that may result from scuba diving. Unfortunately, there are some severe injuries which MAY require air transport to the nearest hyperbaric chamber.

As a rule, the best way to manage or handle an emergency is to prevent one from occurring.

How safe is scuba diving in Boracay?

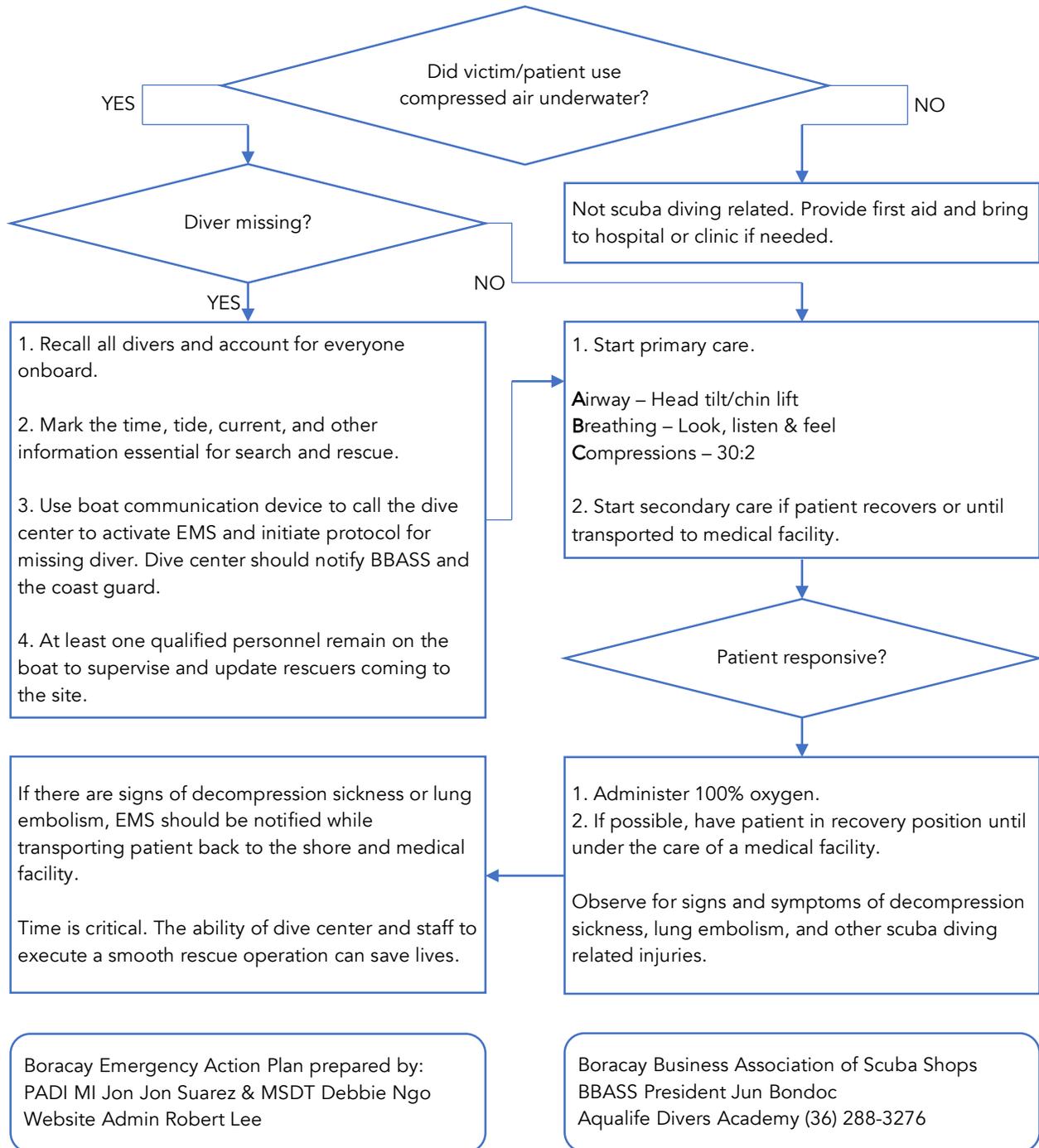
In some places, recreational scuba divers can dive without professional supervision. After all, that is within the limits of the open water diver certification. Still, divers should avoid scuba diving in unfamiliar dive sites without a guide.

In Boracay, diving without supervision is not allowed, even for visiting professional scuba divers. In that sense, scuba diving in Boracay is relatively safer. The local dive pros not only know the underwater conditions well but also take care of all aspects of safety.

Scuba diving is not without risk. While unlikely, if an emergency does occur, then the following pages may prove invaluable.

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PART 1



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PART 2

The sooner a patient receives medical care, the better. Speedboats can get back to shore in five minutes or less, but pump boats may take up to five times longer. Besides administering oxygen while on the dive boat, there must be a coordination on where to egress.

EGRESS POINTS

From: Baling-Hai 1 & 2, Diniwid Point, Friday's Rock & Reef, Yapak 1 & 2

Egress: White Beach Station 1

From: Angol Point, Camia II, Coral Garden, Lobster Rock, Tri-Bird

Egress: White Beach Station 3

From: Crocodile Island, Laurel 1 & 2, Tulobhan Reef

Egress: Tambisaan Port

From: Bulabog Reef, Laguna Reef

Egress: Bulabog Beach (only during high tide)

The point of coordinating where to meet up is to shorten travel time from the dive boat to the medical facility of Boracay.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

Metropolitan Doctor's Medical Clinic
(36) 288-6357, 288-6638

Boracay Island Hospital
(36) 288-3041

Divers Alert Network Philippines
(2) 632-1077

PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD

Boracay Station
(36) 288-6150, (917) 750-2851, (929) 686-4146

Caticlan Station
(36) 288-7361, (927) 886-8853, (998) 182-0670

RECOMPRESSION CHAMBERS

St. Patrick's Hospital Batangas City (43) 723-7089,
(917) 815-2010

PCSSD Hyperbaric Chambers Quezon City and
Mandaue City (928) CHAMBER or (928) 242-6237

AFP Medical Center Quezon City (2) 920-7183,
426-2701

Central Command Station (VISCOM) Hospital
Cebu City (32) 31-0709, 232-2464 to 68

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NOTES

Diving-related accidents and injuries are rare on Boracay Island. Nevertheless, operators and dive pros should ensure a safe scuba diving experience, not only during the dive, but also before and after.

These flowcharts of an emergency action plan (EAP) for scuba diving accidents in Boracay are only a guide. At the end of the day, dive centers are responsible for keeping a comprehensive plan on hand. But even more than having a plan, there is a need to regularly practice rescue scenarios to keep everyone in the team sharp.

All dive centers, not only in Boracay but elsewhere in the Philippines and the world, claim to value safety. In reality, not all dive centers can back up that claim.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Caring for the safety of scuba divers is a discipline. Besides following the usual safe diving practices as well as the standards of PADI, there are ways to increase the safety net. "Practice makes perfect," they say. So, conducting regular prevention and rescue scenarios is something dive centers should do. Furthermore, first aid and safety equipment must be available for use if needed.

In Boracay, almost all scuba diving activities are boat dives. While some dive centers use speedboats, most others use the much slower pump boats with outriggers. Even if it takes speedboats less than five minutes to reach the shore, a lot could and should be done in a real emergency situation. As such, communication devices must be available to activate EMS, besides first aid kits and other equipment.

Taking safety to the next level, one great thing that can be done is to bring oxygen onboard. The risk of decompression sickness (DCS) is small, but it is still a risk. It can happen to anyone at any time regardless of dive profile. Administering 100% oxygen is one of the things that needs to be done in a scuba diving accident, so having one onboard may help alleviate or manage the symptoms sooner rather than later - in which case, DCS could worsen.