

Near-miss incident involving a diver's umbilical

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The UK Association of Diving Contractors (ADC) has issued ADC Safety Alert 3/08 – Very Near miss incident Involving a Divers Umbilical.

What happened?

The Near Miss Incident:

At the start of the salvage operation a heavy down line / working line was required to be positioned to replace the thin temporary line used to mark the wreck, this would then enable a secure line to be secured to a fixed point on the wreck which would be used for the duration of the works. The dive was planned to be carried out during a slack water period and to facilitate this final preparations were completed on deck. The diving supervisor approached the Master of the Vessel on the bridge to seek permission to commence diving when the tide turned. A Permit to Dive form used by the contractor was presented to the Master for confirmation that all machinery was isolated and that diving was cleared to commence. The Master checked and isolated the controls on the bridge and signed the permit returning it to the diving supervisor. As soon as the tidal conditions were considered to be suitable the diver entered the water. Soon after commencing his descent along a temporary down line the diver informed the supervisor that he needed slack on his umbilical. Slack was provided, but the diver continued to struggle to overcome the pulling on the umbilical and requested further slack. Over the communications the supervisor proposed terminating the dive to await a change in the tidal condition, believing the tidal flow to be the primary cause of the problem, whilst attempting to respond the diver reported he was in difficulty and soon after communications were lost.

Recommendations

Although the incident occurred during a diving operation being carried out in UK territorial waters, the lessons learnt are relevant world-wide to both inshore and offshore diving operations.

Members are reminded of guidance note IMCAD 035 – The selection of vessels of opportunity for diving operations – which discusses isolations and vessel permit systems.

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