

# The HangLine

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By Bill Nadeau

## Risk Acceptance

One of the greatest issues threatening the reputation of the diving industry today is the diver's inability to accurately assess and accept risk. Quite often this is the result of his lack of awareness of what can happen (panic) and what to do to prevent it – (eliminate stress). What we have already discussed is that the average diver may not have been taught to accurately analyze what risks there are. He may feel prepared to deal with a problem when it occurs, but it is possible that a typically well-trained diver could be misled into thinking that he is truly prepared to handle even the simplest problems in the water.

Take for example a diver who has his weight belt come undone and begin to slide off. In our open water class we were trained to remove and replace a weight belt at the bottom of a pool, lake or ocean and like all new skills it was practiced under the watchful eye and control of the SCUBA Instructor in a very controlled and placid environment. Successful completion of this skill and issuance of a c-card assured us as new divers that we have been both trained and

certified to handle problems of this nature should they occur.

The reality of it is that a weight belt, like any other piece of equipment, does not necessarily come off when a diver is expecting it and in the calm and controlled waters as described above. It will occur when we are in a somewhat compromised and uncomfortable situation. It is then that most divers discover whether they are really prepared to handle

the loss of a weight belt, the flooding of a mask, the frantic free flow of a regulator or the out of control inflation of a BCD. Through trial and experience (and sometimes error) we soon begin to question what kind of divers we really are and wonder how we could have ever prepared ourselves for this.

What seems to convince divers that they are well prepared to handle the myriad diver problems that could occur is a false sense of experience. It is not uncommon for divers to embellish the number of logged dives they have made and soon believe that they actually made that number of dives (like the angler who let the 'Big One' get away). The pattern emerging is a diver who really is not aware of how much diving experience they

***'As we advance in life,  
we learn the limits of  
our abilities.'***

- James Anthony Froude





actually have. This statement is heard time and again by industry professionals when they talk with keen and (perhaps overly) ambitious divers. Wow – two thousand dives and this person is only what...twenty-three, twenty-four years old maybe? In reality this individual not only has difficulty understanding what real experience he has, but what kinds of risks are involved in diving. And has he really made that many dives? Without actually logging each and every dive, it is difficult to estimate how many dives we have really done. A 24-year-old with 2000 logged dives has made on average, 6.4 dives every single week, since he was 18 years old (see inset). That is one dive every day of the year, for 6 years straight. That is a lot of diving; very few active instructors in the industry are able to get that many dives in.

YES diving can be very safe as long as divers understand their limitations, and are realistic about their abilities. A diver has a responsibility to be honest with himself, with his dive buddy, with his family and friends, and with the diving industry. This includes accurately assessing all the risks of each dive and making a correct decision as to whether the dive is within his capability based on training, skills, experience, equipment and physical and mental fitness.

Divers also need to understand that there are often many issues that they need to be aware of and familiar with that are not very obvious. Oxygen toxicity is a good example of this. Divers who dive beyond 55 meters (180fsw) on air do not realize the extremely high levels of risk they are assuming. At that depth in cold waters, a diver becomes extremely vulnerable to oxygen toxicity due to the high partial pressures of oxygen, cold water, and

currents which require a degree of physical exertion.

Narcosis is another often underestimated and misunderstood problem. *'I am not prone to narcosis and have never felt it!'* This diver believes that he does not suffer any form of narcosis. The reality of it is that if you are diving, and you are breathing nitrogen, you will suffer a certain degree of cognitive debilitation. The trick is in determining the point at which it prohibits you from diving safely. A person who drops straight to 55 meters (180fsw) on air and comes straight back up might not feel

any effects of narcosis - unless something happens. Their cognitive processes to deal with that problem are restricted, but unless the diver knows this, he cannot accurately assess the total risk involved in the dive (which in this case is a lot).

~Safe Diving

***'I've made over a thousand dives in my first three years of diving and to date have made yet another thousand!!'***  
 ~ Confessions of an unrealistic diver

**Number of Dives Per Week Since the Age of 18**

Total Number of Career Dives Made	Present Age of Diver									
	20	22	24	27	30	34	38	42	50	
100	1.0	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	
150	1.4	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	
200	1.9	1.0	0.6	0.4						
250	2.4	1.2	0.8	0.5						
300	2.9	1.4	1.0	0.6						
400	3.8	1.9	1.3	0.9						
500	4.8	2.4	1.6	1.1						
750	7.2	3.6	2.4	1.6						
1000	9.6	4.8	3.2	2.1	1.6	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.6	
1500	14.4	7.2	4.8	3.2	2.4	1.8	1.4	1.3	0.9	
2000	19.2	9.6	6.4	4.3	3.2	2.4	1.9	1.7	1.2	
3000	28.8	14.4	9.6	6.4	4.8	3.6	2.9	2.6	1.8	
4000	38.5	19.2	12.8	8.5	6.4	4.8	3.8	3.5	2.4	
5000	48.1	24.0	16.0	10.7	8.0	6.0	4.8	4.4	3.0	

For a 24 year old diver to have logged 2000 dives, he would have to make at least 6.4 dives every week since he was 18 years old. ~that's a lot of diving!!

