



# Guidance on the Medical Assessment of Divers



December 2018

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# **Guidance on the Medical Assessment of Divers**

## **1. Introduction**

These guidelines outline the procedure for the medical assessment and certification of divers as required under the Safety in Industry (Diving Operations) Regulations 1981, hereby called the Diving Regulations. The appeals procedure in the event of refusal, revocation or limitations being placed on the certificate are detailed. Agreements with other Member States of the European Union with respect to the mutual recognition of doctors approved to carry out diving medical examinations are also included.

## **2. Legal Requirements**

Divers who wish to dive under the Safety in Industry (Diving Operations) Regulations 1981 (S.I. 422 of 1981) must be certified by a “medical examiner of divers”. If the examiner is satisfied that the diver is fit, the diver will be issued with a certificate (guided by the notes in Appendix 1). The certificate must be in the form approved in Appendix 2. Medical examiners of divers are registered medical practitioners who have been approved by the Health and Safety Authority in accordance with Regulation 1(2) and 12 of the Diving Regulations, under the executive powers vested in the Authority under Section 63 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (No. 10 of 2005).

A list of approved doctors is available at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) or by contacting the Workplace Contact Unit at 1890 289 389 or [wcu@hsa.ie](mailto:wcu@hsa.ie).

### **3. Procedure for Applying for a Medical**

Divers who wish to be medically examined should contact the medical examiner of divers of their choice stating their availability, previous medical examinations and so on. The medical examiner of divers will arrange a suitable date and time for the examination.

### **4. Criteria for Conducting Medicals**

Medical examiners of divers will examine divers using the medical form in Appendix 1. Based on information obtained at the courses that they must attend in order to obtain approval, journal articles or other sources, they may need to vary the criteria according to their clinical judgement.

### **5. Frequency of Medical Assessments and Conditions Attached**

Regulation 12 of the Diving Regulations requires that a diver may not take part in any operations unless he has been certified within a period of 12 months. Where the medical examiner of divers has stipulated a shorter period in the certificate, the diver must re submit himself/herself for examination within the stated period. Where the medical examiner has attached conditions to the diver's certificate that

diver may not take part in diving operations unless these conditions are complied with (for example, a condition as regards a particular depth).

**6. Procedure to Become an Approved Medical Examiner of Divers.**

Doctors who wish to apply to become an approved medical examiner of divers must:

1. Have their names included in the Medical Register of the Medical Council of Ireland.
2. Have attended a course in underwater medicine of at least 5 days duration, covering the following subjects.
  - Diving techniques and equipment
  - Diving physics and physiology
  - Inert and metabolic gas physiology
  - Decompression theory, decompression illness and barotraumas
  - Immersion and near drowning
  - The ear and diving
  - Assessment of fitness to dive
  - Radiology and bone necrosis
  - Principles of treatment of diving related illness

3. Complete the application form (Appendix 3) and submit it to the Occupational Health Manager, Health and Safety Authority, Metropolitan Building, James Joyce Street, Dublin 1.
4. Approval as a Medical Examiner of Divers is valid for 5 years. Re - approval will be required after 5 years.

#### **7. Re – Approval of Doctors as Medical Examiners of Divers**

Re – approval of doctors as medical examiners of divers will be required after a period of 5 years. Re – approval will be conditional on;

1. The doctor having attended an appropriate revision course not later than 5 years following their initial (introductory) course. These revision courses should be of at least 2 day's duration and include updates on the subjects specified above.
2. The doctor having submitted an annual return of the numbers of divers examined by them at the end of each calendar year, in the form at Appendix 4, to the Occupational Health Manager, Health and Safety Authority, Metropolitan Building, James Joyce Street, Dublin 1.
3. Where the Health and Safety Authority is of the opinion that the competence of a particular medical examiner of divers remains acceptable, it may make an exception as regards the length of

time within which the revision course referred to above, needs to be undertaken.

4. Re - approval is for a period of 5 years.

## **8. Mutual Recognition Agreements**

In certain cases, the Health and Safety Authority may have mutual recognition agreements of doctors approved to carry out diving medical examinations and diving medical testing, with other Member States of the European Union. Currently the Authority has a mutual recognition agreement with the Health and Safety Executive in the United Kingdom. There is currently no mutual recognition agreement in place with the Health and Safety Executive (Northern Ireland).

Under the mutual recognition agreement with the Health and Safety Executive (United Kingdom):

1. Doctors approved under the Irish Diving Regulations to carry out diving medical examinations will automatically be recognized under UK Diving Regulations.
2. Doctors approved under UK Diving Regulations to carry out diving medical examinations will automatically be recognized under Irish Diving Regulations.

3. Medical certificates issued by doctors approved under Irish Diving Regulations to carry out diving medical examinations will automatically be recognized under UK Diving Regulations for divers intending to work in the UK sector.
4. Medical certificates issued by doctors approved under UK Diving Regulations to carry out diving medical examinations will automatically be recognized under Irish Diving Regulations for divers intending to work in the Irish sector.



**Appendix 1**  
**Safety in Industry (Diving Operations) Regulations, 1981**

**Diver's Medical Record**

(This is a confidential medical record to be retained by the medical examiner of divers)

Diver's Full Name										
Address										
Contact Telephone No.										
Date of Birth										
Approved Doctor's Name										
Approved Doctor's Address										
	1	2	3	4	5					
<b>Date of examination</b>										
Height (M)										
Weight (Kg)										
BMI (body mass index)										
Smoker										
Skin										
	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L
<b>Ears/Nose/Throat</b>										
External Meatus										
Ear Drum										
Eustachian Function										
Nasal Airways										
Sinuses										
Audiometry										
Teeth										

<b>Respiratory System</b>					
Chest Wall					
Lungs					
FVC					
FEV1					
FEV1 %					
<b>Cardio-Vascular System</b>					
Pulse					
BP mm Hg					
Heart Sounds					
Murmurs					
Peripheral Pulses					
Varicose Veins					
ECG (initial and 5 yearly from 40 years of age)					
<b>Abdomen</b>					
Palpation					
Hernial Orifices					
Haemorrhoids					
GU System					
<b>Musculo-Skeletal</b>					
Physique					
Spine					
Joints					
Limbs					
<b>Nervous System</b>					
Cranial Nerves					
Tone					
Power					
Reflexes					
Sensation					
Coordination					
Balance and Gait					
<b>Psychological State</b>					

<b>Vision</b>	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L
Dist Vision										
Near Vision										
Visual Fields										
Fundi										
Ishihara colour vision										
<b>X-Ray (if clinically indicated)</b>										
Chest										
Skeletal										
<b>Blood PCV</b>										
Hb										
Hct										
Blood Group										
<b>Urine</b>										
Protein										
Sugar										
Blood										
<b>Exercise Response</b>										
<b>Fit/Unfit</b>										
<b>Restrictions</b>										
<b>Remarks</b>										

## Appendix 2



### **Safety in Industry (Diving Operations) Regulations, 1981** **Certificate of Medical Fitness**

#### **It is hereby certified that**

- (a) Insert full name of diver in block capitals:
- (b) Insert private address of diver in block capitals:

(c) Insert date of birth of diver:

Has been medically examined by me and is fit to dive.

(d) This certificate is issued subject to the condition that the diver shall not dive to a depth greater than        metres.

(e) Other special conditions where applicable:

(f) The diver should be medically examined within a period of        months from the date of this certificate.

(g) Date of issue of certificate (not more than 7 days after examination):

(h) Signature of approved doctor:

(i) Approved doctor's HSA No.

(j) Insert full name of approved doctor in block capitals:

(k) Insert address of approved doctor in block capitals:

In relation to (d), (e) and (f) above, please see notes overleaf.  
**Form No. DR2**

**Version 2, 2016**

## **Appendix 2 Continued**

### **Notes for the attention of medical examiners of divers**

- (a) The certificate may be issued subject to such conditions as you consider necessary to ensure the safety and health of the diver. If there are no restrictions on depth of diving, strikethrough and initial subparagraph (d) and insert any other conditions necessary to his/her safety and health that may be applicable in subparagraph (e) on the certificate in Appendix 2.
- (b) The Regulations forbid a diver to be employed or to take part as a diver in diving operations unless not more than 12 months beforehand a certificate has been issued by an approved doctor that the diver is fit to dive. But a certificate may state that the diver should be medically examined within a shorter period. If you consider that the diver should be re-examined within less than 12 months, state the shorter period in subparagraph (f) of the certificate in Appendix 2. The diver is then forbidden to dive after that period unless a fresh certificate is issued by an approved doctor that the diver is fit to dive. If the diver is fit without restrictions insert "12 months" in the subparagraph.

### **Notes for the attention of the diver and employer of divers**

- (a) This certificate must be given to the employer of divers.
- (b) The diver must not be employed or take part as a diver in diving operations (as defined in the Regulations) after 12 months from the date of this certificate, or if a shorter period is stated in paragraph (f) of this certificate after that period, unless a fresh certificate that the diver is fit to dive, is issued by a medical examiner of divers before he/she is again employed or takes part as a diver in diving operations.
- (c) If conditions are specified in paragraph (d) and / or (e) of the certificate, it is not valid for diving operations other than diving operations in which these conditions are satisfied.
- (d) If by reason of illness or physical injury the diver is unable for a continuous period exceeding 7 days to work underwater as a diver, this certificate shall cease to be valid.
- (e) The diver should obtain the certificate from the employer of divers when the diver leaves his employment or when the diver ceases to take part as a diver in diving operations with which the employer of divers is concerned, as the case may be.

## Appendix 3



HEALTH AND SAFETY  
AUTHORITY

### Safety in Industry (Diving Operations) Regulations 1981

#### Application Form for Approval as Medical Examiner of Divers

Name			
Address			
Registration Number with the Medical Council			
Details of Underwater Medicine Course Attended (please attach a copy of the certificate of completion of course)			
Type of Approval Sought			
First Time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Re-Approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
For office use only			
Employer ID.	EPOW ID.	Contact ID.	Date Received.
Comments			

**Return completed form to the Occupational Health Manager, The Health and Safety Authority, The Metropolitan Building, James Joyce Street, Dublin 1, D01 K0Y8.**

*The details of doctors who are approved to carry out medicals on divers in Ireland will be published on the HSA website.*

**Form No. DR3**

**Version 3, December 2018**

## Appendix 4



HEALTH AND SAFETY  
AUTHORITY

### Safety in Industry (Diving Operations) Regulations 1981

#### **Form of Annual Return of Number of Divers Examined by Medical Examiners of Divers**

Name of Approved Doctor			
Address of Approved Doctor			
Year			
Number of Divers Examined			
Number Certified Without Conditions			
Number Certified with Conditions			
Number Rejected			
For office use only			
Employer ID.	EPOW ID.	Contact ID.	Date Received.
Comments			

**Return completed form, as soon as possible after the 31<sup>st</sup> December each year, to the Occupational Health Manager, The Health and Safety Authority, The Metropolitan Building, James Joyce Street, Dublin 1, D01 K0Y8.**

**Form No. DR4**

**Version 3, December 2018**