

Actsafe Safety Bulletin #7a

PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS USING UNDERWATER DIVING EQUIPMENT

Section 24.13 of the OHS Regulation requires that all divers in an occupational diving operation meet the requirements of CSA Standard 275.4-97 Competency Standard for Diving Operations, or another standard acceptable to the Board. Each diver is also required to be competent to use the equipment that he or she will be using during the diving operation.

The BC film production industry has been submitting variance requests to the Board to obtain relief for principal performers from some of the requirements of sections 24.10, 24.12 and 24.13 of the OHS Regulation. A principal performer for the purposes of this interpretation refers to principal cast contracted for artistic purposes. Occasionally an underwater scene will require the principal performer to go underwater using a self contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA) or surface supply equipment, in order for the production to film the principal performer in a fashion which cannot be done through use of a "double". For example, a particular shot may require a direct facial filming of the principal performer(s).

Under strictly defined situations, a principal performer going underwater for selected shots in shallow depths will not be considered to be a diver. Each principal performer is, however, considered to be a worker and is subject to the requirements of other sections of the Workers Compensation Act and the Regulation. Section 2.2 of the Regulation states "all work must be carried out without undue risk of injury or occupational disease."

Productions that meet the following conditions need not submit a request for a variance to sections 24.10, 24.12 and 24.13 of the Regulation for principal performers.

1. An occupational driver who meets the requirements of CSA Standard 275.4-97 Competency Standard for Diving Operations must assess the ability of the principal performer to perform the required underwater shots, and must consider the performer competent to perform such underwater shots.
2. A dedicated occupational diver who meets the requirements of CSA Standard 275.4-97 must accompany each principal performer at all times while the principal performer is underwater.
3. A principal performer with only a valid recreational diver's certificate must not exceed 15 feet in depth.
4. A principal performer without even a valid recreational diver's certificate must not exceed 7 feet in depth.
5. In all cases, water time for a principal performer who is not certified and qualified as a diver to the full requirements of the Regulation is to be strictly limited to the time required to perform the underwater shot.

A production seeking more latitude than is provided by the above guideline is to submit a variance request to the Prevention Division at least 20 working days prior to the scheduled shooting days.

For information on Actsafe, the application of these Regulations or to obtain copies, please contact Actsafe at 604.733.4682 (1.888.229.1455 toll free). You may also contact the WorkSafeBC Prevention Division directly at 604.276.3100 for information on the OH&S Regulations including occupational diving.