



Ontario Underwater Council
www.underwatercouncil.com

2012 Report on Scuba Diving Incidents of Ontarians Outside Ontario, and Recommendations to Prevent Recurrence

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Document Control

Date	Description of Change	By Whom
April 14, 2012	Created document	Dave Noble
April 15, 2012	Incident – Pompano Beach, Florida	Ayisha Hassanali
April 22, 2012	Incident – Westport, Nova Scotia	Ayisha Hassanali
July 9, 2012	Incident – Cayo Santa Maria, Cuba	Ayisha Hassanali
October 21, 2012	Updated Cuba incident	Ayisha Hassanali

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Submitting an Incident Report

To submit a report, you should contact one of the [OUC board members](#).
You can also complete and return an **Incident Submission Form**.

For comments on this document please contact

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Ontario Underwater Council

Report on Scuba Diving Related Incidents outside Ontario, and recommendations to prevent recurrence.

Goals:

The goals of this report are to:

- **Educate** (inform) readers on Scuba Diving incidents that have occurred outside Ontario, the direct causes leading up to those incidents, and recommendations to prevent recurrence.
- **Prevent** and /or reduce the numbers and/or severity of future scuba diving incidents wherever divers are diving, thus making the sport of scuba diving more safe
- **Earn** the privilege of continued sport self-governance by demonstrating that the greater Ontario scuba diving community cares deeply about sport safety and that it works hard to identify past incidents, and prevent future ones.

Intended Audience:

Although this report is posted on the Web and can therefore be read by anyone, the *intended* audience for this report is:

- Ontario Underwater Council (OUC) Members and Member Organizations (Clubs, Charter Operators, Retailers, etc.)
- Not-yet OUC Members and Member Organizations (Clubs, Charter Operators, Retailers, etc.)
- Scuba Certification Agencies (e.g. ACUC, PADI, NAUI, BSAC, etc.) that certify divers in Ontario
- Scuba Safety Organizations (e.g. Divers Alert Network) that provide services in Ontario
- Ontario Government, Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Office of the Chief Coroner (Dr. Andrew McCallum at time of publication)
- Other Canadian Provincial Underwater Councils, whether still self-governed, or provincially-governed (e.g. Quebec)
- Other Ontario Provincial Sport Organizations
- Other users of Ontario waters, including but not limited to: commercial and recreational power boaters, sailors, hydro-electric power generating companies, commercial and sport fishing users, personal watercraft operators, etc.



Scope:

The scope of this particular report includes:

- Only scuba diving incidents that OUC has learned about independently and those that have been brought to OUC's attention by outside parties.
- Scuba diving incidents that have occurred anywhere in the world involving divers whose principal residence was Ontario at the time of the incident / fatality
- Recreational scuba diving incidents
- Technical (including Re-breather) scuba diving incidents
- Recommendations to prevent recurrence, where sufficient direct causes have been identified to allow relevant recommendations to be made.
- Corroborated information from public domain, survivors interviews, coroner's reports, police, witnesses, that OUC deems to be helpful in understanding the incidents/s.

The following are *not* in scope of this report:

- Snorkelling incidents
- Free-diving (breath-hold diving) incidents
- Everything that is not expressly listed as in-scope of this report shall be, by definition, out of scope of this report.

Publication Frequency:

OUC's goal is to re-publish this living document as soon as possible after any of the following occur:

- After investigation of incidents within Ontario have been satisfactorily investigated. The Ontario Scuba Incident & Prevention Report remains the OUC's top priority.
- When we become aware of, and have confirmed that an incident has occurred.
- When we receive more information or facts about the incident.
- When we develop recommendations to prevent the incident from recurring in the future.
- If you wish to be notified of these re-publications, please sign up to OUC's Safety Advisory e-mail distribution list at www.underwatercouncil.com/maillinglist



Recommendations:

The goal of OUC's recommendations is to prevent future recurrence of scuba incidents.

- OUC can only publish relevant recommendations to prevent recurrence if we have sufficient hard facts relating to the direct causes of the incident.
- This means that it could take some time between initial publication that an incident has occurred, and the subsequent publication of relevant recommendations to prevent recurrence.
- OUC needs **your** (the greater Ontario Scuba Community's) help to reduce / prevent future scuba diving incidents. If you are aware of such hard facts or information regarding an incident, or know someone who is, please inform BOTH of the following individuals as soon as possible:
 - OUC's Director of Sport Safety at:
 - ouc.safety@underwatercouncil.com AND
 - OUC's Scuba Incident & Prevention Report Coordinator at:
 - ouc.reports@underwatercouncil.com
- Wherever possible, OUC will position recommendations positively (what people **should do** to prevent future incidents), rather than negatively.
- OUC's recommendations may be directed inwards towards the diving community, and/or outwards to other users of Ontario Waters.
- In some circumstances, third parties such as Police, Coroner's Office, etc. may conduct all areas of the investigation into the incident, and only involve OUC after the investigation has been concluded. These third parties may then request OUC to develop the recommendations and to use OUC's communications channels and contacts to communicate them to the greater Ontario Scuba Community.

Disclaimer:

No claim is made by the OUC, OUC's Director of Sport Safety, OUC's Scuba Incident & Prevention Report Coordinator, or by any contributors, as to the completeness or accuracy of information contained within this report.

Notwithstanding the above, OUC, subject to the availability of its volunteer resources, makes every effort to verify and corroborate the information provided in this report, and to ensure that the recommendations to prevent recurrence are relevant, and if followed, would prevent a similar incident from happening in the future.

Certain personal risks are inherent in most sports, and the sport of scuba diving is no exception. By engaging in the sport of scuba, you accept these risks. No amount of training, experience, equipment, policies, etc. can completely eliminate all personal risks, and the OUC, its Board Members, Regional Coordinators, and Members are not responsible for any losses, injury, or death sustained as a result of members or non-members taking these risks.



SECTION A: Fatalities - Summaries & Recommendations

Fatalities - Summaries and Recommendations are listed in chronological order.



Date of Incident: 2012-02-22

Summary:

A man who had just moved from Ontario went missing in Grand Passage near Westport, Nova Scotia shortly after 1 PM and is presumed dead. Lawrence Collins, 49, was on his first dive in the area to collect sea urchins with two other divers off a fishing vessel. At about 30 minutes into the dive, the two divers accompanying Collins saw him being swept away by the fast moving current. There was a search for Collins conducted by the fishing boat for about 15 minutes and then EMS (Emergency Medical Services) was activated at about 1:30 PM. The RCMP was notified at about 1:45 PM and a sea, air and ground search was initiated.

The tide at the time was on the “ebb” or going down. Ebb tides cause a heavy southerly current in Grand Passage from the Bay of Fundy end towards St. Mary’s Bay and the southern coasts of both Long and Brier Islands, where Collins was believed to be drifting toward. The afternoon that Collins disappeared, the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) buoy report for the Gulf of Maine/mouth of the Bay of Fundy recorded the air temperature as 43F, the water temperature as 42F, the winds SW at 14 kts, and the wave height was 5 feet. The area is considered “treacherous” for diving and conditions can change quickly and unexpectedly. The Guinness Book of World Records declared the Bay of Fundy as having the highest tides in the world: “The greatest tides in the world occur in the Bay of Fundy.... Burntcoat Head in the Minas Basin, Nova Scotia, has the greatest mean spring range with 14.5 metres (47.5 feet) and an extreme range of 16.3 metres (53.5 feet).” Wally Devries, the Westport Fire Chief, states that the conditions in the area are “treacherous, very treacherous. There’s a lot of current running there and people underestimate it for if they go diving or even ...recreational boating. There’s a very small margin of error”.

Volunteers from the local community and even further away assisted in the search for Collins. Many fishing boats took part and were assigned grids to search for the missing diver. A diver who was looking for Collins was swept over 1 km south through the passage to Peter’s Island, where he was picked up by a fishing boat returning from hauling traps. The full search and rescue mission continued until the evening of February 24th, 2012, when it was changed to a recovery operation for the next week.

Lawrence Collins had answered an ad looking for divers to harvest sea urchins in Nova Scotia and moved from Ottawa just a few days before to start a new life. Constable Jessie Patterson of the RCMP Digby unit stated that Collins had been certified for nearly 20 years, but “in the last 7 or 8 years, he’s only been diving probably 7 or 8 times,” primarily in lakes or rivers.

For public domain information of this incident, please refer to Section C, Appendix #1 of this document.



OUC Recommendations:

- ✓ *Only dive in conditions for which you are trained or have experience.*
- ✓ *If you have not been diving regularly, take a refresher course and practice skills in a confined environment such as a pool or calm, shallow open water and build skills and experience gradually.*
- ✓ *Do not attempt commercial diving without proper training. Commercial sea urchin harvesting must be performed by certified commercial divers.*
- ✓ *Divers should receive a proper dive site orientation including possible conditions and emergency response procedures anytime they are diving a site for the first time*
- ✓ *All divers should ensure they have proper safety equipment for a dive including a Surface Marker Buoy/Dive Flag, a dive light and signaling equipment such as a whistle and air horn.*
- ✓ *If swept in a strong current, do not fight the current. Instead, if possible, swim diagonally across the current toward the shore or an area to hold onto and wait for help to arrive.*



Date of Incident: **2012-03-20**

Summary:

An Ontario man died while scuba diving in Pompano Beach, Florida in an accident that occurred in the late morning.

Bruce Magill, 63, had been diving off a charter boat and was swimming toward the boat with other divers and did not arrive at the boat.

The captain and other divers searched for Mr. Magill and found him floating in the water about 15 minutes later.

The victim was pulled onto the boat and CPR was performed.

Mr. Magill could not be revived and was pronounced dead shortly after.

This report will be updated as more information becomes available.

For public domain information of this incident, please refer to Section C, Appendix #2 of this document.

OUC Recommendations:

- ✓ *Assign buddies and stay within close proximity to a buddy to be assisted or assist in an emergency situation.*
- ✓ *Close attention should be paid to what a buddy is doing, the condition of a buddy throughout the dive, and where a buddy is at all times.*



Date of Incident: 2012-06-12

Summary:

There was a fatal dive accident near Cayo Santa Maria, Cuba on June 12, 2012. David Italiano, 24, a Toronto resident, was on holiday with six close friends. On June 10th, David and his friends took an Initiation to Diving course with a Divemaster from a nearby marina in the resort pool, where they learned how to equalize their ears, some communication signs, and how to use the equipment. The next day, the water was too rough, so on June 12th, the day before they were to return home, five of the seven friends went on to do the open water dives of the Introduction to Diving course.

During the first open water dive, all 5 friends were nauseous and had headaches, and informed the two Divemasters. David also was heard saying that he couldn't hear very well. Two of the divers opted not to do the second dive as they were still feeling ill. The remaining three divers, including David, floated at the surface and reported starting to feel better. Those three divers went back down for a second dive.

An underwater camera rated to 40 feet and a glass ring shattered due to pressure at an as yet undetermined depth. David signalled trouble and pointed to his stomach. One of the Divemasters signalled that they would all ascend. David started ascending with the group and as he was reaching the surface, he appeared to be having a seizure, his head went back under the water and he appeared to be unconscious.

David was brought onto the dive boat and the Divemaster and Captain removed his gear, pulled off the top of his wetsuit and administered rescue breaths and chest compressions. He was transported to an ambulance waiting at shore and to a medical clinic approximately a one minute drive away where a doctor continued life-saving measures until death was pronounced. The doctor that performed the autopsy told David's parents that the official cause of death was being recorded as drowning but it appeared to be an embolism and asphyxiation.

For public domain information of this incident, please refer to Section C, Appendix #3 of this document.

OUC Recommendations:

- ✓ *Outdoor enthusiasts should perform a thorough search of any qualifications when choosing a diving destination or any other rigorous outdoor activity in which training will be required*
- ✓ *If a person is feeling unwell, a dive or pending dive should be aborted*
- ✓ *As part of a complete pre-dive check, all equipment should be tested to be complete, connected, and in good working order, including smelling and tasting the air prior to beginning a dive*
- ✓ *Never hold your breath*
- ✓ *Ensure comfort and proficiency in a pool setting prior to open water*
- ✓ *Monitor depth and adhere to depth limitations for students under the care of a dive professional*
- ✓ *Follow safe ascent rates and procedures, maintaining an open airway throughout*
- ✓ *Dive buddies and professionals should have equipment immediately secured and tested in the event of an incident*



SECTION B: Near Misses - Summaries & Recommendations

Definition of a “Near Miss”

A “Near Miss” is any scuba-related situation or incident that did not result in a fatality, but that did put the diver/s health and/or safety at risk.

To report a near miss and submit it for consideration for publication in this report, please send an e-mail to ouc.safety@underwatercouncil.com with all relevant details.



Date of Incident: 2012-mm-dd

Summary:

OUC Recommendations:

- *Recommendation 1*
- *Recommendation 2*



SECTION C: Appendices



Appendix #1

Public Domain Information on Scuba Fatality of 2012-02-22:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/story/2012/02/24/ns-diver-search-over.html>

Search ends for missing Ottawa diver in Digby Neck

Lawrence Collins had just moved to province to start a new life

Posted: Feb 24, 2012 7:52 AM AT

Last Updated: Feb 24, 2012 8:26 AM AT



RCMP Const. Jessie Patterson said the diver was inexperienced. (Phonse Jessome/CBC)

[Search continues for Ottawa diver at Digby Neck](#)



[Missing diver was inexperienced: RCMP2:17](#)

News Video: <http://www.cbc.ca/video/#/Shows/1221254309/ID=2201411530>

The search has ended for a missing Ottawa diver near Digby Neck, N.S.

Lawrence Collins, 48, had moved to Nova Scotia in the last few days to make a new start at life.

RCMP said he had moved to the Digby Neck area and responded to an ad seeking sea urchin divers.

The CBC's Phonse Jessome filed the above video report Thursday, while the search was still on.

Collins had held a diving licence since the early 1990s, but had limited experience and that was mostly in lakes and rivers.

RCMP say he dove into the water off a fishing boat Wednesday afternoon and was pulled away by the Bay of Fundy current. The two colleagues he was diving with alerted the captain and started a search, but nothing came of it.

The Coast Guard, ground search-and-rescue crews and local fishermen looked for Collins Wednesday and Thursday, but early Friday the RCMP said they had not found him.

"The RCMP has determined that no criminal wrongdoing took place," said Const. Dal Hutchinson.

"The Nova Scotia Department of Labour is continuing with its investigation into this workplace incident."



<http://www.digbycourier.ca/News/2012-02-24/article-2906316/RCMP-call-off-the-search-for-missing-diver/1>

RCMP call off the search for missing diver

Jonathan Riley

Colleagues of Lawrence Collins continued searching for the missing diver Thursday, Feb. 23, 2012.

Published on February 24, 2012

Published on February 24, 2012

Island residents are still walking the shore and checking beaches with their four wheelers this morning.

"Islanders just doing their thing," said Arron Titus, one of the many Islanders who has spent the last two days combing the water and shores of their community for a missing sea urchin diver.

Hope however of a finding Lawrence Collins alive all but evaporated last night when RCMP called off the search in and around Grand Passage.

Corporal Blair Pemberton spoke to ground search and rescue volunteers after dark Thursday night, Feb. 23 at the Freeport Firehall.

While the searchers warmed up with chowder, sandwiches and hot drinks, Pemberton thanked them for their hard work and announced the ground search and rescue operations would not continue Friday morning.

"After all this time, there's no way we're thinking we can still find him alive," said Pemberton, incident commander for the search Thursday. "We're suspending the ground search and rescue operations and looking at this now as a recovery operation."

Pemberton said the RCMP would call out the searchers next week to make another sweep of the Island shorelines.

Collins, a 48-year-old diver from Ontario, failed to surface Wednesday afternoon sometime after 12 noon. He was diving for sea urchins in Grand Passage just north of the village of Westport.

Digby RCMP staff sergeant Phil Barrett said although Collins had 10 years' diving experience, he was not experienced in marine environments like the notoriously strong and unpredictable currents of Grand Passage. Barrett says the decision to call off the search was based on the water temperature and the time of the year and environment the diver was lost in.

"This is not like someone lost in the woods," said Barrett. "Given 48 hours in that environment we determined we could no longer realistically continue a rescue operation."

Collins went down with two other divers near noon Wednesday, Feb. 15. Barrett says visibility on the bottom is only 10 to 15 feet and the divers have about 19 minutes air time on the bottom. When the divers surface the current may have pushed them 500m or more through the passage. The currents however do not necessarily push the divers in a straight-line.

When the divers surfaced, about a half later, they first realized Collins was missing.

The tide at that time was on the ebb or going down. Ebb tides cause a heavy southerly current in Grande Passage from the Bay of Fundy end towards St. Mary's Bay.

Another diver who went in to look for Collins was swept south through the passage more than a kilometer, as far as Peters Island. A local fishing boat, returning from hauling traps picked him up.

Resident's on Brier Island first knew something was wrong when they noticed the Water Queen circling in the passage with one crewmember on the top of the wheelhouse.

"You live by the water long enough and you know when something doesn't look right," said Titus. He and another fishermen took a boat out and joined the search with the Coast Guard and the Sea Quiz, another boat involved in sea urchin diving.

As word spread Wednesday, almost all the fishing boats on the Long and Brier Islands joined the search. Eventually boats even came from across St. Mary's Bay from Saulnierville, Meteghan and as far down as Salmon River.

The Coast Guard Westport assigned grids to the boats involved and they continued searching until late in the night Wednesday.

A Cormorant helicopter from CFB Greenwood was over the passage for several hours Wednesday afternoon and again briefly Thursday morning. Visibility was good with some haze although the sea was choppy.

An R.C.M.P helicopter arrived near 1 p.m. Thursday and spent several hours in the area with a local fisherman on board for a guide.



Meanwhile the RCMP and Fundy Ground Search and Rescue were coordinating shoreline searches. On Brier Island the Westport Fire Department walked the passage shores and the south end of the island both Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning.

Locals continued to search the south and "back" (south westerly) end of Brier with four wheelers and on foot throughout the afternoon.

Thursday afternoon, Pemberton called in the Digby Area Search and Rescue to take over the search on Brier. They arrived with a couple dozen searchers and a mobile command centre near 3 p.m.

On Long Island, Fundy Ground Search and Rescue and many local volunteers walked the shores til dark Wednesday and were out again at low tide Thursday morning until dark.

The Freeport Fire Hall was open and providing warm drinks and homemade meals both days. Fire chief Gerald Moore, Lieutenant Helen Teed and a small army of local volunteers looked after the searchers, ran errands and answered the phones and kept the local community informed.

On Thursday, when Teed learned the Digby searchers were en route, one little post on Facebook and a couple phone calls brought in a deluge of sandwiches and chowders.

"The community response was incredible," says Teed. "Those searchers didn't know this poor man but you just think 'What if he was my family member?'"

Barrett says Collins had recently moved to the area in answer to a job ad looking for a sea urchin diver. The RCMP have determined there was no criminal wrong-doing. The Nova Scotia Department of Labour is continuing with its investigation into this workplace incident.

Other Related Links:

<http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/accidents-incidents/411894-missing-urchin-diver-off-freeport-nova-scotia.html>

<http://ontariodiving.com/showthread.php?14852-Missing-Ottawa-Urchin-Diver&daysprune=-1>



Appendix #2

Public Domain Information on Scuba Fatality of 2012-03-20:

<http://www.local10.com/news/Diver-drowns-off-Pompano-Beach/-/1717324/9613396/-/14tjgou/-/>

Diver drowns off Pompano Beach

BSO investigates man's death

Published On: Mar 20 2012 11:57:42 AM EDT Updated On: Mar 20 2012 06:18:47 PM EDT

POMPANO BEACH, Fla. -

A 63-year-old Canadian man died while diving in the waters off Pompano Beach on Tuesday morning, Pompano Beach Fire Rescue said.

The Broward Sheriff's Office said Bruce Magill, of Ontario, had been diving, and he and other divers were swimming toward their boat, the Aqua View.

Magill never made it to the boat, and the captain and passengers began searching for him. They found his body floating in the water about 15 minutes later, BSO said.

The man was taken aboard the boat from which he had been diving, where a doctor who was aboard performed CPR.

The boat came in to Fish City at 2601 N. Ocean Blvd. in Pompano Beach, where Pompano Beach Fire Rescue officials pronounced him dead.

BSO said homicide detectives are investigating, but they do not suspect foul play. The Medical Examiner's Office plans to perform an autopsy to determine the cause of Magill's death.

<http://www.wpbfl.com/news/south-florida/Tourist-dies-while-diving-off-Pompano-Beach/-/8788880/9623420/-/13dhy92z/-/index.html>

Tourist dies while diving off Pompano Beach

63-year-old Canadian man didn't resurface after dive

UPDATED 5:04 PM EDT Mar 20, 2012

POMPANO BEACH, Fla. -

Authorities said a tourist died while diving off the coast of South Florida.

Broward Sheriff's Office deputies said the 63-year-old Canadian man had been diving as part of a tourist group Tuesday morning from on a commercial boat owned by Aquanaut Aqua View SFARI of Pompano Beach.

After the dive, Bruce Magill didn't resurface.

The boat captain and passengers searched for him, found him floating in the water about 15 minutes later and pulled him on the boat.

A doctor on board immediately performed CPR, but Magill didn't survive.

Foul play is not suspected. An autopsy will be conducted to determine the cause of death

Other Related Links:

<http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/accidents-incidents/414550-fatality-off-pompano-florida.html>

<http://ontariodiving.com/showthread.php?14912-Ontario-Diver-Drowns-off-Pompano-Beach-FL>



Appendix #3

Public Domain Information on Scuba Fatality of 2012-06-12:

<http://www.thespec.com/news/local/article/748816--david-italiano-remembered-as-such-a-loving-person>

David Italiano remembered as 'such a loving person'
David Italiano died in a scuba diving mishap in Cuba.

David Italiano was having a blast in Cuba with five close high school buddies. The group of men in their 20s were celebrating the last trip they would all take together before one friend, Andrew Oliveros, left to spend time with his father who lives in Mexico. The day before they were to return from the week-long break, the group decided to go scuba diving. They had taken lessons and all went well. But when they went out for the real deal on June 12, something went horribly wrong.

According to Italiano's father, Nunzio, five of the friends went scuba diving on that Tuesday. They made one successful trip, and that was enough for two of them.

But 24-year-old Italiano and two other friends wanted to go again.

When he was submerged the second time, Italiano motioned to his instructor that something wasn't sitting well with his stomach and then hoisted a thumb, to indicate he was returning to the surface. "His friend that was nearby said he seemed to be conscious when he was coming up," said his father. "But when he hit the surface his head just went back under."

Italiano lost consciousness and died of a gas or air embolism between 5 and 6 p.m. Gas embolisms occur when gas bubbles enter the bloodstream during ascent to the surface, blocking circulation. Italiano's father grew up in Hamilton and attended McMaster University, before he moved to Toronto and met his wife Carolyn.

He has three sisters who still call Hamilton home, Angela, Josephine and Maria Italiano. And two sister-in-laws Pasqualina and Gizelle.

In an interview Friday, Gizelle Italiano said the family has already experienced its share of grief. Her husband Nino died in 2003 and then they lost his brother, Joseph, a month later.

She said they saw their nephew mostly during family functions.

"He was a very shy boy, but a loving boy. He's left a large hole in our family.

"He will be greatly missed."

Italiano worked as a bartender in Toronto and wanted to attend Trent University, his father said he was interested in studying the environment and forestry.

His father describes his youngest son as a loving person who couldn't get enough of nature and animals. He was considered the "go-to guy" whenever an injured animal would show up in their Toronto neighbourhood. He was a volunteer with Greenpeace and also a vegan.

Other Related Links:

<http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/accidents-incidents/425215-diver-death-cuba.html>

<http://daviditaliano.com>

<http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/Blog/a-tribute-to-david-italiano/blog/41046/>