



# 2004 Report on Scuba Diving Related Incidents in Ontario

**Compiled by:**

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*Director, Sport Safety*



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# Ontario Underwater Council

## 2004 Report on Scuba-Diving Related Incidents in Ontario

### Foreword:

The primary goal of this Ontario Underwater Council (OUC) report is to prevent future scuba diving incidents by collecting, analyzing, and sharing information about past scuba diving incidents.

So as to ensure the greatest possible benefit to the Ontario Scuba Community, OUC's goal is to share the information on fatalities in Ontario as collected and any recommendations on OUC's website at: [www.underwatercouncil.com/safety.htm](http://www.underwatercouncil.com/safety.htm) within 72 hours.

Recommendations are not intended to be a comment or conclusion on the cause or causes of the specific incident.

### Disclaimer:

No claim is made by the OUC, the Director of Sport Safety or by any contributors, as to the completeness or accuracy of information contained within this report. Every effort has been taken to include only respected sources in the public domain, however it must be stated that none of these have been independently verified or investigated.

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.**

1. 2004-06-01 A 24 year-old man (Kyle Quinn) was scuba diving alone off Maple Leaf Bay in Lake Rosseau (near Windemere). He had no Dive Flag and no Buddy and no surface support. He was found floating face-down at the surface with a ~3” gash in his head, consistent with being struck by a propellor. *See Parry Sound North Star article Appendix A*
2. 2004-06-06 A 52-year-old male (Richard Wynott) OWSD student was scuba diving in an area known as “The Gap” in Fathom Five National Marine Park in Tobermory. He was on his 4<sup>th</sup> and final certification dive and was ascending from approximately 60’ in depth when he began experiencing difficulties at around 30’. Efforts to resuscitate were unsuccessful.. *See e-mail from Jim Burchard, CFOS Radio Owen Sound, Appendix B*
3. 2004-08-07 ~18:00 hrs: A 30 year-old woman (Aviva Barth) was scuba diving in Lake Simcoe off Big Bay Point. She was floating at the surface in approximately 10’ depth of water between a dive flag and the government dock when she was struck by a 25-foot-long power boat travelling at a high rate of speed. *See Toronto Star article Appendix C*
4. 2004-09-25 ~14:00 hrs: A 47 year-old woman (Kim Davies) was diving off Keewaydin Island in Lake Muskoka (on the shipwreck of the Waome) when she had an out-of-air emergency. Her buddy was not aware of her situation and could not find her. She was found shortly after by a group of divers from the Scuba Shack. *See Bracebridge Examiner article Appendix D*
5. 2004-10-11 A 51 year old man (Robert Connell) was scuba diving in the St Lawrence River near Brockville on the shipwreck of the Lillie Parsons. He encountered difficulties at depth and his Instructor ascended with him to the surface. Resuscitation attempts were unsuccessful. Autopsy results are not known. *See Cyber Diver News Network article Appendix E*
6. 2004-10-23 ~16:30 hrs: A 48 year-old man (Thomas Drayton) of Romulus, Michigan, was scuba-diving off the Canadian (Ontario) side of the St. Clair River. He was pulled from the water by emergency workers and rushed to hospital but could not be resuscitated. *See Sarnia Observer article Appendix F*



*Note: The office of the Director of Sport Safety, OUC, has heard through “the grapevine” that an American diver died in Tobermory sometime in August of 2004. If you know anything about this event, please contact the OUC Director of Sport Safety.*



## OUC Recommendations:

### Part A: 2 fatalities were caused by scuba divers being struck by motor boats.

- 1) Recreational Scuba divers should always dive in a buddy team of two, and never dive alone.
- 2) The use of Surface Marker Buoys should be considered mandatory in all areas where boating traffic exists.
  - a. Surface Marker Buoys should be highly visible and should prominently display the "Scuba Diver Down" flag, a bright red rectangular flag with a white diagonal stripe. Ontario safe boating regulations require that boaters in the area "must take early & substantial action to stay well clear and pass at a slow speed".
    - i. "Prominent" is defined as: Easily visible from deck-height of a boat at least 100 metres/yards away
    - ii. The Surface Marker Buoy and vertical Flag/Symbol should extend at least 4' vertically out of the water.
    - iii. The Surface Marker Buoy and vertical Flag/Symbol should be easily visible from any direction of approach (360 degrees). This suggests that the vertical portion of the Surface Marker Buoy have 3 or 4 faces (in other words, have a triangular or square cross-section).
  - b. Surface Marker Buoys do NOT GUARANTEE that boat traffic will stay clear of your dive site. If you hear/see a boat approaching you at a high rate of speed, descend to a depth of at least 10' as quickly and safely as possible. Do not surface again until you hear that the boat traffic has safely passed.
  - c. Do not under any circumstances, tie or clip off the Surface Marker Buoy Line onto any part of your body or equipment.
  - d. Although present guidelines suggest that divers stay within 50' of their Surface Marker Buoy, the OUC recommends that when you are at the surface, you and your buddy stay within touching distance of your Surface Marker Buoy.

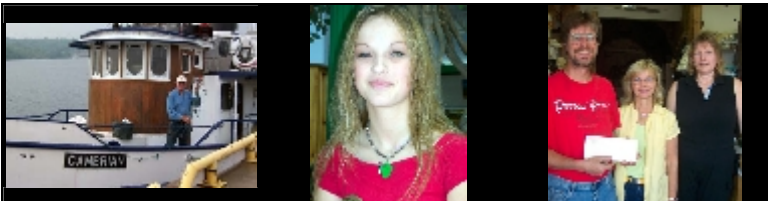
### Part B: Four fatalities involved scuba divers

(3 males and 1 female) between the ages of 47 and 52

Four data points do not normally constitute a statistically valid sample from which to make recommendations, but when four are this close to one another (all 4 within 5 years of age), it suggests taking another, closer, look at "older" divers.



# Appendix A:



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Saturday, June 5, 2004

### Fatal dive on Lake Rosseau

WINDERMERE - Bracebridge OPP are investigating a scuba diving fatality that occurred on June 1 on Lake Rosseau.

Shortly after 7 p.m., emergency services responded to the scene located just off of Maple Leaf Bay, near Windermere. The scuba driver was diving alone, he was found floating on the surface near the last spot he had been seen diving.

The deceased has been identified as Kyle Quinn, 24, of Utterson.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Bracebridge OPP or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

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## Appendix B:

Editor's note: The following e-mail prefaced a "public domain" Radio Interview between Jim Birchard of CFOS Radio, and Raimund Krob, Director of Sport Safety of the OUC. No recording of the interview has been appended here, but the e-mail summarizes what was introduced as background in the opening minutes of the interview.

-----Original Message-----

From: jbirchard@bmts.com [<mailto:jbirchard@bmts.com>]

Sent: June 8, 2004 6:49 AM

To: raimund.krob@sympatico.ca

Subject:

Mr. Krob. Here is the latest story we have on the diving accident.

Jim Birchard  
CFOS. Radio.

There has been a diving death at Fathom Five National Marine Park in Tobermory.

South Bruce Peninsula OPP and Parks Canada officials are probing the death of 52 year old Richard Wynott of Dundalk.

He was diving in an area called the Gap along with 13 others in what is described as an open dive.

This was the last stage of training to obtain his certification as a SCUBA diver.

Constable Dave Meyer says witnesses say Wynott was at a depth of about 30 feet when he began experiencing difficulties.

He was brought to the surface where CPR was performed on shore.

Wynott was taken to the Tobermory Medical Clinic where he was seen by Coroner Dr. George Harpur.

as of November 17, 2006	
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Meyers says a post mortem will be conducted today at Grey Bruce Health Services in Owen Sound to determine the cause of death.

The diving equipment also will be inspected.

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# Appendix C:



Tuesday, August, 10, 2004

## Diver's family blames boater

Death was instant, relatives are told after collision

Others said boat was handled recklessly

TABASSUM SIDDIQUI  
STAFF REPORTER

The family of Aviva Barth says a boater travelling erratically and at high speed may be to blame for her death.

The Toronto-based consultant, who grew up in Guelph, was killed on Saturday by a passing boat during a diving lesson.

Barth, 30, was scuba diving at Big Bay Point on Lake Simcoe with a group that included boyfriend Noah Wagner, 29, a diving instructor.

When Barth was hit by the boat, Wagner and another instructor tried in vain to revive her.

She was pronounced dead of serious head injuries at Barrie's Royal Victoria Hospital.

"It was going perfectly, we were almost finished for the day and we were going to come home," Wagner said. "She was just coming up with her diving partner when the boat came speeding up and hit her in the head.

"When I came up with my pair, the other instructor saw a pool of blood behind her. We started CPR right away, but at no point in the rescue did she have a pulse."

None of the divers got a good look at the boat that hit Barth, but another diving instructor caught a glimpse of the vessel as it went by.

"The other instructor said the boat was going extremely fast; it just streaked by," Wagner said. "For her to be hurt that bad, that boat had to be going pretty fast."

Wagner said that he and Barth's family were told by the coroner yesterday that Barth was killed instantly, leading them to believe the boat was speeding when it hit her.



Wagner said he has been told that witnesses saw three young men in a white boat, but police will not confirm the reports.

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'When we put that flag up, it means that boaters shouldn't come within 150 feet of that flag.'

Diving instructor Noah Wagner

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"I haven't heard that, and the exact boat hasn't been determined," said Inspector Tom McDonald of the South Simcoe police. "We're still trying to locate the boater that was involved. We're interviewing as many people as possible in the area, and if we do get a description of the boat, we will certainly broadcast it so that they can come forward."

Police say the boaters may not be aware that they hit anything and that has been widely reported in the media. But local divers are skeptical. Postings about the incident on diving message boards on the Internet suggest many boaters routinely ignore dive markers, red flags with a diagonal white stripe that are hoisted on buoys to indicate divers are in the water below.

The divers were training in a relatively shallow area about 30 metres off the end of a government dock near Innisfil and were about to complete their second dive of the day when the boat passed a dive marker at about 5:45 p.m.

Wagner, who dives frequently at Big Bay Point, said the area near the dock is popular with swimmers and divers because the water is warm and not too deep. He said that boaters are often not familiar with or are dismissive of dive markers.

"When we put that flag up, it means that boaters shouldn't come within 150 feet of that flag — (the boat) came within 50 feet of that flag," he said. "The water was only 10 feet deep — that's how close they came to the shore. Essentially it wasn't a diving accident — it was a boating accident."

Barth was a senior consultant with business consulting firm Bearing Point at the time of her death. She studied math at York University before getting an MBA from McMaster University.

The eldest of three siblings, Barth was committed to social issues and volunteerism, said sister Jennifer, 28. Barth was devoted to tutoring youngsters and worked with a Jewish youth outreach organization that visited small Ontario communities.

Richard Baker, community services officer with the Toronto police marine unit of the Toronto police, said that current regulations for boaters are "a work in progress."

While all boaters operating any motor-powered vessels less than four metres (including personal watercraft) will have to have a competency card by September, 2009, currently boaters can obtain the permit without taking any courses.

Baker said some boaters get the card by filling out a simple true-or-false questionnaire at boat shows or over the Internet.

as of November 17, 2006	
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Barth's funeral is being held today at Beth Isaiah synagogue in Guelph.



## Appendix D:



Bracebridge  
**EXAMINER.**



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- [Scuba diver dies near Milford Bay](#)
- [Five years for river killing](#)
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- [Town to loan \\$1.6 million for new theatre project](#)
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#### Scuba diver dies near Milford Bay

by Amanda Dyer

A woman died while scuba diving near Milford Bay on the weekend.

Emergency services responded to the scene of an incident near Keewaydin Island in Lake Muskoka shortly after 2 p.m. on Saturday, September 25. Police said 47-year-old Kim Davies of Willow Beach, Ontario, had been scuba diving with a partner when she had an out-of-air emergency. OPP Constable Tanya Landry said she does not know how the partner became aware of the emergency.

Police said due to poor visibility, Davies' partner was unable to locate her at the time.

According to Landry, the partner came to the surface of the water and told a group of recreational divers who happened



to come along that his partner was still under water.

Police said the divers helped search and her body was located at the bottom of the lake. She was transported to South Muskoka Memorial Hospital where police said she was pronounced dead.

Police are currently investigating the incident and are awaiting results from a post-mortem held Sunday, September 26 in Toronto.

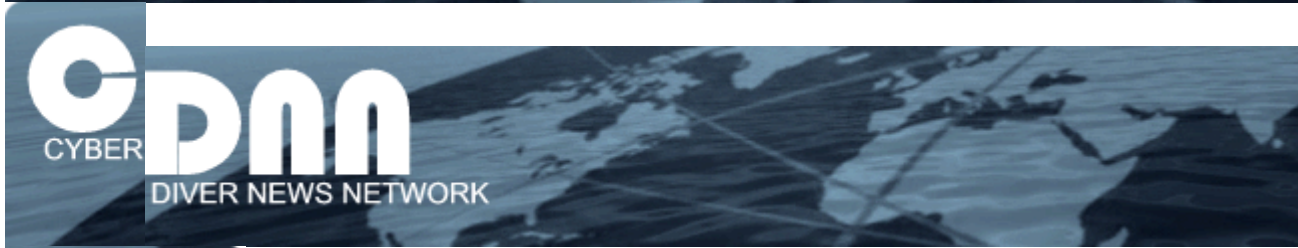
This is the second diving fatality of the year in the area. In June, the body of 24-year-old Kyle Quinn of Utterson, who had gone out diving alone, was found floating on the surface of Lake Rosseau by a family member. A post-mortem confirmed he had been struck on the head with the propeller of a boat.

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- **GUAM** - Navy officials identify body of dead scuba diver
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## Toronto man dies scuba diving on the 'Lillie Parsons' shipwreck

Powered by *CYBER DIVER News Network*  
by *MARY VORSINO*

**OTTAWA, Canada (12 Oct 2004)** -- Despite a scuba instructor's rescue attempt, a 51-year-old man died yesterday while scouring a 19th-century shipwreck in the St. Lawrence River.

Robert Connell of Toronto was exploring the wreck of the Lillie Parsons, a 39-metre-long schooner near Brockville, when he died.

An autopsy has yet to be performed, but Alec Peirce, owner of Scuba 2000, the company Connell was diving with, said police told his instructors the man likely had a heart attack. "Unfortunately, when you're

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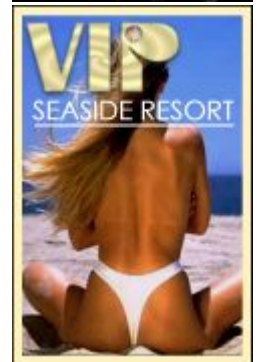
under water and you have a heart attack, you drown," he said. "He had good equipment, lots of air, he was experienced and he went unconscious — what else could it be?"

Ron Irvine, a certified instructor, "rocketed" to the surface with Connell in his arms, but the man was dead even as they surfaced, Peirce said.

**SOURCE - Toronto Star**

**More from CDNN:**

- [HAWAII](#) - Shark attacks diver off Molokai
- [AUSTRALIA](#) - Coroner's report: Diver death caused by inexperience
- [FIJI](#) - Jet ski tourist impaled on tree after canceling scuba trip
- [NEBRASKA](#) - Firefighter team practices rescue diving for dummies



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## The Observer

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### "Michigan Man Drowns Beneath Bridge

A man police describe as a "master diver" drowned Saturday in strong St. Clair River currents under the Blue Water Bridge,

Thomas Drayton, 48, of Romulus Michigan had been diving in an area in Point Edward between the Charity Casino and the bridge when he went under and didn't come up police say. Emergency workers were called at 4:30 p.m. Saturday and he was pulled from the water and rushed to Bluewater Health. Drayton could not be resuscitated.

"He had 52 plus dives so he was considered a master diver in Michigan," said Luke George, media relations officer for Lambton OPP. "He figured he'd go and do some dives. He assessed the water and said there was too much current and he was coming out."

Drayton never made it and was found by the Point Edward Volunteer Fire Department's Underwater Rescue Unit submerged seven feet from shore. George said there was no reason to suspect foul play, but an investigation is ongoing. The OPP have also sent the diver's oxygen tanks to a lab to be assessed.

"There are a lot of unanswered questions that the investigators are looking into," said George. "Hopefully in combination with what they find out ... regarding the tanks and autopsy we'll have more answers."

George isn't sure if the temperature of the water was a factor but acknowledged it would have been cold.

"For this time of year it's probably reasonable to expect that it would be a little chilly with the cold weather we've had and the fact that the St. Clair River is also cold anyhow."

as of November 17, 2006



The OPP crime unit is continuing to investigate but the results of the autopsy will likely not be know for another month."