



Ontario Underwater Council
www.underwatercouncil.com

2012 Report
on
Scuba Diving Incidents in 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 17, 2012	Incident – Humber Bay Park West	Stephen Weir, Ayisha Hassanali, Raimund Krob
April 24, 2012	Numerous post-interview updates	Stephen Weir, Ayisha Hassanali, Raimund Krob

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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

OUC's Director of Sport Safety at:
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Ontario Underwater Council

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

Goals:

The goals of this report are to:

- **Inform** readers about Scuba Diving incidents that have occurred in 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 in Ontario, thus helping make the sport more safe and enjoyable.
- **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, analyze, and learn from 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) Member scuba divers and Member Organizations (Clubs, Charter Operators, Retailers, etc.)
- Not-yet OUC Member scuba divers and Member Organizations (Clubs, Charter Operators, Retailers, etc.)
- Scuba Certification Agencies (e.g. ACUC, PADI, NAUI, BSAC, etc.)
- Scuba Safety Organizations (e.g. Divers Alert Network) that provide services in Ontario
- Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Office of the Chief Coroner (Dr. Andrew McCallum at time of publication)
- Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport
- 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 following are *in* scope of this report:

- Only scuba diving incidents that OUC has learned about independently and those that have been brought to OUC's attention by outside parties.
- Only scuba diving incidents that have occurred in Ontario, and in the case of dives in waters that share boundaries with other provinces or states, those dives that had both their planned entrance and exit points inside Ontario boundaries
- 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
- Scuba diving incidents that occur outside of Ontario or that have their planned entry and exit points outside Ontario.
- 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:

- 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 (what people **should not** do).
- 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.

Trauma / Grief Counselling Services:

Often people can be psychologically and/or physiologically impacted by a scuba diving incident. These people can include (but are not limited to) fellow divers, family, rescuers, witnesses, survivors, and friends. OUC can provide information about Trauma / Grief Counselling Services upon request.

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: 2012-04-13

Summary:

Events Leading Up To Incident:

On Friday, April 13th, a 58-year old Caledon woman (Judy Ann Swann) and her husband (Eric Tolton) were planning on doing a dive to check out her brand-new dry-suit. The locations they considered for doing so included Welland Scuba Park and Humber Bay Park West. They chose Humber Bay Park West because it was closer. Since this would be their first time diving there, they obtained a briefing from their son who had previous experience at that site.

Satellite image of incident site (blue dot):

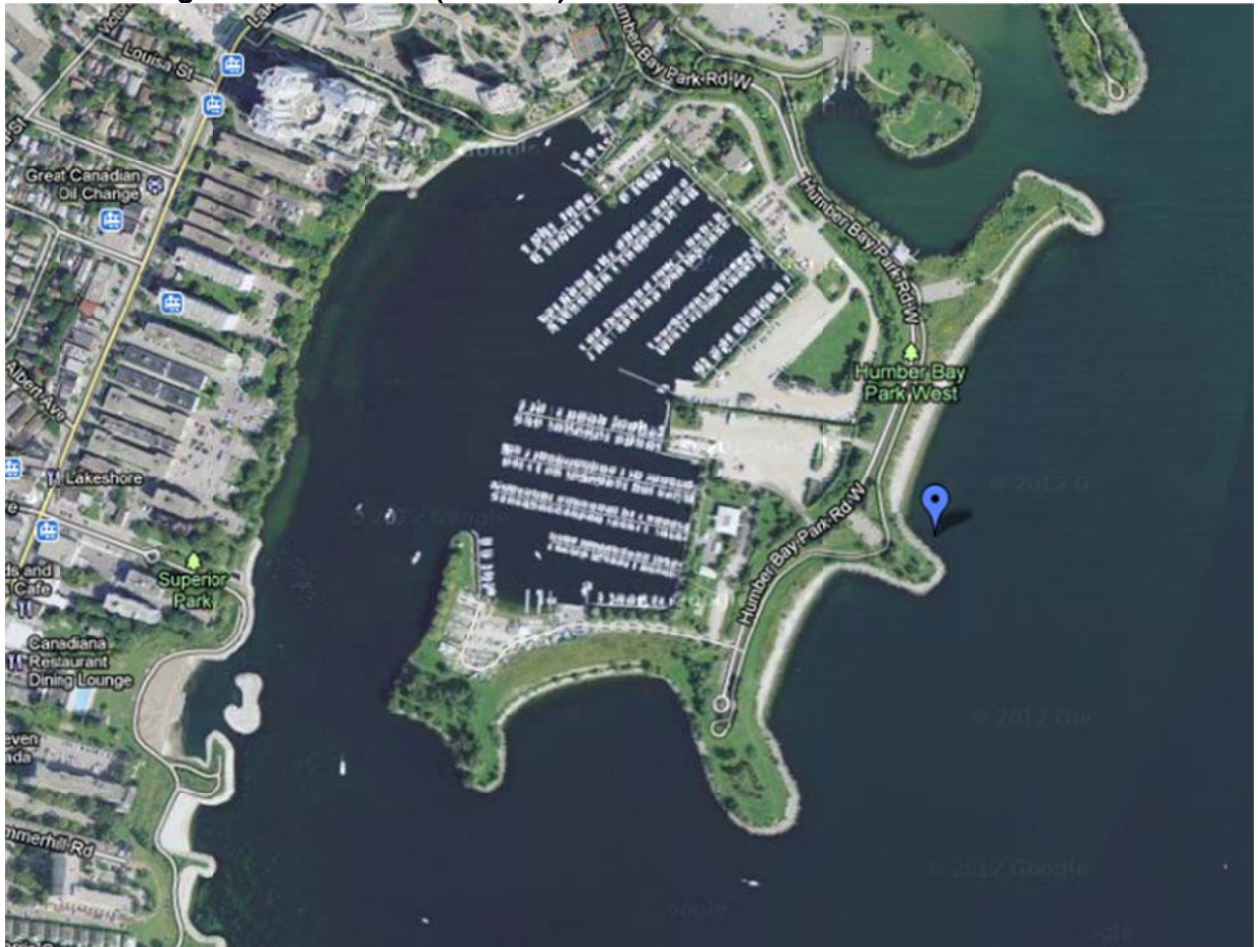


Photo of North Beach Entry Point :



Photo taken post-incident by Raimund Krob

Incident Site Description:

The entry point is a rock beach a few metres away from a parking lot. From shore, the bottom has about a 1:6 gradient, or 1 metre of depth for every 6 metres out.

Conditions:

The day of the incident was sunny with mild winds and waves out of the south-west. Water temperature at the surface was 6 degrees C.

Dive Plan:

Eric and Judy's dive plan was to first have Judy get geared up and go out to a depth just above her head and then do a buoyancy check, while Eric stood by on shore with additional weights if she needed them.

- If Judy **was** able to descend, then she was to inflate & come back to the surface
- If Judy was **not** able to descend, then she was to swim to shore, get the additional weights from Eric, and do the buoyancy check again.



- Once her buoyancy was fine, then Judy was to wait for Eric to gear up, and the two of them would go on their dive.

What Happened:

When Eric and Judy arrived on site in the parking lot, they met another diver (Elliott Cristofoli) who was already preparing to go on his dive. Eric and Judy discussed the conditions with Elliott and then decided to use the north entry instead of the south entry because conditions, while good in both locations, were slightly better on the north.

Elliott then went on his dive while Eric and Judy unpacked and geared up.

Shortly after Elliott returned from his dive, Eric and Judy made their way from the parking lot to the north entry, a rocky beach a short walk from the parking lot.

Elliott recollected that Judy was fully geared up, and that Eric had his dry-suit half on and was carrying two weights.

Eric described Judy as feeling fine and excited about checking out her new dry suit.

Judy entered the water with her snorkel in her mouth, but when she got out far enough to do her buoyancy check, she became completely unresponsive. Officer Alex Singfield from the Metro Marine Unit said that he believed a “medical event” had occurred. Eric shouted out to Judy several times to put her regulator in her mouth, but she did not respond and then slowly sank under the surface.

Eric then entered the water with his dry-suit still half on. Judy had by then sunk to the bottom and was in a head-down, fins-up orientation. Eric described trying to reach Judy to inflate her suit, but with his flooded dry-suit & underwear and the cold water, it was impossible for him to do so, so he began shouting for help.

A passing cyclist heard Eric’s cries and alerted Elliott, who was disassembling his gear and loading it into the trunk of his car. Elliott grabbed his mask and ran to the beach. He helped Eric (whom Elliott described as being in a state of hypothermia / shock) out of the water, and then swam out to help Judy. Elliott saw Judy outlined below at a depth he estimated around 12 feet / 4 metres but had no means of getting down to her.

Elliott then swam back to shore, ran to his car and got his bail-out bottle & regulator. He borrowed Eric’s fins, and then holding his bail-out bottle in one hand, swam out to rescue Judy. With his other hand, he grabbed one of Judy’s legs, towed her into shallower water, inflated her BCD, and then proceeded to give her rescue breaths. Judy had been submerged for a considerable period of time.

Bystanders assisted in the rescue effort, EMS was activated, and shortly afterwards the Metro Marine Unit responded, followed by land ambulance.

Judy was taken to St. Joseph’s Health Centre a short distance away, where she was kept on life support until approximately 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 22nd.



As of publication date and time, the Coroner's office has not yet completed their testing and/or analysis of those test results, and has not yet notified the family of the formal cause of death or the reason for Judy suddenly becoming unresponsive.

Other Information:

The Metro Marine Unit informed OUC that the victim's tank had air and that all gear was found to be in working condition.

Judy held a recently-earned Advanced Open Water Scuba Diver certification.

Carotid Sinus Reflex was ruled as not likely to be a contributing cause as the neck seal of the dry-suit had previously been trimmed at the store during the fitting process. Also the Coroner's office advised OUC that there is no way of testing for or detecting CSR during an autopsy.

OUC Recommendations to Prevent Recurrence:

1. *Buddy teams of divers should make every effort to do as much as possible together, including gearing up together, entering the water together, and checking buoyancy together.*
2. *Dry suit divers should ensure their dry-suits are zipped completely closed before entering the water.*
3. *Certain types of scuba equipment such as dry suits may be easier and safer to use with appropriate Instruction / Training / Supervision beforehand. If you have any questions as to whether Instruction / Training / Supervision might apply to your scuba equipment acquisition, ask your local scuba professional (Retailer, Instructor, etc.).*
4. *When performing buoyancy checks, divers should have their regulators in their mouths.*
5. *When rescuing an unresponsive diver from depth, rescuers should if possible, inflate the victim's BCD.*
6. *When checking out dry-suits for the first time, divers should strongly consider doing so in a confined-water pool-like setting (many scuba retailers and clubs book pools for this purpose).*
7. *In public parks where fishing & watersports are known to take place, park management should provide standard rescue equipment (life-ring, throw-rope, reach-pole, etc.) <Editor's Note: OUC is working with park officials to assess implementing this recommendation.>*
8. *This incident was similar in some respects to the fatality of Robert Cupick in 2006, so OUC should make its "Ontario Scuba Diving Incident and Prevention Reports" more visible. <Editor's Note: OUC implemented this recommendation in part on April 17th, 2012 by creating a direct-link icon to these reports right on our home page. Further increases in visibility are currently being assessed.>*

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



Date of Incident: 2012-mm-dd

Summary:

TBD

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

OUC Recommendations:

- *Recommendation 1.*
- *Recommendation 2.*



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:

TBD

OUC Recommendations:

- *Recommendation 1*
- *Recommendation 2*



SECTION C: Appendices

Appendix #1

Public Domain Information on Scuba Fatality of 2012-04-13:

<http://www.citytv.com/toronto/citynews/news/local/article/200595--woman-pulled-from-waters-near-etobicoke-yacht-club>

[Woman pulled from waters near Etobicoke Yacht Club - CityNews](#)

Woman pulled from waters near Etobicoke Yacht Club

04/13/2012 | CityNews.ca staff



The scene of a dramatic water rescue near the near Etobicoke Yacht Club on Friday April 13, 2012.

A 57-year-old woman has been pulled from the waters of Lake Ontario near the Etobicoke Yacht Club by a Good Samaritan after an apparent diving mishap.

Witnesses said the woman was testing new diving equipment with her husband when something went wrong.

Another diver, who only gave the first name Elliot, rushed into the waters to assist. He pulled the panicked husband to shore before retrieving one of his own tanks and diving to find the woman, who was submerged.

"I saw a panicked gentleman and I went and rushed into the water and pulled (him) out," he said. "A female was supposed to be with him....I proceeded to get a small tank and paddled out there and grabbed the body and (brought) it to shore and performed CPR."

Two other Good Samaritans assisted in the rescue effort, with one calling 911.

Members of the Toronto police marine unit received a call around 1:18 p.m.

The woman didn't have any vital signs when paramedics arrived and her rescuer described her condition as "lifeless."



She is currently listed in critical condition.

"From our understanding she was with her husband and I guess she was trying some new gear in the water," Const. Tony Vella said. "She fell into the water and as a result she was submerged in the water for a period of time."

Police are interviewing a group of divers who were in the area at the time of the incident.

An investigation is ongoing.

News video interview of the Primary Rescuer Elliott Cristofoli:

<http://www.citytv.com/toronto/citynews/videos/200618>

Other related links:

<http://ontariodiving.com/showthread.php?14957-Incident-near-Humber-Bay>

<http://www.scubaboard.com/forums/accidents-incidents/417236-accident-humber-bay-toronto.html>



Appendix #2

Public Domain Information on Scuba Fatality of 2012-mm-dd: