



TECHNICAL DIVING  
INTERNATIONAL

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**TDI**

**Standards and Procedures Manual**

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**TECHNICAL DIVING INTERNATIONAL**

[tdisdi.com](http://tdisdi.com)

TDI Standards and Procedures

Part 1: Introduction

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TDI Standards and Procedures Manual

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5.0	11/19/2004	Editorial changes and minor updates.
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7.0	10/27/2006	Minor updates.
8.0	11/13/2007	Updated with 2007 training updates.
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		students. 7.7 Added suspension/termination for cause clause.
0124	01/01/2024	No changes.
0125	01/01/2025	No changes.
0126	01/01/2026	6. & 7. Rearranged and clarified language throughout sections

# 1. Instructor Package

This package contains all pertinent information necessary to do business as an TDI Instructor when used in combination with the required instructor guides and any other required materials as listed in individual course standards. All of the information enclosed is also available online at [www.tdisdi.com](http://www.tdisdi.com) in the members' area.

Please retain this package as a handy reference guide. Forms may be printed out from the website as needed to process orders, register students, etc.

World Headquarters:  
Scuba Diving International  
Toll Free: 888-778-9073  
Fax: 877-436-7096  
E-mail: [worldhq@tdisdi.com](mailto:worldhq@tdisdi.com)  
Web site: [tdisdi.com](http://tdisdi.com)

Orders may be submitted by email to your regional office 24 hours a day.

Registrations should be processed in the members area of [tdisdi.com](http://tdisdi.com).

Our staff of dive professionals will be happy to handle your business needs, questions, or concerns. We appreciate your business and look forward to giving you the best service we possibly can!

## 2. A Brief History

From its humble beginning in 1994 to today, the group of training agencies known as Scuba Diving International (SDI), Technical Diving International (TDI), and Emergency Response Diving International (ERDI) form one of the largest certification agencies in the world. With offices servicing more than 100 countries, the company today far exceeds the original vision the founders had when they conceived the idea on a napkin, sitting at the kitchen table many years ago.

As with many companies, the original concept for the business was an outgrowth of the recognition that a niche needed to be filled. This niche was providing specialized training for what the industry now calls technical diving, and the founders did so by forming the first agency of the group, Technical Diving International, in 1994.

Technical Diving International was one of the first agencies of its kind. It focuses on providing training materials and education in special areas ranging from Nitrox to Closed Circuit Rebreathers, along with overhead environments such as Cave and Wreck diving. TDI also provides training in the preparation of gas mixtures for dives up to 100 metres (330 feet).

During TDI's development, there were a few key things that separated it from its competitors and pioneered the way many divers learn to dive today. For one, TDI was at the forefront of the movement that convinced the dive industry to accept technical diving activities. In the early stages of technical diving there were many industry professionals who felt the average diver was not smart enough to handle the expanded dive planning that goes into doing a technical dive, and that technical diving was far too risky for non-professionals. These two factors were offset at TDI by an extensive education process conducted through seminars, publications, and TDI's training materials. The average diver realized that the risk in technical diving could be brought to an acceptable level, and they were indeed smart enough to conduct technical dives. Today, the industry not only embraces technical diving, but Nitrox is now the largest specialty course taken worldwide.

Another key event in TDI's history occurred when it became the first agency to pioneer the use of Semi Closed Rebreathers by recreational divers. This opened the door to allowing divers to use Closed Circuit Rebreathers recreationally and spawned a whole new segment of the diving industry. In short, TDI ushered in an exciting breakthrough in the dive industry that many believe actually prevented the industry from further decline.

In 1998 the membership of TDI could no longer be held back from their demands for the creation of a sport diving division of TDI and thus was born Scuba Diving International (SDI). The primary reason for this expansion was that dive instructors enjoyed dealing with an agency that listened to the instructors in the field and created programs that were, and continue to be, very profitable because they are tailored to the way today's diver wants to learn to dive.

Like TDI, SDI did a number of things that separated it from previously established training agencies. One example is that SDI was the first agency to require the use of personal dive computers by all divers during every dive. This new standard was put in place because dive computers were and are used daily by all diving professionals to make diving safer and more enjoyable. Research showed that the average diver forgot how to use dive tables soon after completion of a course. This fact, along with the advancement and increased reliability of dive computers, meant they were considered a safer alternative to dive tables. SDI recognized this and although dive tables are not required curriculum in the basic diver course, they still can be taught during any course. Another groundbreaking step taken by SDI was the development of an e-learning platform for dive education. Allowing a student to learn the academic portion of a dive course online rather than requiring additional classroom instruction was a bold yet visionary step. Currently SDI is one of only a few agencies that offer divers the opportunity to learn online and is the only organization to offer continuing education courses.

With the membership now happy about their options for both sport and technical dive training through SDI and TDI, they continued to ask for more specialized training in public safety, and thus Emergency Response Diving International (ERDI) was born in 2000. ERDI was and continues to be the only training program that is supported by a major certification agency catering exclusively to public safety diving. Throughout the years ERDI has written programs that have trained very established dive teams such as the Chicago Fire Department, numerous state police dive teams, and also several federal agencies.

In 2004, with 10 years of development into the company, the founders of SDI/TDI/ERDI decided it was time to move on and sold the company to a group of investors who quickly expanded the offerings of the company. Immediate changes included applying for and receiving acceptance into the Recreational Scuba Training Council (RSTC) and the European Underwater Federation (EUF). This acceptance was critical because it meant that SDI standards were evaluated and found to be sound and safe by its competitors. SDI passed with ease and today is currently actively involved in both organizations, helping make the sport safer for more divers. Other changes came with additional staff and a commitment to embrace electronic technologies to make doing business easier for members.

First Response Training International was subsequently launched in 2018 to replace the outdated first aid and CPR offerings from SDI with current, ILCOR-compliant layperson provider level courses for first aid and CPR. In addition, a diver-focused Oxygen Administration course is offered. During the pandemic of 2020, the Airborne Pathogens course led the way for many businesses returning staff to the workplace.

Sharing a history of firsts, it only made sense for Performance Freediving International (PFI) to join the family of companies now known as International Training in the summer of 2019. Offering all levels of Freediver training from snorkeling through advanced and specialty instructor ratings, PFI's focus on safety makes it a leader in the field.

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Although International Training is considered to be one of the newer organizations in the industry, it is viewed as one of the most professional and progressive certification agencies. International Training's history and its reputation as an innovator have built a strong foundation for the future. By listening to its members and building programs that are profitable and keep risk at an acceptable level, the future is bright for the organization.

### **3. TDI Code of Ethics and Conduct**

- Technical diving is recognized as carrying a degree of risk and responsibility not normally associated with other technical diving.
- We believe an individual should not be qualified as a TDI Diver unless those empowered to qualify the person would allow them to buddy or teach their loved ones technical diving.
- The TDI Professional always maintains their personal, physical, and mental fitness as they relate to diving.
- The TDI Professional always maintains their equipment and never begins a dive with defective equipment.
- The TDI Professional strives to maintain an attitude of professionalism and objectivity and supports the concept of safety in technical diving.
- The TDI Professional will not encourage or recruit other individuals to dive technically if unqualified.
- The TDI Professional will make every effort to pass on their knowledge to novice technical divers and diving community if requested to do so, whether through formal instruction, answering questions or via appropriate publication in books, journal and magazines.
- The TDI Professional strives to encourage and practice an awareness of conservation of the underwater environment at all times.
- The TDI Professional, by virtue of their voluntary membership in TDI, recognizes a responsibility and obligation to promote TDI and support the official decisions adopted by TDI. In fulfilling this obligation to the organization, the TDI Divers and Instructors shall:
  - Publicly support TDI as an organization.
  - Make every effort to bring about necessary changes in a professional manner by direct contact with those fellow TDI Members and Divers who are in positions of authority and responsibility.
- Every TDI Member has an obligation to report violations of TDI Standards and of the Code of Ethics.
- Every TDI Member should strive to set an example of professional behavior and ethical conduct in all activities including, public speaking, articles and books, and various forms of Internet style discourse.
- Unwarranted critical comment and deliberate inflammatory statements of diving peers is inappropriate and undesirable.

## **4. Introduction**

Standards that ensure genuine diver safety while maximizing the pleasures of learning to dive are the foundation of TDI's diver training programs. TDI has re-examined limits that are arbitrary or based solely on tradition and developed new guidelines using scientific data and common sense. TDI believes divers should be trained from the beginning to take advantage of new technologies and enjoy the freedom to dive deeper or longer or both - with greater safety.

As skill and experience increase, TDI offers divers training that will allow them to advance beyond the traditional limits of recreational diving to the level of skill they desire.

### **4.1 *You and TDI***

As an instructor, your role in the TDI family is the most important of all.

You are the ambassador who will deliver enlightened and innovative scuba instruction to divers. Your ideas and experiences are a vital part of TDI's growth, and we value your input to help keep us on the leading edge. You are also encouraged to continue your career as an instructor by also becoming certified as an SDI Instructor to teach sport diving programs such as the SDI Open Water Scuba Diver, Advanced Adventure Diver and Rescue or move into emergency response diving with ERDI if you have not done so already.

You are already a qualified diver, or you wouldn't be here. Our job is to provide you with the tools to transfer that knowledge to students. They would be overwhelmed if they tried to absorb, in one course, even a part of the knowledge you have gained throughout your career. Therefore, it is vital that we be selective and make sure that new students receive the training they actually need. This open water body of knowledge is so vital that TDI has focused a great amount of research and effort to determine which knowledge and skills are most important.

TDI will help you select the information that is most vital to students and show you proven ways to teach them. It's up to you to use your abilities as an instructor to deliver this critical core package to the student. It's a partnership between TDI and YOU.

## 5. Using the Standards and Procedures Manual

### 5.1 Purpose

Your TDI Standards and Procedures Manual is intended to be your guide to providing safe and enjoyable training to divers from the open water level to black water, cave and Trimix CCR. It is your reference for the standards and procedures that TDI instructors implement to achieve consistency and quality. It outlines the vital “core knowledge” that each of your students will need to achieve TDI certification. Finally, but no less important, it is intended to help you effectively deliver the skills and knowledge your students will actually need.

Your TDI Standards and Procedures Manual is meant to be a “living manual” - updated on a regular basis, it is meant to grow and change with you throughout your diving career. From time to time, you will receive updates for your manual and you should be sure to incorporate these updates promptly so that your manual is always up to date.

### 5.2 How to Use this Manual

Your manual has intentionally been kept brief but concise.

The manual consists of several parts. These parts are:

1. Introduction
2. Diver Standards
3. Leadership Standards

#### **Part 1, Introduction covers:**

- **The Need for Standardized Instruction**  
Explaining TDI’s progressive approach to consistency and excellence in instruction.
- **The Role of Instructor**  
Emphasizes your important role in the TDI family.
- **Risk Management**  
Directs you to further information that will help you protect yourself against a problem that could consume your career. Of course, you want to be the best instructor possible, so:
- **Tips to Becoming a Great Instructor**  
Tips that offer information that can help you be a better teacher and a respected professional in dive instruction.

- **How to Conduct an TDI Scuba Course**

Covers the general approach to scheduling a scuba course and enrolling students. It focuses on the logistics and details (medical and legal) of scheduling your training sessions, organizing your students, collecting class fees, and motivating your students to show up for all of the sessions.

**Part 2, Diver Standards covers:**

- The list of the current diver courses offered through TDI.

**Part 3, Leadership Standards covers:**

- The list of the current leadership courses offered through TDI.

## **6. TDI - Professional Dive Instruction**

### **6.1 *The Need for Standardized Instruction***

In scuba's early days, training was informal—experienced divers simply guided novices, teaching them whatever they believed was important for “skin diving.” This lack of structure led to accidents, and diving became known as a dangerous sport. Diving clubs began forming and creating their own safety standards. Over time, as knowledge grew, a large body of safe diving practices emerged.

Professional training agencies were eventually established, empowering sanctioned instructors to certify divers. While this was better than having no standards at all, training still varied widely with some instructors favoring military-style discipline while others relied on a “sink or swim” methodology.

To make scuba safer and more appealing to the general public, the sport had to shed its macho, high-endurance image. A core body of essential knowledge had to be identified and standardized. Even more challenging was creating uniform teaching methods so students could reliably learn the skills needed for safer, enjoyable diving. Most difficult of all, uniform and consistent methods of instruction were needed so students could actually learn the real-world knowledge and skills they needed to safely enjoy diving. TDI recognized the importance of consistent content and instruction. For TDI instructors to be effective, they must not only know what to teach, but also how to teach it.

While instructors bring their own style and personality, all students must still receive the same foundational knowledge and proven training approach. This principle is at the heart of the TDI Instructor courses.

Benefits of standardized content and instruction include:

- A clear structure allows instructors to focus on individual student needs
- Prevents spending excessive time on some topics while neglecting others.
- Ensures no critical topics are overlooked.
- Strengthens legal defense if training follows a respected, proven program.
- Improves presentation quality, making instruction look and feel professional.
- Enhances both perceived and actual professionalism.

### **6.2 *The Role of Instructor***

While TDI provides a strong curriculum and proven teaching methods, the instructor's role is still critical. Even the best program is only as effective as the person delivering it—because while the curriculum is consistent, students and dive environments are not.

- You are the one with the training, experience, and judgment to bring all elements together into an enjoyable, high-quality learning experience. From the moment you decide to run an Open Water class, you will be making important decisions, such as:
- Class logistics: How large will the class be? How much assistance will you need?
- Student mix: What are the age ranges (10 - 72)? Are there any health concerns (e.g., issues needing medical clearance)?
- Interpersonal dynamics: Could relationships, like a controlling parent or over-involved partner, interfere with learning?
- Teaching environment: What atmosphere will help you teach most effectively?
- Delivery method: Will you use videos, lectures, or a mix? How will you integrate online learning with classroom sessions?
- Comprehension checks: How will you confirm understanding and assist those struggling?
- Risk management: Who might panic in open water, and how will you prevent incidents?
- Certification decisions: Should a marginal student be certified?

Even with TDI's well-balanced curriculum and structured approach, the most important factor in student success is you, the instructor. Your ability to assess situations, adapt methods, and manage safety determines the overall quality of the training experience.

### **6.3 *Becoming a Great Instructor***

A great instructor is, above all, a professional. Think about the people you most admire in any field. They likely share the same professional qualities. In scuba instruction, professionalism is vital to both success and safety.

Hallmarks of a Professional Instructor:

- Acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to attract and retain students.
- Keeps up to date with the latest technology and industry developments.
- Charges fair fees for services rendered.
- Strives to be open-minded and fair in all dealings.
- Belongs to a self-policing organization.
- Acts as a role model by:
  - Staying physically fit.
  - Acting ethically.
  - Maintaining a positive attitude.
  - Being considerate and punctual.

#### **Professionalism: A Lifelong Commitment**

No one is “born” a professional. It requires hard work and a long-term commitment to quality goals. Remaining professional also continually supporting the best principles of the industry while staying open to new ideas and technology. The most challenging parts of being a professional instructor are often not about scuba skills. They are about human relations:

- Patience
- Tolerance
- Self-control
- Emotional awareness
- Adaptability to change

### **Managing Change**

Change in the diving is inevitable – it can be exciting, challenging, and sometimes costly. Professionals:

- Welcome good ideas and join in implementing them.
- Challenge poor ideas honestly and reasonably; if they are flawed, they will fade.
- Expect change so that it does not catch them off guard

Take initiative to create positive change when they have a better idea. **Managing Yourself**

Our own feelings can sometimes undermine us – especially in challenging situations. To remain professional:

- Recognize and address your **emotions** honestly
- Maintain **self-control** – students look to you for stability and common sense. Avoid extremes and public criticism of competitors or students
- Practice **tolerance** – you will encounter all kinds of personalities, not all of them easy. Your professionalism helps bridge differences.
- Show **patience** – students learn at different paces. Moving too fast risks losing them; moving too slowly risks boredom. Impatience can embarrass students, reduce focus, and harm their enjoyment of diving.

When professionalism, patience, and adaptability are combined with technical skill, you not only teach students to dive, you inspire them to become confident, safer, and enthusiastic members of the diving community.

## **6.4 Risk Management**

### **6.4.1 Teaching Defensively**

The single best advice for an instructor: expect the unexpected.

Never assume everything will go according to plan or that all your directions will be followed exactly. Since the early days of scuba instruction in the 1960s, experienced instructors have learned to anticipate that students may suddenly do the opposite of what was briefed.

A defensive teaching approach means:

- Continuously thinking ahead to possible contingencies.
- Being ready to respond instantly to prevent accidents.
- Turning student mistakes into **positive learning experiences** rather than dangerous incidents.

### **Follow Agency Standards**

Agency training standards provide:

- A proven sequence of academics and skills that lead to diver self-sufficiency.
- Legal defensibility in the event of an accident.

Your responsibilities:

- Teach in compliance with current standards.
- Keep course content updated when standards change.
- Contact the Training Department at HQ if you have questions.
- If site conditions or other factors require a deviation from standards (e.g., pool availability, local conditions, special equipment), obtain written approval from HQ before making changes. Never assume you can deviate without permission.

### **Adjusting for Site Conditions**

Student to instructor ratios are based on optimal conditions. If conditions are less than ideal, such as reduced visibility, surf or current, or students needing special attention, then you must reduce the class size, and/or add qualified assistants to maintain proper direct supervision.

### **Legal and Risk Considerations**

In an ideal world, insurance and thorough training would guarantee protection in the event of an accident. In reality, legal defense is rarely that simple. Our society is increasingly litigious, and instructors should:

- Understand and follow all agency standards and procedures
- Maintain high safety standards
- Keep accurate records to reduce professional risk

Key principle: Defensive teaching is proactive teaching. Plan for problems before they happen, and you will be ready to turn potential accidents into valuable learning opportunities.

## **6.4.2 Introduction**

Have you ever told someone that diving is a *safe* sport? If so, you weren't being accurate. "Safe" means "without risk," and nothing in life is truly without risk. Diving, like many other recreational activities, carries inherent dangers.

### **Learning from Other Industries**

Many of the diving industry's risk management practices were adapted from the snow skiing business. Skiers often suffered broken bones and other serious injuries. This naturally led to lawsuits, forcing ski resorts to take defensive measures.

Over 30 years ago, ski resorts began requiring all participants to sign a Waiver and Release, acknowledging the risks and agreeing not to hold the resort or instructors liable for injuries. As other high-risk activities, such as snowmobiling, ATV riding, skateboarding, skydiving, hang gliding, and even youth sports grew in popularity, waivers and formal risk warnings became standard practice.

### **Why Risk Management Matters in Diving**

In today's litigious society, risk management is one of the most important responsibilities of a professional diving instructor. Fortunately, there are straightforward steps you can take to reduce your exposure to legal risk.

Step One: Obtain professional instructor liability insurance.

- Even a minor incident—like a stubbed toe on a dive boat—can result in a lawsuit.
- Without specific insurance tailored to the unique risks of scuba instruction, you have no protection against the potentially devastating cost of legal defense.
- The expense of defending an innocent instructor in court can easily bankrupt an individual or business without adequate coverage.

Step Two: Teach Defensively

While liability insurance is essential, it is equally important to develop a solid understanding of risk management principles. By conducting yourself with the highest level of caution and professionalism, you protect:

- Your students
- All divers under your supervision
- Yourself and your livelihood

### **6.4.3 Elements of a Lawsuit**

Basic Personal Injury Law 101:

For a plaintiff (the injured party or their heirs) to recover money in a lawsuit, all four of the following elements must be proven:

1. **Damages** – The plaintiff must show measurable harm, either financial, physical, or both.
2. **Duty of Care** – The defendant must have had a duty to provide training or supervision in an atmosphere of reasonable safety.
3. **Breach of Duty** - Through action (commission) or inaction (omission), the defendant failed to fulfill that duty.
4. **Causation** – The plaintiff's damage must have been directly caused by the defendant's negligent performance.

#### **Why This Matters**

At the start of entry-level scuba training, students don't know what they don't know. They are unaware of hazards such as:

- Decompression sickness (the bends)
- Arterial gas embolism
- Dangerous marine life

It is the instructor's job to fill that blank slate with the knowledge students need to make safe, informed decisions.

#### **The Role of Waivers in Informed Choice**

A waiver and release is an essential part of risk management. It documents that students have been informed of the risks involved in scuba diving, and they willingly choose to participate with full awareness of possible injury or death.

A properly executed waiver is a legal tool that supports the concept of informed choice, and can be critical to protecting both the instructor and the dive operation in the event of a lawsuit.

### **6.4.4 Proper Use of Waivers**

A waiver is your first line of defense in risk management. It is more than just a form. It's a legal contract between you and your student that states:

*“Diving carries inherent risks, including injury or death. You understand these risks and agree not to hold me liable if an accident occurs.”*

When properly executed, waivers and medical statements are powerful tools for protecting students, instructors, and dive facilities. When mishandled, they can lose much of their legal force.

### **Purpose of Waivers and Releases**

Waivers and releases document that participants have been informed of inherent diving risks, establish that they voluntarily accept those risks, and serve as a key part of an instructor’s legal defense in the event of an accident. No TDI instructor, dive professional, or dive facility should operate without proper, signed waivers. Typical forms include:

- *General Liability Release and Assumption of Risk* agreements
- *Medical History* form (covered below)

### **TDI Standard Liability Release Forms**

TDI provides course and discipline-specific liability release forms for each diver training program. Using the correct form is essential. Specialized TDI forms include those for non-diving courses.

### **Medical Statements: A Companion Risk Tool**

The medical history form is a screening tool used to verify that students possess the general health and fitness required for diving.

Procedures:

- The form must be completed, signed and dated by the student before any class activities, including academic lectures
- For minors, it must be signed by a parent or legal guardian.
- Instructors should not coach students on how to answer questions but may clarify wording or meaning if a student is unsure
- If a student makes an error when completing the form, provide a new blank form to ensure all answers are accurate and properly recorded
- If any response indicates a medical condition requiring a physician’s approval, the student must submit the signed medical clearance for inclusion in their training record

### **eLearning integration:**

Following completion of a TDI online course, students are automatically directed to complete the medical history form online. If a physician’s clearance is required, the student will be prompted to print the form, obtain the medical signature, and upload the approved document. The final, approved form is stored in the Medicals and Waivers tab of the student’s TDI profile page. Students must grant access to the signed form to the affiliated facility.

### **6.4.5 Sign on the Dotted Line, Please**

#### **Timing and Presentation of Waivers**

The way you present and execute waivers greatly affects their enforceability. Students must have reasonable time for review, ideally from the moment of course enrollment. Best practices include providing the waiver at enrollment or posting it on the facility's website for advance review.

Avoid last-minute signing sessions just before water activities begin and never imply that refusing to sign will result in loss of fees already paid. This may be considered duress, weakening the waiver in court.

#### **Execution and Group Briefing**

Handling the signing of waivers is one of the most important parts of your relationship with students. At the first session:

1. Explain that the waiver is a formal contract affecting their legal rights and those of their family.
2. Reinforce that diving is inherently hazardous and accidents can happen even with proper training and supervision.
3. Read the entire documents aloud and pause after each section to answer questions. Have students initial each section to confirm understanding.
4. Verify honesty in self-reported training and experience, especially for previously certified divers.
5. Ensure a third-part witness signs the form.
6. Allow students to withdraw without loss of face or financial penalty if they have reservations. Encourage them to discuss the risks with family members.

Conduct this briefing with all students present so everyone hears the same information and can later confirm the thoroughness of the explanation if needed.

#### **Special Requirements for Minors**

Minor children cannot legally waive their own rights. A parent or legal guardian must sign the waiver. Ideally, parents attend the first session. If not, send the waiver home and call the parents to provide the same briefing given to adult participants.

#### **Documentation Standards**

1. Do not allow students to alter the waiver language.
2. Ensure all forms are fully completed, initialed, dated and signed.
3. Keep waivers and medical statements organized and readily accessible.

### **Legal Considerations**

In some jurisdictions, waivers may be dismissed early in a case if a judge grants a summary judgment motion. Even then, the waiver can be admitted as evidence at trial to demonstrate that the student was informed of the risks and they knowingly assumed those risks before participating in scuba training.

Courts are more likely to uphold waivers when the signer understood the risk and was capable of assuming it, and the signer knew they were legally waiving the right to sue – even for certain types of negligence.

### **Reality Check**

In some countries, a diving death may be ruled “*death by misadventure*,” recognizing the participant knowingly accepted the risk. In the U.S., lawsuits can arise from almost anything. Even with properly executed waivers and medical statements, you could face prolonged, costly litigation regardless of merit.

### **Bottom Line for Professionals**

- Always use the correct TDI course-specific waiver
- Use supplemental and non-training forms where applicable
- Present forms well in advance – never under pressure or duress
- Conduct a thorough group briefing before signing
- Secure parent/guardian signatures for minors
- Maintain complete, accurate records for every participant

When combined with defensive teaching and strict adherence to TDI Standards, waivers and medical statements are among the most effective tools for protecting your students, your business, and your professional reputation.

## **6.4.6 Student Training Records**

Thoroughly documenting each student’s training activities is vital for both instructional quality and legal protection. In the event of a claim of negligent or incomplete training, these records serve as critical evidence of the instruction provided and the student’s demonstrated mastery of skills.

SDI Student Training Records are specifically designed to record a student’s successful completion of all academic sessions and knowledge reviews, confined water training, and open water training. These records are now available online and can be downloaded by either the student or the instructor. SDI provides a tutorial video to guide you through the use of the digital student record folder.

### **What to Include**

Your student training record folder should contain:

1. Completed exam results and evaluations
2. Skills checklists for confined and open water sessions
3. Medical history forms and physician's approval (if applicable)
4. Signed waivers and liability releases

Maintain all student training records for a minimum of seven (7) years. If an accident occurs during training, these documents will be of immediate use. If an incident occurs after certification, student training records can help defend against allegations that the course lacked full content or the student failed to master certain academic topics of skills without proper remediation.

### **Best Practices**

- Keep records updated as the course progresses. Do not wait until the course is completed.
- Review and correct any incorrect performance immediately and document the remediation
- Store records in an organized, secure location, whether physical, digital, or both.

Maintaining complete and accurate training records is not just good administration, it is a key element of risk management that safeguards your students, your reputation, and your professional credentials.

## **6.4.7 Accident and Incident Procedures**

If an accident occurs, your first priority is always to care for the victim. Once immediate medical needs are addressed, follow these steps to protect the safety of others, preserve evidence, and fulfill reporting obligations.

Immediate Actions:

- Secure the victim's equipment - in serious cases, local authorities may take custody of it for investigation.
- Gather all relevant information, using the International Training *Accident/Incident Report* form.
- Be compassionate toward the victim's family and friends.
- Avoid speculation about the cause of the incident.
- Make no statements regarding anyone's potential liability.
- Photograph everything – the scene, the equipment, and relevant surroundings.

### **Reporting Requirements**

Submit the report promptly. Email or fax the completed report to International Training or to your local regional office or service center. Include:

- A copy of any applicable liability release.
- If the accident occurred during training, include the medical statement and all student training records.
- Report every accident, even minor ones.
- Follow your insurance company's reporting procedures if applicable.
- If the incident occurred under another agency's training program, follow their reporting requirements as well
- Whenever possible, submit the same report to all relevant parties – avoid multiple versions

### **Cooperation and Communication**

Cooperate with any subsequent official investigations by International Training, local authorities, and any other relevant agencies. Do not make statements to the news media or unauthorized individuals. Keep all reports confidential and do not share them with third parties outside the official process.

### **Preparedness and Scene Management**

Prudent dive professionals maintain emergency procedures and site-specific emergency action plans for every training location. Best practices include:

- Stay current with CPR and first aid certifications.
- Keep accurate emergency contact information for each dive site.
- Be prepared to control the scene, assign tasks, and secure the area.
- Evaluate and document the equipment used and environmental conditions.
- Take detailed notes and establish a timeline for your report.
- Interview multiple witnesses to gather varied perspectives.

### **Finalizing the Report**

Complete the accident report as soon as possible while details are fresh. Submit it to the required entities promptly, and maintain a single, consistent version of the report.

### **Key Point**

Your calm, professional, and thorough response can save lives, preserve critical evidence, and protect you legally. Be ready before an incident happens by having a clear plan, trained assistants, and all necessary forms and contact information on hand.

## **6.4.8 Summary**

Risk management is a serious and essential responsibility for every dive professional. It must be approached soberly and professionally, without distraction, and applied consistently across all programs.

## TDI Standards and Procedures

### Part 1: Introduction

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- Follow course standards - Teach strictly in accordance with agency standards.
- Anticipate problems – Consider where accident scenarios might arise and plan preventive measures in advance.
- Screen participants appropriately – In technical and advanced programs, you have a duty to exclude divers who lack the necessary skill or experience, even when it is a difficult decision. This may ultimately save a life.

Accidents can happen, sometimes due to unforeseeable conditions, but in the United States and other jurisdictions, that reality alone will not protect you from litigation. Lawsuits can arise from almost anything, and the best protection is a layered defense:

- Properly executed waivers and releases.
- Accurate and complete medical statements.
- Thorough student training records.

By combining these tools with defensive teaching and constant vigilance, you reduce risk, protect your students, and safeguard your professional reputation.

Key takeaway – Use every risk management tool available and maintain the highest professional standards both in the water and in your paperwork.

## 7. TDI General Membership Standards

All the following criteria apply to:

- TDI Leadership positions
- Divemaster
- Instructor
- Instructor Trainer

### 7.1 *General*

1. Instructors and Instructor Trainers must comply with the 'Two Year Renewal/Refresher Policy' detailed at 7.15 in these General Standards.
2. Members must ensure they are in renewed, active teaching status and that they hold the appropriate instructor level prior to teaching any TDI course.
3. All courses must be completed within 12 months unless otherwise stated.
4. Recommendation for all TDI courses – Any new student should demonstrate skills required in previous courses to the new instructor in shallow water.
5. Required skills in all courses must be demonstrated by the instructor and performed by the student with appropriate buoyancy control and proper trim relevant to the environment.
6. Procedure for creating a "Unique" Specialty: Instructors often create their own specialties and wish to have a certification issued by TDI. The procedures for getting a unique specialty approved are as follows. The Instructor must:
  - a. Be in active teaching status with TDI.
  - b. Have at least 25 dives in the particular specialty being applied for.
  - c. Complete the *TDI Specialty Instructor* upgrade form.
  - d. Must submit an outline for approval to TDI.
  - e. TDI must approve the outline before the course can actually be taught.
7. An active TDI Instructor may teach an open circuit TDI Diver level course while using a SCR/CCR under the following conditions (note these conditions apply to ALL training dives.): \*
  - a. Current TDI standards for the course are followed.
  - b. The instructor must be an active TDI instructor on open circuit at the level being taught.

- c. The instructor must be an active TDI instructor on the SCR/CCR unit he/she is diving.
- d. The instructor must be an active TDI instructor on SCR/CCR at the level being taught.
- e. The instructor must carry sufficient bailout gas for himself and one student to abort the dive and carry out full decompression including safe ascent to the surface.
- f. Under NO circumstances shall a TDI instructor teach any part of any TDI course while using a SCR/CCR without holding a current TDI instructor-rating on that specific unit.

\* As a courtesy, we also suggest the student(s) be made aware of the situation and be comfortable with the circumstances of their course dives.

8. If an instructor is teaching a SCR/CCR course, the instructor may use SCR/CCR or open circuit equipment provided all skills are demonstrated on the unit specific SCR/CCR.

## **7.2 Regional Office Affiliation Procedures**

1. Members (Dive Masters, Assistant Instructors, Instructors, Course Directors, and IT's) are required to be affiliated with the Regional Office (RO) that is managing their country of residence with the following guidelines:
  - a. Members reside in the region for a period of 4 months or longer.
  - b. If a member travels to a different region to teach, they are not considered a part of that Regional Office unless they spend more than 4 months in the location continuously.
2. All new members are required to be registered and affiliated with the Regional Office of their country of residence.
  - a. Instructor Trainers must submit leadership application paperwork to the appropriate regional office.
  - b. Instructor Trainers who are unsure of the region to register a new dive professional should contact SDI/TDI/ERDI World Headquarters for directions.
3. Members must have an address in their user profile that coincides with the region they are affiliated with.
4. It is strongly recommended that any member that is traveling outside their region they are affiliated with to conduct courses, contact the Regional Office in the area they are teaching in to become familiar with local law, rules and regulations should they apply and as a courtesy to the local Regional Office.

### **7.3    *Active Teaching Status***

**An instructor given the designation of Active Teaching Status must agree to the following criteria:**

1. Annual dues must be paid in full.
2. All account balances from the previous year must be paid for in full.
3. Submit proof of current liability insurance in accordance with applicable local regulations.
4. Having taught or assisted in at least one Scuba Diver course.
5. All instructors must hold Active Teaching Status to be authorized to teach TDI courses and to certify TDI divers.
6. Ability to perform all the leadership skills.

### **7.4    *Probation Status***

**An instructor may be placed on Probation Status for any of the following reasons:**

1. Account balance is 90 days or more.
2. Failed to meet the contractual obligations of Active Teaching Status.
3. Violated teaching standards.

**An instructor placed on Probation Status is authorized to teach TDI courses and to certify TDI divers. Further standards violations, violations of the Code of Ethics and Conduct, a breach of membership agreement, or a quality assurance determination can result in an instructor being moved from Probation Status to Suspended or even Expelled Status at International Training's sole and absolute discretion.**

### **7.5    *Non-Teaching Status***

**An instructor can be placed on Non-Teaching Status for any of the following reasons:**

1. Account balance is 90 days or more.
2. Temporarily placed on suspension.
3. Failed to meet the contractual obligations of Active Teaching Status.

**Instructors placed on Non-Teaching Status are not authorized to teach TDI courses or certify TDI divers.**

## **7.6 *Suspended Status***

**An instructor can be placed on Suspended Status for any of the following reasons:**

1. Account balance is 120 days or more with no attempt to rectify the situation.
2. Failed to meet the contractual obligations of Active Teaching Status.
3. Violated teaching standards.

**An instructor placed on Suspended Status is not authorized to teach TDI courses or to certify TDI divers. Further standards violations, violations of the Code of Ethics and Conduct, a breach of membership agreement, or a quality assurance determination can result in an instructor being moved from Suspended Status to Expelled Status at International Training's sole and absolute discretion.**

## **7.7 *Expelled Status***

**An Instructor can be placed on Expelled Status for any of the following reasons:**

4. Account balance is 120 days or more with no attempt to rectify the situation.
5. Placed on Suspended or Probation Status on more than one occasion.
6. Failed to meet the contractual obligations of Active Teaching Status.
7. Violated teaching standards.
8. Displayed conduct unbecoming a professional Instructor.

**An instructor placed on Expelled Status is no longer authorized to teach TDI courses or to certify TDI divers. An instructor placed on Expelled Status is no longer a member of Scuba Diving International.**

**Note:** Technical Diving International reserves the right to suspend, expel or terminate an individual in its sole and absolute discretion, for no reason or any reason it determines is in the best interest of International Training.

## **7.8 *Quality Assurance (QA) Procedures***

Quality assurance issues are handled at SDI/TDI/ERDI World Headquarters by the Training Department. This is to ensure that Regional Offices and Sales Managers remain neutral in the final decision.

### **7.8.1 General Quality Assurance Procedures**

General quality assurance involves random Q&A letters sent out to students who were recently registered by members in good standing. General Q&A letters are sent out to maintain the quality of instruction and ensure that proper training materials were used.

Letters are sent with a self-addressed, return postage paid envelope or via electronic e-mail course survey form.

All course survey letters are forwarded to SDI/TDI/ERDI World Headquarters Training Department.

Non-English speaking student's letters are translated to the student's language.

#### **HQ Quality Assurance Steps**

**Step 1:** The HQ Training Department receives a written letter or course survey alleging a standards or ethics violation. The letter must be signed (electronic signature is acceptable) by the individuals who witnessed the alleged standards or ethics violation. Phone conversations will not be accepted.

**Step 2:** SDI/TDI/ERDI HQ Training Department will check the database for current status of the dive professional in question. Once HQ has all contact information, they will notify the individual that a complaint has been filed against them. Notification will be attempted first by phone or email and then by letter.

**Step 3:** The notification letter will contain the alleged quality assurance violations. The individual will be notified they have fifteen (15) days to respond.

**Step 4:** HQ will send course surveys to former students.

**Step 5:** When all information has been submitted and reviewed, a final decision will be made as to what action will be taken. HQ Training Department will compose a letter and inform the member as to its decision.

**Step 6:** The member's status will be noted in the database. All feedback on the material used and quality of instruction will be noted in the instructor's file in the database at HQ.

All QA issues are to be kept confidential and not shared with outside instructors or facilities unless authorized by HQ Training Department. Regional Offices and Sales Managers may be asked to assist in acquiring information about the QA issues.

A provisional status or remedial training requires the file be kept open until all requirements have been met.

There are four possible actions that may be taken when a SDI/TDI/ERDI Professional's standing comes into question. They are:

1. No Action Required

2. Probation
3. Suspension
4. Expulsion

### **7.8.2 No Action Required**

No Action Required means that the information provided to the Training Department was insufficient or unfounded.

### **7.8.3 Probation**

Probation status requires that a course survey letter be sent to every student the member registers; it does not restrict or preclude the member from teaching courses. This status can be placed on the member without notification to the member and is generally a short term period of time. Probation status is used when information is brought to the attention of the Training Department that suggests a member may not be conducting themselves according to the standards or ethics of SDI/TDI/ERDI. A member may also be placed on probation without written documentation by the complainant, at the discretion of the Training Department.

### **7.8.4 Suspension**

Members placed on suspension status are not allowed to teach at any level for a period of time or under conditions determined by the Training Department.

These conditions, along with the reasons they are being placed on suspension, will be provided to the Member in writing. Members may be placed on suspension status immediately upon receipt of a complaint as determined in the absolute and sole discretion of the Training Department. Upon receipt of written notice of suspension, the member shall have fifteen days to respond to the allegations serving as the basis for the suspension and the Training Department shall complete its investigation into the allegations after receipt of the Member's response.

### **7.8.5 Expelled**

Expelled members are indefinitely prohibited from teaching SDI/TDI/ERDI programs. Members may be expelled immediately upon receipt of a complaint of serious misconduct and/or violations of the standards or ethics of International Training as determined in the absolute and sole discretion of the Training Department. Expulsions can only be approved

by the president of International Training after the Training Department has performed a complete investigation.

All QA issues are to be kept confidential and not shared with outside instructors or facilities unless authorized by HQ Training Department. Regional Offices and Sales Managers may be asked to assist in acquiring information about the QA issues.

A provisional status or remedial training requires the file be kept open until all requirements have been met.

## **7.9 Required Subject Area for all Instructor Courses**

1. Review of the Instructor Package.
2. History of TDI.
3. Offices:
  - a. Locations.
  - b. Rules for teaching in other areas of the world.
4. TDI Code of Ethics and Conduct.
5. Products and Procedures:
  - a. How to place an order.
  - b. How to fill out student registrations.
  - c. Yearly renewals.
6. Liability and Insurance:
  - a. Risk management.
  - b. Waivers and releases.
7. Filling out an Accident Report.

## **7.10 Definitions**

### **Supervision**

1. **Direct supervision:** Visual observation and evaluation of participant skill introduction and development during diving activities by an instructor or certified assistant. Direct supervision requires personal observation and evaluation of the skills introduced and developed in the program. During skills introduction and development, direct supervision requires the participant to be accompanied underwater. During the initial introductory scuba dive, direct supervision requires an instructor to accompany the

participant underwater and be in control of the participant. Subsequent dives may be led by a certified assistant with reduced ratios as required by the training organization.

2. **Indirect supervision:** The overall control, general observation, evaluation and direction of the participant skill performance and participant diving activities. The instructor must be personally present at the dive site and be prepared to come to the aid of a participant.

### **7.11 Forms**

TDI Forms are to be used for training courses where applicable. Equivalent documents, not produced by TDI, are not acceptable without prior authorization from TDI Headquarters. Authorization to use non-TDI forms must be applied for prior to commencement of training and will only be granted under circumstances such as:

1. A Form not available in a language the student or instructor understands.
2. A Form is superseded by document(s) produced under local regulations.

### **7.12 Exams**

The required score for all students taking any TDI Diver level or leadership course exam is 80%, with 100% remediation of any incorrect answers required by the course instructor. Alternate exams, where produced, are also to be used when a student's score is below 80%.

### **7.13 Existing CCR Instructor - Unit Crossover/Upgrade**

**Note:** Approval is subject to headquarters training department review and the unit manufacturer's authority.

Current TDI Rebreather instructors who wish cross over to another TDI approved Rebreather must complete an entry level instructor course with a qualified Instructor Trainer on the unit they wish to cross over to.

To qualify for a unit crossover, applicants must:

1. Be an active TDI Instructor on another CCR unit at the level they are applying for.
2. Verify formal training with the manufacturer or a TDI recognized agency at diver level on the unit for which the rating is being applied for.
3. Verify a minimum of 50 hours experience on the unit for which the rating is being applied for.
4. After Air Diluent Decompression unit specific instructor training has been completed, instructors can apply directly to TDI for higher TDI Instructor ratings they hold on other

rebreathers. In order to qualify, they must have assisted with at least one complete TDI course at the level and on the unit being applied for, and meet the following requirements:

- a. CCR Helitrox Instructor-Unit Specific:
    - i. TDI CCR Helitrox or higher instructor on another unit.
    - ii. Have issued at least 2 diver certifications on the unit applying for.
  - b. CCR Mixed Gas and Advanced Mixed Gas Instructor-Unit Specific:
    - i. TDI CCR Mixed Gas Instructor or Advanced Mixed Gas respectively on another unit.
    - ii. Have issued at least 4 diver level certifications on the unit applying for.
5. Current TDI Kiss CCR instructors upgrading to teach the Kiss Sidewinder must complete an academic session covering unit build, hose routing, donning and doffing, and a minimum of 120 minutes open water training over a minimum of 2 dives with a qualified IT. Instructor must also provide proof of 600 minutes bottom time on the unit over at least 10 dives prior to upgrading instructor rating.

**CCR Instructor Trainers crossing over from a different unit must meet the requirements above and certify at least 5 divers at each level they are applying for.**

### ***7.14 Requirements for Dive Leader Crossovers***

Dive leaders associated with another recognized scuba training agency must provide a copy of their active ratings with the other agency.

- If they have been inactive for less than five years, they must secure a letter from that agency, stating what requirements must be completed prior to reinstatement with that agency.
- If they have been inactive for more than five years, they must secure a letter from that agency stating what requirements must be completed prior to reinstatement with that agency. Due to the length of inactivity, they will be required to complete an IEC for the level they wish to cross over.
- All crossover candidates must also complete the online crossover program (if it is available in their language), complete the appropriate crossover application, and submit it along with proof of current leadership rating(s), insurance (if required in their geographical location), and documentation they have completed the online program. They will then be required to complete the crossover program with a qualified individual\*. This can be completed either in person or via a web conference (if administrative).

\* Qualified individuals are defined for each crossover level as follows:

- Instructor crossover with evaluation – Instructor Trainer qualified to level needing evaluation.
- Instructor crossover (administrative) –Instructor Trainer, Regional Representative, or Headquarters/Regional Office Staff Member.

**Note:** All TDI crossovers are subject to Training Department approval, and many will require an evaluation with a qualified TDI Instructor Trainer. Please contact the Training Department prior to conducting a TDI crossover for verification of ratings and requirements if there are any questions.

### **7.15 Two Year Renewal/Refresher Policy**

Instructors and instructor trainers must teach a course at their highest level every 2 years from the date they last taught that course. If a course is not taught within that two-year period, teaching status for that level will be inactive and the instructor or IT must attend an update to regain active status for that level. Members usually affected by this policy are those who have not renewed as TDI members for 2 or more years. However, members who are actively teaching lower ratings but not at their highest level may also be affected for that level.

The following information details how members can regain fully active status either by verifying activity at an equivalent level with another recognized agency or by completing an update with an instructor trainer.

**When an update with an IT is required, the following criteria applies:**

1. **TDI open circuit (non-overhead):** Update covers the specific TDI rating and includes all lower level TDI non-overhead open circuit ratings as follows:
  - a. Advanced Trimix.
  - b. Trimix.
  - c. Extended Range.
  - d. Decompression Procedures.
  - e. Advanced Nitrox.
  - f. Intro To Tech.
  - g. Nitrox.
2. **TDI Open-Circuit (overhead):** Update covers the specific TDI rating and includes all lower level TDI *overhead* open circuit ratings and SDI ratings (*except CPR*). \*A 'Nitrox only' update does not cover SDI ratings unless dives are conducted.

3. **TDI Semi-Closed and Closed-Circuit Rebreather:** Update covers the Unit Specific TDI SCR or CCR rating and includes all lower-level Unit Specific ratings and SDI ratings (*except CPR*).
4. TDI gas blender and service technician instructor ratings require a separate update for each level.

#### **Renewal Policy for Inactive Members of TDI**

1. For an instructor who is a member of TDI and has not renewed for 2 or more years *but has been teaching with another recognized scuba certification agency*, the requirement for renewal includes ALL of the following:
  - a. Successfully complete the on-line professional familiarization course (code issued by headquarters).
  - b. Purchase or verify possession of all current teaching materials for ratings held.
  - c. Complete and submit membership renewal & agreement form for the current year.
  - d. Submit a *TDI Member Update* Form detailing activity as a scuba instructor during the period, including verification of teaching activity at equivalent ratings with another recognized agency during the past 2 years.
  - e. Verify no quality assurance issues with any other agency during the period of inactivity with TDI.
2. For an instructor who is a member of TDI and has not renewed for 2 or more years and has not been teaching with another recognized scuba certification agency, the requirement for renewal includes ALL of the following:
  - a. Successfully complete the on-line professional familiarization course (code issued by headquarters).
  - b. Purchase or verify possession of all current teaching materials for ratings held.
  - c. Complete and submit membership renewal and agreement form for the current year.
  - d. Verify no quality assurance issues with any other agency during the past 2 years.
  - e. Complete SDI Instructor Evaluation Course (IEC) or relevant TDI/ERDI leadership level course Skill Performance & Graduation Requirements (at highest level held) as an update with a qualified active teaching status TDI Instructor Trainer.
  - f. Submit a completed Member Update form, signed by the instructor trainer who completed the update.
  - g. Submit a current medical signed by a licensed physician with no restrictions or limitations for scuba diving.

- h. Submit verification of current CPR and first aid training.

**Active Teaching Status Policy for TDI Members Who Have Maintained Renewal**

1. For an instructor who is a member of TDI and has maintained renewal but not taught or assisted at their highest level for 2 or more years and *has been teaching at an equivalent level with another recognized scuba certification agency*, the requirements for regaining active teaching status are as follows:
  - a. Purchase or verify possession of all current teaching materials for ratings held.
  - b. Submit a *TDI Member Update* form detailing activity as a scuba instructor during the period, including verification of teaching activity at equivalent ratings with another recognized agency during the past 2 years.
  - c. Verify no quality assurance issues with any other agency during the period.

**Or**

- d. Have a current and active TDI Instructor Trainer (qualified to the same levels) submit a Member Update form verifying an update has been completed.
2. For an instructor who is a member of TDI and has maintained renewal but not taught or assisted at their highest level for 2 or more years and *has **not** been teaching at an equivalent level with another recognized scuba certification agency*, the requirements for regaining active teaching status are as follows:
  - a. Verify no quality assurance issues with any other agency during the past 2 years.
  - b. Complete the relevant TDI/ERDI leadership level course skill performance and graduation requirements (at highest level held) as an update with a qualified active teaching status TDI Instructor Trainer
  - c. Submit a completed Member Update Form, signed by the instructor trainer who completed the update.
  - c. Submit a current medical signed by a licensed physician with no restrictions or limitations for scuba diving.
  - d. Submit verification of current CPR and first aid training.

Note: Additional requirements and documentation may be required once the application for renewal has been reviewed by the headquarters training department, or regional office. Members who have been inactive for 5 or more years may have additional requirements to regain active status and must contact the Training Department.

**Online codes can be obtained from headquarters for any and all of the aforementioned procedures at no charge.**

Instructor trainers wishing to renew IT status after an inactive period of 2 years or longer at that level must attend an Instructor Trainer Workshop (or IT crossover program) conducted by TDI Headquarters Training Department Staff (no charge is made for this). Additionally, the requirements of renewing at the corresponding instructor level must also be met.

## TDI Standards and Procedures

### Part 1: Introduction

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SDI Divemasters, SDI Assistant Instructors, TDI Divemasters and ERDI Supervisors who have not been active with SDI/TDI/ERDI in over 2 years must follow the same procedures as instructors. However, where an IT signoff is required, any SDI Instructor can sign.