

Renewal of Diver Medic Certification During the COVID-19 Pandemic – Rev. 1

This Information Note supersedes Information Note IMCA D 05/20 *Renewal of Diver Medic Certification During the COVID-19 Pandemic* which is withdrawn.

It is IMCA Members' responsibility to conduct their operations safely and in compliance with all applicable national laws and regulations.

A. Background

IMCA recognises diver medic training courses provided by a number of establishments (listed at <https://www.imca-int.com/diver-medic-courses>) which have been audited in accordance with guidance note *IMCA Scheme for Recognition of Diver Medic Training – Guidance for training establishments* (IMCA D 020). These establishments issue IMCA recognised Diver Medic Technician (DMT) certificates which are normally valid for a two-year period and therefore diver medics are required to undertake DMT refresher training at intervals of two years (see information notes *IMCA D 05/13* and *IMCA D 10/13* for more information).

'Renewal' is normally required as follows:

1. **Within the final three months of validity**, a refresher course can be carried out and the validity date of the new certificate will run for a further two years from the expiry date of the old certificate.
2. **For up to eight weeks after the expiry of a certificate**, a refresher course can be undertaken. The validity date of the new certificate will run for a further two years from the expiry date of the old certificate.

These additional eight weeks are to allow for unforeseen circumstances that prevent a refresher course being undertaken during the final three months of a certificate's validity – it is not recommended that individuals plan in advance to undertake the refresher course during this period.

3. **After eight weeks following expiry of a certificate**, the full course should be undertaken again.

B. Former IMCA Policy for the Validity of Diver Medic Certification During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the prevalence of Covid-19 increased globally during the spring of 2020, it became clear that many diver medics would be unable to attend a DMT refresher course within the two-year interval through no fault of their own. Given this unprecedented situation, and in an effort to assist its Members, diver medics, and the industry, IMCA's Diving Division Management Committee (DDMC) agreed that for IMCA recognised DMT certificates issued on or after 01 February 2018, the period of validity for such certificates may be temporarily extended to 30 September 2020.

Information Note IMCA D 05/20 *Renewal of Diver Medic Certification During the COVID-19 Pandemic* advised all those wishing to extend an IMCA recognised DMT certificate issued on or after 01 February 2018 to contact the training establishment which issued the certificate and request a temporary certificate of extension to 30 September 2020.

IMCA D 05/20 also noted that once a temporary certificate of extension to 30 September 2020 had been issued, the renewal process set out in points 1, 2 and 3 of Section A above would then need to be followed. Following a suitable refresher course, the validity date of the new certificate would run for a further two-years from the expiry date of the original certificate i.e. the one that was issued prior to the temporary certificate of extension.

For more details, please contact:

Bryan.McGlinchy@imca-int.com

Issue date:

August 2020

Document reference(s):

Diving Division

IMCA D 05/20 Rev. 1

*The information contained herein is given for guidance only and endeavours to reflect best industry practice.
For the avoidance of doubt no legal liability shall attach to any guidance and/or recommendation and/or statement herein contained.*

Information Note IMCA D 05/20 emphasised that IMCA is responsible only for the approval of diver medic courses and, as part of that, defining acceptance criteria for individuals to be able to sit initial and refresher courses. It reminded those unable to undertake a refresher course within the validity period of their IMCA recognised DMT certificate that they must check with their employing contractor and, where appropriate, with the relevant national authority, to determine the acceptability of working as a diver medic without a valid in-date certificate.

C. Present IMCA Policy for the Validity of IMCA Diver Medic Certification During the COVID-19 Pandemic

IMCA has now undertaken a review of its policy on the validity of diver medic certification during the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. IMCA's current policy on the issue is as follows.

It is IMCA Members' responsibility to conduct their operations safely and in compliance with all applicable national laws and regulations. A number of countries in the world have national regulations, codes and/or standards which require employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities, and people so that employees can be given immediate help if they are injured or taken ill at work. These must always be complied with.

Normalisation Policy for the Validity of IMCA Diver Medic Certification

IMCA Members cannot keep accepting temporary certificates of extension to the validity of IMCA DMT certificates for an indefinite period in the absence of suitable refresher training. Diving contractors have a responsibility to ensure that the persons they employ as Diver Medical Technicians remain competent for the role. Extending the validity of expired DMT certification for a limited period without suitable face-to-face practical refresher training has been a risk balanced temporary measure. It cannot continue indefinitely due to concerns of skill fade.

While the theoretical aspects of DMT refresher training may be delivered by online distance learning methods, practical clinical skills training and assessment cannot be satisfactorily undertaken entirely online. **After 30 September 2020 the normal IMCA requirements for renewal of DMT certification will apply** i.e. the certification and re-certification of diver medics will require individuals to attend and pass an IMCA approved diver medic training course which incorporates suitable face-to-face practical clinical skills training and assessment.

D. Concerns About the Availability and Accessibility of IMCA Approved Diver Medic Training Courses Which Incorporate Face-to-Face Practical Clinical Skills Training and Assessment

When IMCA's initial policy on the renewal of Diver Medic certification during the COVID-19 pandemic was developed in the spring of 2020, it was clear that owing to national government restrictions on travel and on the gathering of people indoors, many, if not all, training providers would be unable to run classroom based face-to-face DMT refresher courses for a significant period of time. Lockdown restrictions and quarantine requirements implemented by the authorities in many countries also prevented divers from travelling to the locations of DMT training courses that were available.

It was envisaged that, as the pandemic passed its peak and declined in many parts of the world, lockdown restrictions would steadily ease, and the availability and accessibility of diver medic courses would become unproblematic. In many countries, this has happened, but there are now a number of countries where restrictions were initially eased but have since been re-tightened in response to locally rising rates of SARS-CoV-2 infection. At the time of writing this is particularly true of the Asia-Pacific region.

The present circumstances are complex, and there is understandable concern that with the upcoming normalisation of IMCA policy for the validity of IMCA diver medic certification, some divers may find it impossible to renew their DMT certification before expiry of their current certificates (or expiry of their temporary certificates of extension). There is unfortunately nothing that IMCA can do to remedy the situation.

If some divers cannot attend and pass an IMCA approved diver medic training course which incorporates suitable face-to-face practical clinical skills training and assessment before the expiry of their present certificates, it remains the responsibility of Members and their clients to consider suitable alternative arrangements. In all cases, the health, safety and welfare of the divers must be paramount.