



# COVID - 19 PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND EQUIPMENT DISINFECTION PROTOCOL

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## I.- CONTEXT

The new coronavirus, known as SARS-CoV-2, is the major cause of the COVID-19 diseases and has killed hundreds of thousands of people around the world. The spread of the virus from human to human occurs through respiratory droplets (coughing, sneezing, talking) and touching contaminated surfaces.

Medical experts believe that the vaccine for COVID-19 has contributed to reducing the lethality of the virus and all its variants, however, the disease still continues to spread. The impact of social distancing and "flattening the curve" has helped keep people safe and avoid overwhelming medical resources, but it has also had a massive economic impact on society. This impact has been especially felt in the diving industry, as it is based on consumer discretionary spending. Also, for many divers, their interest in diving is strongly related to the ability to travel internationally.

The diver or student diver should feel safe before going to a store to buy equipment or training, board a dive boat, or just fun dive. For the foreseeable future, this will mean continuing to wear face masks in public, social distancing in dive shops, fewer passengers spread out on dive boats, an emphasis on online training where possible or smaller class sizes, to contribute to the reduction of chances of infection.

## II.- PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

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This document aims to summarize all the measures implemented by Dive Nicaragua, School of Diving and Marine Ecology to:

- Reduce the risk of infection for diver clients and employees.
- Reorganize work and activities to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the dive center and classroom.
- Build trust with our diving clients.
- Update the Emergency Action Plan to face a new context.

## III.- DOCUMENT CONTENT

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To fulfill the required work and meet the established objectives, a main section has been prepared that includes preventive measures to avoid the spread of Covid 19 within our clients and collaborators.

We have detailed the actions, procedures and measures that have been taken at the dive center and at the school to reduce the possibility of spread and infection.

## **IV.- GENERAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

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### **1.- At the Diving Center**

#### **a.- arrival at the dive center**

When clients arrive at the center, they should have washed their hands with soap and water. At the entrance they should always rub their hands with an alcohol-based disinfectant solution and wear a face mask.

#### **b.- dive equipment**

The equipment of each diver will be carried in separate bags, with a label indicating the name of each diver. Divers should have already read this information document upon receiving the equipment. Divers can also inform the Instructor / Dive Master how much weight they need to dive, and if they use built-in weights or need a weight belt. The professional will have it ready the day of the dive.

#### **c.- board the boat**

When they arrive to dive, our professional Instructors/Dive Masters will already have the tanks ready for them on the boat, the pool or the lagoon. Each of the tank valves will be sanitized at the filling station. Professionals should sanitize their hands with alcohol and wear face masks to grasp the tanks by the valves.

Customers, and customers only, are responsible for the handling and assembly of their equipment. Assistance will be provided only if requested by the diver. Additionally, our professional Instructors/Dive Masters will ensure that all divers disinfect their hands with alcohol before boarding.

The regulator must be protected from possible infection. The second two stages should be placed with the BCD facing down to avoid contamination when setting up the equipment in the tank. The mask and snorkel must be kept at all times with the diver's equipment to avoid contamination.

#### **d.- payment**

All diving packages and/or courses must be paid for before arrival. Clients who wish to pay for additional services, additional dives, equipment rental or any other will make electronic transfers, deposits or payments. Contactless payment methods will be preferred, such as credit cards, or bank transfers.

#### **e.- compressor operation**

The compressor room should be operated by only one person, which reduces the possibility of infection by circulating fewer people through the compressor room, especially where the air inlet is. The intake is elevated above ground level at least 5 m, to avoid the suction of infected air near people.

The compressor dust filter should be changed regularly and changed dust filters should not be reused. The internal filter of the compressor that we use is a filter with the capacity to reduce the suction and compression of viruses.

#### **f.- filling room**

The access to the filling room is restricted. The room must always be extremely clean and must be different from where full or empty tanks are stored. When tanks return after dives, professionals should wash and disinfect them with fresh water and alcohol. After washing, the filling operator will take the tanks to fill them, following a protocol to be described later. In the filling room or filling station, there should be a disinfectant solution (soap),

70% alcohol, clean water, disposable cotton, disinfected masks, and replaceable gloves. Areas must be extremely clean and only one person should be allowed in.

The filling operator must follow this protocol to fill the tanks:

- Wash hands with soap and water before working with tanks.
- Have a face mask in place ALWAYS when working with tanks,
- Use cotton to apply alcohol to the fill ports and valves of the tanks, wait two or three minutes for the alcohol to evaporate.
- Allow at least 2 minutes for alcohol to evaporate before filling.
- Purge the tank to clean the disinfectant or alcohol from inside the valve.
- Connect fill ports to tanks.
- Fill the tanks.

## 2.- On the boats

### a.- group size

The maximum number of divers on our boat is 14 divers including our Instructors/Dive Masters.

### b.- distribution by side

Divers should be assigned 7 per side, leaving 2 tank depots between them. If two tanks are to be exited, one of the two remaining empty tank magazines will be used for the second tank. The Dive Masters and instructors will have a place at the bottom of the boat for their teams.

### c.- mask defog

Spitting on masks is no longer allowed. Defogging solutions or "shampoo" should be used. If a diver spits out the mask, they should rinse it off the boat, away from the rest of the group.

### d.- fruits and snacks.

The fruits will be split with due care to avoid contaminating them. A single person should be in charge of cutting and distributing fruits and drinks, thus reducing the risk of infection.

### e.- waste

A waste container/bag will be available on the boat for garbage. The captain will be in charge of properly disposing of the waste at the end of the operation.

### f.- disinfection of handrails

All boat interiors shall be disinfected with 70% alcohol prior to the arrival of the divers. The captain shall be the person responsible for this task and shall ensure that:

- All metal handrails are rubbed with alcohol.
- Areas of constant contact (seats, ladder, etc) are disinfected.

Once the boat returns to the dock and all divers have left the boat, the captains will wash the boat with soap and water and all handrails and constant contact areas will be disinfected for the last time.

g.- after diving

When the boat returns to the dock, each client will take care of their equipment. Masks, snorkels and regulators must be placed by each diver in their bags.

The professionals will take care of the empty tanks, and the captains will wash the boat with soap and water, and then disinfect the handrails and constant contact areas once again.

### **3.- In the classroom**

Face-to-face classes will be replaced by online or eLearning options when available, so the time people will be in a closed environment will be reduced as much as possible.

For those courses that do not have On Line or eLearning options, face-to-face classes will be held in our large classroom, with social distancing, in which the following measures will be followed:

- a.- The instructor and students **MUST** wash their hands before entering the classroom.
- b.- After washing they should apply alcohol on their hands.
- c.- Face masks should **ALWAYS** be worn inside the classroom.
- d.- Instructors and each student **MUST** have an individual table for the entire course, and must have their own set of materials, books, tools, pencil, pen, pencil, eraser, calculator, eRDPml, RDP and not share during class,
- e.- At the beginning and end of each class, students and the instructor should disinfect their table, tools and materials with cotton and 70% alcohol.
- f.- Laptops cannot be used by more than one person, and must be disinfected with alcohol every day.

Individual tables should be placed at a distance of 1.5 m from each other, and no more than seven people (six students and the instructor) should be in the classroom at the same time. For courses that require the use of special equipment or tools, such as Nitrox analyzers, oxygen equipment, cameras, compasses, etc., each piece of equipment should be disinfected with 70% alcohol before being handled by the next student. Instructors must ensure that disinfection is carried out correctly.

For courses where rescue breathing or air exchange is involved, such as EFR - primary and secondary care, Rescue Diver and Dive Master Course, further disinfection should be implemented before using the necessary tools and materials, and the skills related to breathing or air exchange should be adapted as indicated by the certifying agency (EFR or PADI) in recent training bulletins.