

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED: Work permits for foreign diving professionals working in the Egyptian diving industry

Can foreign diving professionals in Egypt obtain a CDWS card without a work permit?

No, they cannot obtain a CDWS card without a work permit. By law, all foreign nationals working in Egypt must have a work permit. The Ministry of Labour requested that CDWS comply with the law by making a work permit compulsory for all holders of CDWS cards.

How do foreign diving professionals obtain a work permit?

Foreign dive professionals do not submit a request for a work permit. The whole process has to be done by the company owning the diving business. The process is complex and involves the following steps:

1. Obtaining approval from the Ministry of Labour for the number of work permits required by the company. The law stipulates that the number of work permits should not exceed of the ratio of one foreign worker per every Egyptian employee registered in the company's social insurance records. However, CDWS managed to change this ratio within the diving sector which means three work permits for every ten Egyptian employees socially insured with the company. To get this approval, the company must send a request to the CDWS for its supporting letter, together with social insurance Form Number Two as proof of number of socially insured Egyptian employees. For more information email Sinai.membership@cdws.travel.
2. The company then has to submit the CDWS supporting letter to the Ministry of Labour in Cairo and wait for approval from the Minister of Labour. The Minister of Labour sees each approval request case by case personally. This process usually takes between one week to one month.
3. Once the company has obtained this approval specifying the number of work permits, it can start working on individual procedures for each staff member it wants to employ. The member operation should fill in, sign and stamp the request form for a certificate of experience request for each foreign worker. This costs 200LE per individual experience certification. Involvement of the CDWS in the process is no longer needed once these certificates of experience have been obtained.
4. For each individual work permit, the centre must hold the experience certification from CDWS together with all the other necessary documents for each permit, including professional diving licence and copy of passport. Work Permits for South Sinai employees should be processed in the El Tur Labour Office, for Red Sea Governorates, this should be done in the Hurghada Labour Office. The Cairo Investment

Authority labour Office processes applications for companies operating in areas in Egypt under Law 8 1997.

Can you explain what CDWS has done to make it easier for foreign diving professionals in Egypt to secure a work permit?

As well as increasing the ratio to three foreign workers for every ten socially insured Egyptian employees at each company, the CDWS has made the process easier with supporting letters. These letters strengthen the case for Ministry of Labour approval.

There are also other areas where we have worked hard to make it as easy as possible for diving professionals to work in Egypt. It used to be the case that those requesting a work permit had to leave the country and come back with a fresh visa for application, a process known as Estqdam. CDWS managed to get a waiver on having to leave the country during the process.

Also, CDWS convinced the Minister of Labour that once a diving professional has submitted Form Number Four and obtained a green receipt for this as proof of work permit processing, the individual could legally obtain a CDWS card.

What if there is a delay? Can foreign diving professionals work while waiting for the work permit application process to be completed?

Yes, as long as they have sufficient proof of application. As previously explained, diving professionals can obtain a CDWS card once they receive the green receipt for Form Number Four. This proves they have begun the process of obtaining their work permit. The green receipt can be obtained before the results of the HIV test are available.

Usually employees of companies under Law 159 can obtain a green receipt within one week of the work permit application. For companies under Law 8, this may take around two weeks.

If you have any problems or questions regarding the green receipt needed for your CDWS card, email the CDWS membership service sinai.membership@cdws.travel.

What is the approximate cost of an individual work permit?

CDWS fees are set at 200LE per work permit, covering experience certification and other administration costs. CDWS has no control or involvement in the additional costs needed to obtain a work permit.

Approximate costs of each work permit are as follows:

*Approximately 1,520LE must be paid to the Labour office for the working visa application, together with receipts and stamps.

*The HIV test which has to be completed by all those requesting a work permit costs approximately 100LE.

*Tourist investment fee is approximately 100LE, covering security checks on

individuals.

*Companies operating under Law 8 pay an additional 100LE for tourist investment charges.

*The six-month resident stamp costs approximately 75LE. For each additional six months this costs approximately 70LE on top of the first fee.

*In addition to the approximate costs as outlined above (between 1,900 and 2,000LE), are the logistical costs, such as going back and forth to the labour offices and any tips requested during the process from lawyers or other people involved in the process.

Does it matter which diving training agency qualification you have when the dive business you work for applies for your work permit?

Any diving training agency that is a European Underwater Federation member or recognised by the World Scuba Training Council is accepted. So if you are a qualified professional with these agencies, you qualify to work in diving with regards to your qualification and experience.

Do you have to be a qualified instructor to obtain a work permit or can you legally work as a dive guide?

Those recognised as a qualified professional dive guide are eligible for a work permit. It must be noted, however, that dive professionals do not apply for the work permit themselves. It is the business that owns the dive centre that applies for the permits.

How does the work permit requirement affect freelance diving professionals?

A CDWS member operation has to be the applicant for the freelancer. The freelancer can still work for other dive centres with this card. Individuals cannot apply for work permits; all applications must be done through a CDWS member centre.

Can CDWS member centres obtain work permits for counter staff?

Yes. Currently the Ministry of Labour accepts work permit applications for counter staff, however, it has claimed that it this will be stopped soon. CDWS will of course try to work to make sure this doesn't change and counter staff still qualify for permits.

How does the work permit requirement affect underwater videographers?

Videographers must have a CDWS card if they are working. This can be obtained through a CDWS member business or through their own licensed

video companies.

If you have a work permit for other employment other than diving, but are a qualified diving professional can you obtain a CDWS card with this permit?

No. Only those with a work permit for diving employment legally qualify for a CDWS card.