

Egypt gets down to raising standards

EGYPT'S NEW CHAMBER OF DIVING & WATERSPORTS says it is getting to grips with ensuring that all Red Sea dive centres and liveboards conform to a set of European standards.

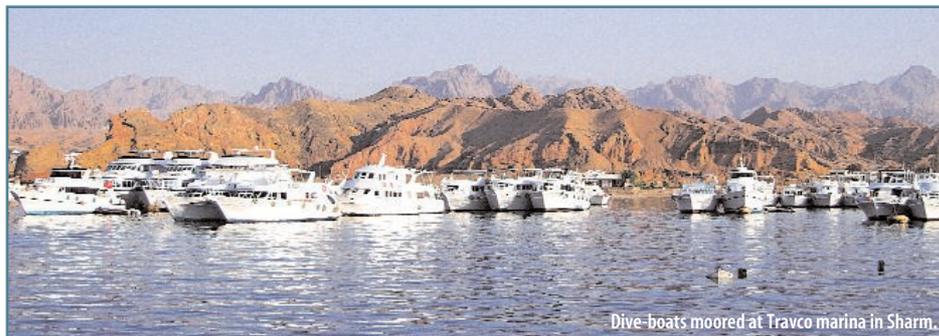
The CDWS is an official body set up last summer under the auspices of the Egyptian Tourist Federation to regulate and support the Red Sea diving and watersports industries.

Such work had previously been left to non-governmental organisations such as the Red Sea Association and HEPCA.

All dive centres and safari boats are required to join the CDWS or be refused an operating licence from the Ministry of Tourism after November. To date 320 dive centres and 80 liveboards hold membership.

CDWS has adopted the European Standard EN 14467 for recreational scuba-diving service providers, which defines requirements in training and education; organised and guided diving for certified divers; and equipment rental.

For example, equipment must be CE-marked and maintained according to the manufacturer's recommendations by a trained person, including record-keeping. The equipment must be suitable for the planned dive and must fit the diver.



Dive-boats moored at Travco marina in Sharm.

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Air has to meet gas-purity standards. On site, there are minimum requirements for training levels of guides and instructors, first-aid kits, oxygen kits and communications equipment.

While such measures may be taken for granted by divers booking through a specialist tour operator, they should provide a level of reassurance for independently travelling divers.

To qualify for or renew CDWS membership, all centres or boats must pass a two-to-four-day audit of services, documentation, premises, equipment, files and staff. A team of nine independent auditors is carrying out the checks.

The CDWS team will also look at issues of sustainability, investigate incidents, issue safety recommendations, and promote Egyptian diving in

Europe, such as the Red Sea Zone at Dive 2008.

Issues currently under consideration include Sharm el Sheikh's jetties, illegal fishing, mooring lines at dive sites, opening of new dive sites at Tiran, and search and rescue service improvements.

The chamber is managed by a board of 15 directors – 10 elected by dive centres and five government appointees, typically from the armed forces, chambers and environmental organisations.

"I look at the audit process as one of quality improvement," said Hesham Gabr Ali, CDWS board member and manager of Camel Dive Centre in Sharm. "The role of CDWS is to help all diving and watersports businesses provide a quality service.

"There are provisions for enforcement, but they will be applied only as a last resort." ■



Hesham Gabr Ali: "Provisions for enforcement... are a last resort."

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BRITON CHARGED OVER DEATH IN CYPRUS

A BRITISH NATIONAL HAS BEEN CHARGED with causing the death of a snorkeller by dangerous driving of a powerboat off Cyprus.

The incident, which occurred in mid-July, killed 21-year-old Neophytos Demosthenous, who had been spear-fishing with his brother Mario, 20, said the *Cyprus Mail*. Police said that the snorkellers had taken all necessary

precautions, including the deployment of red SMBs. But at around 2.50pm Demosthenous was hit by the fast-moving boat, which failed to stop.

He was retrieved from the seabed at 12m by divers from a nearby boat, and rushed to hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

The British national was later identified by Mario Demosthenous as

Christopher Sherofflasky, 55. He has lived in Cyprus with his wife and three children for the past eight years.

Sherofflasky was arrested but denied any involvement in the incident, said the *Cyprus Mail*. However, Paphos District Court was told that his boat had been moving at high speed when its propeller hit Demosthenous.

A trial date was set for 9 October. ■

Cayman Islands drowning not fully explained

AN INQUEST HAS HEARD HOW A BRITISH DIVER lost her life in the Cayman Islands earlier this year after getting into difficulties on the seabed.

Tina Baxter, 47, who worked as a ward matron at Burnley General and Royal Blackburn Hospitals, died after taking a diving excursion from a cruise ship. She had been on a voyage with her mother.

Baxter, who held PADI Open Water and Rescue Diver qualifications, and had completed more than 100 dives on holidays around the world, buddied up with

another Briton, Donald Attridge, from Bridlington.

Attridge, who works on North Sea oil rigs, qualified as a PADI Open Water diver last November and was on his seventh or eighth dive since qualification.

Diving with a group from the ship, the pair were on the seabed at about 20m when, the inquest heard, Baxter signalled that she had a problem breathing. Attridge signalled to ask whether she wished to surface, and she replied that she did.

The pair made a buoyant controlled ascent with Baxter

breathing from her own air supply. They reportedly ascended quickly, in close contact. Attridge recalled that, on surfacing, Baxter was conscious, with her regulator still in her mouth.

However, after he had towed her some way towards the dive-boat, he realised that her regulator had fallen from her mouth and that she was unconscious.

A Royal Cayman Islands Police statement to the inquest recorded that, when examined by a governmental diving unit, Baxter's equipment was found to be in good working order. Dive-boat crew had

noted that her regulator purged correctly as her BC was brought aboard.

Addressing the confusing issue of how Baxter could have had difficulty breathing from seemingly normal equipment, the coroner said that it was possible that she had become unwell for some reason not picked up at the post mortem, which found that she had died from drowning.

The coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death.

As *DIVER* went to press, a separate inquest in the Cayman Islands had yet to take place. ■