



# Atlanta Underwater Explorers

## AUE Bubbles

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The Atlanta Underwater Explorers, P. O. Box 55048, Atlanta, GA 30308 [www.diveaue.org](http://www.diveaue.org)

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*Stiff current and many jellyfish in the water - Panama City Beach 2016*

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*"I'm extremely hesitant to abort a dive for any reason, but I recently got a wake-up call I won't forget."*

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## A Wake-Up Call: When to Abort a Dive

*By Laura King*



**None of us wants to call a dive, but in order to stay safe (and have fun), it's best to know your limits.**

I have been diving for 20 years, and consider myself to be a competent diver, confident in my abilities and comfortable in the water. But as they say, complacency breeds contempt. Like other divers, I'm extremely hesitant to abort a dive for any reason, but I recently got a wake-up call I won't soon forget. I was diving off the coast of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on an absolutely beautiful day and on a deep wreck.

When I jumped in the water, I instantly noticed the ripping current. I cannot do a negative descent, as I always need to grab my camera rig from the divemaster. By the time I had done so, the current had pushed me half the boat length back. I started descending at an angle, trying to get below the current, while making my way to the descent line and maintaining a good visual on my buddy. I soon realized that the current was not letting up and – in fact – worsened the deeper I went.

### What happened?

My fantastic buddy, a PADI Instructor whom I'd never dived with before, stayed level with me and kept his eyes on me the entire time. When I got to the bottom, the line was still about 40 feet ahead of me. I was kicking with all my might; my legs were starting to burn, and the line didn't seem any closer. I weighed my options: I could abort the dive and make my way to the surface, but I knew in this current I would completely miss the boat. There were about 20 divers in the water, on a 45-minute dive.

## A Wake-Up Call: When to Abort a Dive – Cont.

That meant at least an hour of floating on the surface, in a very strong current, about seven miles off shore. And did I mention the 15-foot layer of jellyfish on the surface? I had to get to that line, no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

I swam as hard as I could, and used my free arm to try and pull me closer. It took me 12 minutes to get to that line, and when I did, I was exhausted. And I had used up 1000psi during my swim. I held onto the line and signaled to my buddy that I needed to catch my breath. He nodded understandingly and stayed right there with me, maintaining eye contact. In a situation like this, eye contact can be unbelievably reassuring.

### When to abort a dive

Once I caught my breath, we went inside the wreck and got a break from the current. After only about 10 minutes, though, I made the call to abort the dive. I've been an instructor for 13 years, and this is the first time in my dive career that I called a dive due to my own personal discomfort, but knowing when to abort a dive is a key part of being a competent diver. I was tired; I wasn't enjoying the dive; and to be honest, I just wanted to get out of the water and relax.

I was the first person out of the water, which shocked the dive crew. I told them exactly what happened and that I just felt I didn't want to continue with the dive. It's essential to know your own limits. If you are feeling uncomfortable, you should end the dive and get out of the water. There's no need to be a hero and continue on with a dive.

This experience also reminded me of the importance of a good dive buddy. It's essential to be self-reliant underwater, and everyone can benefit from taking the Rescue Diver course, which makes you a better buddy and teaches you to anticipate problems and avoid them before they happen. But the buddy system is used for a reason, and it's a practice that shouldn't be taken lightly. If you have a buddy who is impatient with you, doesn't watch you and is unreliable in a potentially dangerous situation, then find a new buddy. I was very grateful to have the buddy I had that day, and I have no doubt that had I decided to come up before making my way to the line, he would have come with me.

I went on the second dive that day, which was closer to shore and out of the current, and it was great – I got to swim alongside a nurse shark for a few minutes, with my wonderful buddy right there beside me.

By guest blogger Laura King - Details at: [www.scubadiverlife.com/a-wake-up-call/](http://www.scubadiverlife.com/a-wake-up-call/)



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*It was necessary to pull ourselves down to the wreck. - Panama City Beach 2016*

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*"The experience also reminded me of the importance of a good dive buddy."*

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## Five Bad Scuba Diving Habits



By John Kean

**We all get complacent when it comes to diving, but we shouldn't. Here are five of the worst scuba diving habits you should avoid.**

We've all been guilty of cutting corners when it comes to diving, especially the more experienced we become. We abbreviate or skip buddy checks; we assume the air in our tanks is sound without checking. Some of these bad scuba diving habits are just sloppy, but some can lead to true danger. Here are five bad scuba diving habits and how to break them.

### Skipping the buddy check

The name "buddy check (<http://scubadiverlife.com/diving-fundamentals-buddy-check/>)" makes an important series of tasks sound far too friendly, almost like it's just suggestion rather than a potential life-saving routine. Let's call it what it is, however — a pre-dive safety check. If you can't remember the various acronyms from your open-water course, just visualize a diver and run through your equipment from head to toe.

Does the BCD actually inflate and deflate? Are all the escape valves tightened? Is the air turned on? Are any pull-cords or dumping strings trapped? Do you know how to operate all the fasteners and clips and how to remove the jacket quickly after a dive?

If you're wearing a weight belt, is it on properly? Are your integrated weight pockets snapped securely into your jacket if that's your system?

You can get five breaths from a regulator when the tank is turned off. Do you only press the purge buttons and listen to the hissing sound, or do you look at your pressure gauge and breathe from the second stage? Ensure that your air is on every time, and make the buddy check count rather than just going through the motions.

### Removing your mask and/or regulator upon surfacing

Most of us want to talk as soon as we reach the surface, and why not? You've just seen a whale shark and a couple of mantas! When we arrive at the surface though, we should delay our impulse to chat until we've inflated our jackets, signaled OK to the boat and made sure everyone in our party is also okay.

It's all too easy to whip off your mask and take out your reg, only to get a face and mouth full of salt water. In rough conditions the boat has a limited time to approach, stop, help you and your group on board and keep the craft stable. As the minutes tick by the risk of injury from rear decks, rolling ladders and other divers increase.

Keep your surface habits tight and polished by establishing positive buoyancy immediately, staying together and keeping an eye and an ear out for the guide. Approach the boat deliberately, with your mask and reg in place, and time your exit to avoid others or any hazardous pickups. Once you're safely back on board, chat away.

### Going too deep

## Five Bad Scuba Diving Habits – Cont.

During open-water training, we learn that depth amplifies nearly everything, especially the amount of air we consume.

Although the dive guide has set a maximum depth of 82 feet (25 m), the group stays at 75 feet (23 m). Because you don't yet have your buoyancy under control, you stray to 92 feet (28 m) where you swim, to the annoyance of others, for 15 minutes. Although you argue that it's only 16 feet (5 m), you'll be consuming more air than everyone else and cutting their dive short as well, so don't make it a habit to go deeper than a planned dive profile

You'll improve your buoyancy and air consumption through correct weighting and trim, and by reducing the energy you spend underwater.

### Not analyzing your tanks

The boat is late leaving the jetty and the nitrox analyzer has a flat battery. Ahead of you is a trip to a shipwreck at 98 feet (30 m). Although you and your buddy were planning to dive on 32 percent nitrox, the guide tells you you'll have to dive on air with everyone else, as the dive boat is in danger of missing the light.

But since you've been diving nitrox all week, you're sure the nitrox tank you grab will be fine. It's been reading 32 percent every time, and the guide is probably being overly cautious. So you turn the green and yellow content sticker around and hide it under the wide strap of your BCD. You decide to use the tank without analyzing it. You'll gain a few extra minutes of bottom time and, just in case, you can always do an extra-long safety stop.

Inside the wreck at 91 feet (28 m) your vision distorts and your face muscles twitch. The taste in your mouth is sweet, slightly sugary even. Something is wrong – you turn to your buddy but he's shaking uncontrollably with a convulsion. You have only one thought: What's in our tanks?

You quickly grab him and hoist him towards the surface, stopping half way as he returns to consciousness. You're at 52 feet (16 m) but you want to abort the dive. The guide spots you from below; you point to your ear. He lets you go and continues with the group.

Back on board, you quickly swap tanks, and grab a seat to calm down. Your buddy has a slight chest pain but nothing too much. A zodiac appears alongside the moored-up dive boat. The on board guide recognizes a friend and asks to borrow the zodiac's nitrox analyzer.

He opens one of the nitrox tanks, places the sensor over the valve, and watches in astonishment as the digital display climbs to 50 percent.

The moral of the story: always check your tanks, and always watch the digital display yourself. A few extra minutes of bottom time isn't worth the risk.

### Not paying attention to the rules

There are four laws in scuba diving: Boyle's, (<http://scubadiverlife.com/pioneers-diving-robert-boyle/>) Dalton's, Charles's and...Murphy's. The latter is the one most violated by scuba divers and the biggest cause of instant karma. Forget your camera and you'll see a whale shark. Rush your pre-dive safety check, and you'll drop your belt in the water. The list goes on.

Problems arise when you ignore the little voice in your head telling you to slow down as you unzip your bag, assemble your gear and prepare for your dive. In technical diving courses, I become that voice. I watch my students and steer them toward blunder just to test their knowledge of the rules. Take your time when you're gearing up for a dive, and make sure you've crossed the Ts and dotted the Is.

**BY GUEST AUTHOR JOHN KEAN**

*John Kean is the author of four books. He holds the PADI Master Instructor rating, along with TDI's Advanced Trimix Instructor qualification. Since 1997 he has amassed over 7,000 dives, trained over 2,000 students and project-managed several world record deep dive events.*

Details at: <http://scubadiverlife.com/five-bad-scuba-diving-habits/>



## Thirteen Things You Didn't Know About Scuba Diving Gear - But Should

By Daryl Carson

### Scuba Gear Fun Facts

Divers have an intimate connection to our equipment. But the history, evolution and hidden inner workings of many integral pieces of our collective kit might be a mystery to many of us. Check out these 13 curious details, historical head-scratchers and surprising facts, including why dive watches glow and what the heck is the “Bends-O-Matic?”

1. One of the earliest “dive computers,” **the SOS Decompression Meter**, was completely mechanical and simulated the process of gas absorption in the body. Its sketchy performance earned it the nickname “**Bends-O-Matic.**”
2. The first decompression tables, and the basis for modern dive computer algorithms, were published in 1908 by John Haldane. They were based on simulated dives using a hyperbaric chamber. **The test divers were English goats.**
3. Depth ratings for extreme deep dive watches have exceeded the known depth of the oceans. The Sinn UX is rated to 12,000 meters, **more than 1,000 meters deeper than the Mariana Trench.**
4. Tritium, a radioactive material safely used in tiny quantities to make illuminated markings in many dive watches, **is also used as a “booster” in multi-stage hydrogen bombs.**
5. The rhythmic, **mechanical breathing of Star Wars’ Darth Vader** is iconic. It’s the amplified sound of a scuba regulator.
6. Jacques-Yves Cousteau and Emile Gagnan invented the **Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus in 1943.** It was based on a diaphragm regulator design first developed more than a hundred years before.
7. In 2011, Allen Sherrod, a dive instructor from Florida, spent **48 hours and 13 minutes breathing from a regulator while submerged** off Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Florida. It was a world record time for a saltwater dive at the time.
8. Many warm-water divers use their **octopus as a defense against stinging jellyfish.** A brief purge beneath an oncoming assailant will gently lift it out of the diver’s way.
9. An ancient bas-relief dating back to 900 B.C. shows **Assyrian divers using animal skins filled with air**, which they carried with them to increase the length of their dives.
10. Before the standard power inflator came along, **horse-collar BCs** incorporated small CO2 canisters to provide emergency inflation when needed, just like many personal floatation devices do today.
11. The popular **backplate-and-wing BC design** came as a cave diving innovation and improvement over “belly bags,” which uncomfortably sandwiched divers between an air bladder and a pair of heavy steel tanks.
12. No welding is used in making a **typical aluminum scuba tank.** Instead, a 32-lb. aluminum slug, 7 inches across, is pressed into shape by 2,500 pounds of pressure in just 20 seconds.
13. Everyone knows **LED lights are more efficient than incandescent models.** But how efficient? Tests have shown burn times may average 30 times longer using identical battery power.

For a more-serious look at scuba gear, including the latest reviews and ScubaLab TV videos, check out the **Gear section** of the website.

Details at: <http://www.sportdiver.com/gear/snorkels/thirteen-things-you-didnt-know-about-scuba-diving-gear-should?src=SOC&dom=fb>

## Upcoming AUE Activities

- *St. Croix Coral Reef Conservation Training* - March 4 - 13, 2017 Elleen Yancey and Alex Adams have been invited and are participating in this new program in conjunction with DWP and Ken Stewart.
- *AUE General Meeting* - Saturday March 18, 2017 Location: 1463 Prior Rd SW, Atlanta, GA Meeting time is 3:00 p.m. every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month.
- *AUE Barbados Club Dive Trip* - April 22 thru 29, 2017 AUE trip coordinator Claudia Young-Hill. Make reservations and payments at, <https://bluisles.rezdy.com/catalog/135453/atlanta-underwater-explorer>.
- *DWP-Coral Reef Program* just announced, May 31st - June 3, 2017. We will be out-planting the coral from our adopted tree and will also be participating in the second Coralpooloza event. Event details are in the registration packet new available on the [www.divingwithapurpose.org](http://www.divingwithapurpose.org) website.

## Recent AUE Activities

- *AUE General Meeting* - Saturday February 18, 2017 Location: 1463 Prior Rd SW, Atlanta, GA Meeting time is 3:00 p.m. every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month.
- *Southern Region 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Manatee Trip*, Feb 24 thru 26, 2017

## Announcements/News

**Club News:** *AUE Member Marie Richardson will spend two weeks diving in Antarctica during March 2017. Marie's goal is to run a marathon on all seven continents and scuba dive in every ocean on the planet. Marie, you rock. We all want to grow up to be just like you.*

*Be safe and take lots of photos to share with your many admirers and AUE members.*

*Congratulations from all of us, Atlanta Underwater Explorers. 😊 😊*

**Announcement:** *Been out of the water for a while, there are local diving opportunities at:*

Blue Water Park (Two hours from Atlanta, GA)  
100 Industrial Park Drive  
Pelham, Alabama 35124  
205.663.7428 || 205.822.212  
More information at:  
[bluewaterparkal@gmail.com](mailto:bluewaterparkal@gmail.com)  
[www.bluewaterparkal.com](http://www.bluewaterparkal.com)



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**AUE Bubbles**

## Editor's Corner

### Fellow AUE Members:

Welcome to the March 15, 2017 edition of *AUE Bubbles* newsletter. The edition is focused on dive training, fun facts and emergency related safety issues.

Want to learn more? You can find us on the web at [www.diveaue.org](http://www.diveaue.org), or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ATLANTAUNDERWATEREXPLORERS> and via *AUE Bubbles* newsletter.

Story ideas are always welcomed. Completed story submissions must be received one week prior to the publishing date (Bi-monthly on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month). The next edition will be published May 15, 2017.

Please submit future story ideas and comments to my attention via email.

Dive safely,

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