

Always Take A Buddy

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Skin Diving Fun But Don't Take Sport Lightly

Skin diving has added adventure to the lives of scores of Saginawians who have taken up this exciting sport.

But, warns Donald McLellan, president of the Saginaw YMCA Underwater Explorers Club and chief Y skin diver instructor, it is not a sport to take lightly.

A mistake can cost not only your life, but the life of the person who is trying to help you, he says. He believes there should be a State law to stop the renting of SCUBA (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) or skin diving equipment to persons unless they can show proof of experience.

Rep. Edward H. Jeffries (D.-Detroit) last week said he will introduce a bill to cover the sport at the next session of the Legislature.

McLELLAN, who has been called by the Sheriff's Department and State Police to recover bodies of drowning victims, says there are many things a skin diver should not do.

He spoke out after two inexperienced skin divers drowned in Michigan lakes within the past week. McLellan recovered the body of one of the victims.

At the top of his list of "don'ts" McLellan puts:

"Don't try skin diving unless you've had at least 12 hours of competent instruction . . . and never dive alone.

"Always dive with someone you can rely on," he said. "Stay with him every moment under water. If you become separated, surface at once and reestablish contact. If you must dive in murky water, use a line between you and your diving partner."

HERE ARE OTHER suggestions:

Know emergency procedures. Know how to ditch your weight belt, how to ditch your SCUBA unit, how to clear your mask, how to use a snorkel and rest on the surface. Know how to "buddy breath" (two divers using one SCUBA unit).

Know the survival strokes, such as side and breast strokes.

Use a weight belt only with an exposure suit to offset the buoyancy of the suit. Weights are not to get you down faster.

Never hold your breath while using SCUBA gear, breathe normally.

Wear an exposure suit when diving in Michigan waters, even in the summer. The water temperature of most Michigan lakes 20 feet below the surface, range between 38 and 50 degrees.

Don't panic and know your own limitations. Shipwrecks are fun to explore—but don't.

Don't let pride stop you from asking for help. Get out of the water if you become cold or tired. Exhaustion comes quickly in water, and you may not have strength to get back to shore or to a boat.

Avoid deep diving. It proves nothing to brag of your ability to go deep, and experienced divers will tab you for what you are—a braggart.

Don't eat just before diving, avoid gaseous foods, and skip alcoholic drinks on the day you dive.

Avoid weedy, murky lakes, and keep out of the Saginaw River. Leave those places to the professional divers.

If your buddy is in need of help go to him immediately. Learn artificial respiration, especially mouth to mouth resuscitation.

"And," McLellan warns, "one or two dives does not qualify anyone as an expert, so don't claim to be one. Too much self confidence can lead to situations that not only will endanger the person, but also those attempting to help."