

REACHING NEW DEPTHS OF DIVER SAFETY

South Africa's SEADOG Commercial Diving School is attracting record numbers of students and professional divers. As Managing Director Bridget Thomson discusses, this is stabilising the business and helping the company focus more on the medical side of the business

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In the time since we last spoke towards the end of 2012 attendance at our Diving School has increased by around 40 percent,” states Bridget Thomson, Managing Director of SEADOG Commercial Diving School. “This increase sees us today operating at maximum capacity, which for a business that has been around for a relatively short period of time is extremely good news indeed.”

Established in January 2010, SEADOG is a training centre for the oil and gas industry, specialising in fields that include commercial diving, supervision and diver medic training. Situated within Saldanha Bay, SEADOG’s location allows trainees to develop under realistic conditions where the quiet waters of the bay provide the perfect introduction to learner divers before they enter the open ocean.

Committed to providing quality, progressive education, using outcome-based skills training, SEADOG promotes student-centred learning. This structure ensures that those individuals trained by the school demonstrate competency through a combination of knowledge, understanding and skills that encourage good performance and safe working practices.

“Rather than positioning ourselves as just a training provider, we have always prided ourselves in how we work closely with the industry,” Thomson continues. “This level of participation, together with our visibility and consistent approach towards health and safety, particularly in the oil and gas sector, is the primary driver behind the growth we are experiencing. The latter trend has seen divers coming from a multitude of locations to attain



C-DOC IMCA Diver
Medic Training

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C-DOC DMAC 015 Medical Kit - designed with divers for divers

or upgrade their tickets for offshore diving recognised under the International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA) Code of Practice.”

The increase in the number of different nationalities visiting SEADOG’s Diving School has also allowed the company’s own instructors to develop a deeper understanding of the differing needs and requirements of individuals working in a variety of operational areas. This in turn helps to enhance the growth and cultural awareness of the company itself.

“Certainly I think the growth we have experienced has helped enhance our own training capabilities, particularly on the medical side of the business,” Thomson says. “Today we are far more aware of the different stresses encountered in different environments when unforeseen incidents occur. Obviously certain countries will always have unique problems; however I feel that our own development means our instructors are more flexible and able to meet individual student needs.”

The medical side of the business, or the Commercial Diving and Offshore Consultancy (C-DOC) to give it its proper title, is one that has always been close to Thomson’s heart, seeing as it is where she started herself, back in 1999.



C-DOC DMAC 015 Medical Kit - designed by the C-DOC Occupational Health and Safety Team

The role of C-DOC is to assist the commercial diving industry to embark on a program increasing the health and safety of members in diving operations and to ensure an easily accessible service for education, training, development and consultation in diving health and safety by establishing a network that the design strategy may be measurable to evaluate trends and successes in the field for future decision making.

“C-DOC and my own personal experience have always given SEADOG a very solid foundation, and indeed a strong reputation,

to build upon,” Thomson enthuses. “What I want to do now, especially now that I see the Diving School thriving in the hands of our instructors, is turn more attention to promoting C-DOC.”

The company’s diver medic training is already well known throughout the oil and gas sector and Thomson has spent the last

year helping further to spread this reputation by travelling to Asia and its oil and gas hubs. Here she has been working with the SSS Recompression Chamber Network in order to make high quality training more accessible to companies within the region.

“There is so much we can offer our clients from a medical perspective,” Thomson

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C-DOC South Africa & Thailand Training centres for IMCA DMT and Refresher training



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Sunset over Saldanha Bay from SEADOG Commercial Diving School, South Africa

highlights. “One such offering is something that we are very excited about, and proud to present is the new DMAC kit. Designed with divers (DMT’s) for divers, and facilitated by the C-DOC Occupational Health and Safety Crew.”

Developed in line with the 16 years of experience that Thomson has had working with divers, the C-DOC Modular DMAC 015 kit is systematically packed to allow quick and easy access to equipment in the unforeseen

40%
Growth in attendance at SEADOG Commercial Diving School since the end of 2012

event of an accident. The C-DOC medical kit has been carefully divided into three modules and a reflective rescue jacket to ensure optimal usage by the diver who is not a trained health care professional. The bag itself can then be opened up into an emergency stretcher. The stretcher width is compatible with that of the bilge plates and trunkings of a chamber allowing for quick and efficient transfer under pressure.

“With C-DOC, our immediate aim is to

strengthen our core service by making it more accessible not just to our local markets, but also to the larger, multi-national oil and gas companies,” Thomson says. “This will bring us in line with the oil and gas producer’s (OGP) goal to assist in the development of a strong safety culture and to pursue IMCA’s goals to encourage the sharing of experience, ideas and aspirations. Meanwhile, from a training perspective we are tailoring our training to focus on step-by-step methods that will help divers in their time of need, regardless of their location.”

With the Diving School catering for a record number of divers, a trend that Thomson naturally hopes will continue, her plans for the year ahead for C-DOC are understandably at the forefront of her mind. “I truly hope that when we speak a year from now C-DOC will have been approached by IMCA, OGP and some of the big oil and gas companies, and medical directors to integrate all these great training scenarios and standards to identify opportunities for improved performance and raise awareness of occupational health and safety in diving operations. That for me would be very exciting - to actually see the work of my company actually filter down through oil and gas companies and to see it having a hugely positive impact on all those that risk their lives under the sea.” **BE**

For more information about
SEADOG Commercial Diving School visit:
www.divingschool.co.za
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