

Galley fire alarm during diving operations

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There was a galley fire alarm during active surface-supplied diving operations.

What happened?

There was a galley fire alarm during active surface-supplied diving operations on a dive support boat working in shallow water (2.4m depth). There was one diver in the water. Diving was immediately stopped, and the diver was safely recovered to the Launch and Recovery System (LARS) before the dive team responded to the vessel alarm. The alarm was quickly confirmed to be a false/nuisance alarm caused by cooking by-products. There were no injuries or equipment damage, but the event highlighted the risks of uncoordinated Simultaneous Operations (SIMOPS) between vessel domestic activities and diving operations.

What went right?

- Detection — the fire alarm sounded, indicating a possible fire in the galley area of the vessel;.
- Notification — the Dive Supervisor was alerted to a potential vessel emergency occurring during an active dive.
- Diver protection — diving operations were stopped without delay and the diver recovered safely to the LARS.
- Vessel response — the vessel master and crew responded to the alarm correctly and rapidly.
- Stand-down and resumption — once the situation was confirmed safe and the cause of the alarm understood, normal diving operations were able to continue.

What was the cause?

- The **immediate cause** was judged to be the galley fire detector was triggered by a non-fire stimulus (probable cooking smoke / steam / heat) during a meal preparation period which coincided with an active dive.
- **Contributing causes** were
 - Cooking in the galley at the same time as an active surface-supplied dive — A SIMOPS condition not formally managed.
 - Detector sensitivity / siting in the galley not optimised to discriminate between cooking by-products and genuine fire conditions.
 - Absence of a specific brief, in the toolbox talk, on how the dive team and crew should react to a vessel alarm occurring during a dive (although the actual response was nonetheless correct).

- **Root causes**

- Safety Management System (SMS) / planning gap — the project Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) and the bridging document did not identify support-vessel nuisance alarms as a credible event capable of interrupting diving operations.
- SIMOPS management gap — the coordination of routine vessel activities (galley operation) with diving windows was not addressed in the project SIMOPS review.

Our member notes that though the planning did not anticipate this event, the **emergency response itself was correct and effective**: the diver was protected, the alarm was investigated, and operations resumed only once the situation was confirmed safe.

Lessons and actions

- Our member
 - Updated their HIRA, SIMOPS plan, toolbox talk and procedures.
 - Added an appropriate drill scenario “vessel alarm during a dive” for future practice.
 - Made a careful review of galley fire detector type, sensitivity and siting, including possible alternative fire detection solutions to reduce nuisance activations.

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