



A Fish Needs A Bicycle.....

Ask Gib

as no question is a stupid question, only a stupid answer by a smart person causes insult....

George Carlins Ghost writes

Dear Gib: Why the Phuck is it that I can sign up for a CCR Cave "Underwater Modeling" course with ANY CCR Cave Instructor, but I can't choose an Open Water CCR Trimix course with a local ccr Trimix instructor?

George, you are noted for making the statement of not trusting anything the government tells you, and while I appreciate your axioms, I don't think that I can print what you really think of the dive industry and not violate some hate speech??? And while yes I agree there are plenty of Arse Clowns in the industry, there are a few good people too. It just happens to be that the people that you call "DPW" overwhelm the few good, and perhaps few misguided.

Now consider the fact that all you are trying to do is to enjoy diving your ccr to deeper depths, and you want to choose a local ccr instructor that you feel comfortable with should not be as if you are asking to have lunch on the moon, followed by dinner in Paris? You are NOT alone as I have recently had a CCR diver who moved due to work and was looking for a "CCR Skills Review". I recommended a great ccr instructor in his area, but was shot down due to standards changes. This strikes me as bureaucratic BS as the diver is already ccr certified and the instructor is a ccr instructor on "another" unit, and the diver wishes to refresh on basic safety skills. Nope, No can do!

To understand why your simple request is so difficult to remedy, and why other divers are being shot down on training, we must look back in time and contrast it to the present day training standards. And if you are patient and willing to follow along, I will untangle this safety reel of dive standards that more closely resembles a black recluse spider web. It begins with the phrase of "A Fish Needs A Bicycle". And to follow this logic is a deep dive in itself, so I advise a bit of training to understand this dilemma and perhaps help clean up the air for all in the future, if we are to have one?

"The Dive Industry Needs RESA/RTC Like A Fish Needs A Bicycle"

*Rebreather Education Safety Association & Rebreather Training Council

By completing this online training seminar you will have qualified for a *CCR Fish Needs A Bicycle* certification. *note this does not allow you to dive trimix on your ccr, but helps explain why not.

Everyone would like diving to be safe, and especially rebreather diving which has had a long history of fatalities due primarily to diver errors. The scuba industry of Open Circuit is considered relatively safe after 70

years of maturity, yet open circuit diving still has fatalities, and serious injuries. The rebreather industry is really only about 20 years old if you consider the start of Semi Closed Circuit "SCR" followed by the more popular Fully Closed Circuit rebreather or "CCR". CCR's have only been popular in the dive scene for about 15 years, and the first 10 years were fraught with deaths of highly qualified divers. We have learned a lot in those early years about diver mistakes, and in a few instances designs that led to failures and subsequent deaths. Some writers have suggested that diving a CCR is 10 times greater risk of death than open circuit, and I do not have any fault with this analysis.

Early SCUBA equipment manufactures of the 50'-60's, like Healthways, would often print a short manual on how to operate their scuba unit as basic instruction. So how did the open circuit dive industry continue to grow when it started out basically in garage "dive shops" by instructors who were simply experienced and did not certify divers, but may have given divers a card of recognition for successfully diving an Aqua Lung. At that time diving then was considered a dangerous hobby that spawned TV shows like Sea Hunt with underwater battles, knife fights, bad guys with spear guns, and blond bombshells in bikinis (well bikinis of the day anyway). Danger is sexy and it sold a machismo that attracted divers and demand started to grow. I recently watched a Sea Hunt episode where Mike Nelson (Lloyd Bridges) was scolding a young lady for training a diver without a license. "It is illegal in this town to train a diver without a license to teach". This was tv educating the public regarding the need for a "certified" instructor to provide quality training. For several decades while scuba equipment has changed and evolved, the manufactures of dive equipment have stayed away from training divers and left this to training agencies.



(Pre training agency diver ID card)



(Mike Nelson-SeaHunt scolds "The Female")

The TV show Sea Hunt, along with Cousteau, started a desire for people to seek adventure and this demand jump started the dive industry. The industry started to organize by offering certifications that were organized by groups or clubs that grew into training agencies. Over the years training agencies sprouted, withered, died, and re-started to the point where there are international agencies around the globe. It became a self-regulating group

that was mostly free of government regulations. It became a real industry when a marketing genius started a dive agency with a professional educator who put “quality” educational material together with high quality marketing materials. This agency head was keen to make diving profitable and was well known for having meetings where he would start by throwing his wallet down on the podium and say “This is what it is about, don’t forget that the goal here is to first make money”. And by sheer genius this guy was able to turn a government law suit against the agency that was supposed to be “non-profit” into a marketing campaign to save the oceans! Not only save the oceans, but this guy started an entity to govern safe diving protocols under the title of Recreational Scuba Training Counsel or RSTC. Now if you start an agency and you market this agency to represent Safe Diving, and you can sell, then people will believe it is viable. Just as people buy into Better Business Bureau as a protection for public, as the BBB is simply a made up entity. And now you have people who buy into the belief that BBB is a necessity. Now here is the funny part; if you were any other training agency providing scuba training and you wanted to have recognition of your scuba program being recognized as RSTC approved, then you would have to ask your competitor to approve you.



(800 lb Gorilla of dive training)

The punch-line is that the RSTC was not independent but it was an arm of the most powerful scuba certification agency, and they had no desire to give this recognition. It was a made up self-fulfilling benefit to the agency that created the bureaucracy in the first place.

So today, does the SCUBA industry really need a Recreational Scuba Training Council or is this only a marketing gimmick that originally benefited one agency? If you believe that only one training agency would stick their neck out to negotiate with the government to save the entire industry, and not their own selfish niche, from government regulations then you are a fool. You only have to go back to the infancy of nitrox, when one agency spent years claiming that nitrox was a gimmick, myth, sham and then turned around and go behind every technical training agency to negotiate with the government to set a new nitrox standard! If you believe that only one agency was concerned with safe diving, then you have to say that YMCA, NAUI, SSI or many others were flirting with dangerous practices! Do these training agencies after decades of providing quality education, need to have a council to endorse their standards?

Today in the rebreather industry we have two groups flexing their muscle to influence training standards. They are RESA, which stands for Rebreather Education Safety Association, and a newly hatched RTC or Rebreather Training Council. The RESA group was initially founded by manufactures who wanted to enforce their own company policies on CCR training. The RTC is a group of busy bodies, god only knows why we need two groups when ZERO is the number of douche bags that we need meeting at dive conventions in a conference room with cookies and coffee and writing new standards that affect real people who live in the real world of teaching ccr?

What has changed in the scuba training industry with the introduction of rebreathers to turn the table upside down on how dive training agencies write standards to preserve integrity and safety? Is this a liability driven

decision only, as I have seen the dive industry go through the nightmares of bloody, brutal, costly lawsuits with the introduction of the first mass produced and popular rebreather. And only one of the manufactures bears the brunt of lawsuits. Others were also sued but not to the extent of the first. The industry has held rebreather forums on many topics of safety, and tech shows have done a great job of hosting world renowned experts on topics to increase safety, design, or techniques. Yet there are still rebreather fatalities. One author of a report listed the dangers of diving a rebreather as ten fold compared with open circuit diving. I don't think this is a secret as it has been widely published, yet it does not deter divers from entering the ccr diving community. But then why does the open circuit scuba diving industry still has fatalities today, after decades of improved training and equipment advances? I recall a period of time when the insurance industry denied insurance policies to all but one scuba dive training agency.

Now let us consider the open circuit scuba industry and contrast it to what RESA/RTC is currently doing. The scuba industry is very tiny compared with other sports, but there is diversity in equipment manufacture. Much of it is overlap as many of these articles are Asian made and private labeled over and over again. If you were to consider one or two articles such as Regulators, Dive Computers, and BCD then you have perhaps ten to fifteen different models of equipment that vary by design, yet still offer the same basic experience. And every day around the world there are scuba divers who are sent to resort destinations after initial scuba training and are given a “referral” document to travel and complete their open water dives at a different destination. How many divers does this account for, is it hundreds or a thousands? Well the point is that a diver who is partially trained in mid-west dive shop that sells SCUBA Pro regulators/bcd's/computers will send a diver to the Caribbean to train at a dive resort that offers Aqua Lung regulators/bcd's/computers. Another scenario would be a new untrained diver can travel with their own equipment purchase, such as a Mares regulator/bcd/computer and be in an open water class with a referral instructor setting with 4-6 divers, and instructor who are all wearing different brands of basic dive equipment. Now we don't blink an eye that this raw diver with no experience is handed over to an instructor that will put this diver into a new set of gear and take them on 5-6 open water dives, or in a mixed class with 6-8 different brands of dive gear? The hypocrisy is that the scuba industry can accept that an untrained diver can switch basic scuba equipment, and an instructor can wear completely different dive gear, however a rebreather instructor, or student is not allowed to train with any other equipment than one and only one specific brand of rebreather?



(3 different regulators/BCD)



(Diver with std power inflator/octopus Verse Alt Inflator or Air II)

This scenario is intolerable! A new regulatory body needs to be implemented immediately to stop scuba instructors from cross training on different scuba units!!!!

How do we now turn a blind eye to thousands of divers each year in the Caribbean that have zero experience and little competency in how to operate their dive computer, and turn them over to another instructor who is not diving the same dive computer, or may not have any knowledge of the dive computer settings? Does it matter what regulator a diver is wearing if the goal is to do an emergency air exchange with a buddy who is out of air? Well, yes it is in a significant way. A diver who has a standard octopus would have a different procedure than a diver who has an alternate air inflator. Wow, that is a big difference, and we do not discriminate or put any restriction on the new diver's training? Has the open circuit dive instructor been certified to operate all brands of regulators/bcd's and dive computers, or could it be that it is not such a big deal? I think you have to accept that scuba equipment is fairly basic and that we have accepted that a open water instructor has the ability to adapt to students in their classes with different dive configurations and will focus on the basic scuba skills.

So when rebreather manufacturers set strict limitation on instructors that they are NOT allowed to have more than one rebreather model in a basic ccr class, we are talking about a student who is not an untrained diver. The student who enters a rebreather class already has in most cases basic to advanced diving skills. I do agree that in a basic CCR class, a student would benefit from watching an instructor demonstrate the exact skill with the exact same "button push / computer switch / scrubber pack". But when we are talking about a CCR student who is now taking an advanced level CCR course, where they already have the basic skill set of how to operate their individual CCR, it really does not matter what rebreather the advanced CCR instructor is operating. With a competent CCR instructor it really does not matter if the student seeking advanced ccr training is wearing a KISS rebreather and the instructor is wearing a rEvo rebreather. The advanced CCR training is about skill sets of decompression or handling mixed gasses for bailout. The instructor is not teaching how to operate the basics, but techniques of survival that rely often on bailing out to open circuit, or more complex techniques to overcome rebreather failure. It doesn't matter what rebreather a diver is wearing if they have to bailout, shoot an SMB, switch from deep bailout gas to shallower deco mix, etc.

(*NOTE: Name Brands of SCUBA or CCR are arbitrary and not to single anyone one out)

What prompted my original article is the numerous request that I have had from CCR divers, asking for continued education on their respective rebreathers. My attempts to put these divers together with a good instructor in their area has been met with rejection as the standards have changed in recent years that previously allowed divers more access to better instructors.

All of this is irrational to me as I was fortunate to get into the rebreather side of the dive industry at the earliest time when I was actually attending the events or course that made up the standards. And by starting early I had followed the growth and introduction of new CCR's to market and purchased each viable unit. As the industry grew there were not as many multi certified instructors, as there were simply new single unit CCR instructors. Competition is not new, but the affect is that you go from teaching a profitable CCR course to a marginal course, to now breaking even and no I'm sorry that I can't afford to teach a class of only one student. The edge of having the CCR instructor rating to train two students on different CCR models was an important consideration, until it wasn't an option. It does not take much to stretch this scenario to fit the CCR Travel Pro, CCR Shipwreck Photo Pro, or CCR Dive Charter that in the near future will be forced to limit only one type of CCR on the trip as it will confuse other divers doing a Pre Dive, etc....



Hypocrisy and Bullshit dominate today's dive industry with what I see as the major players doing the ostrich head in sand (urban legend as ostriches are actually smarter than dive industry leaders).

Here is a simple example of extreme hypocrisy regarding how standards change to suit those who are in the good ol boy network to the advantage of a very few. Consider this example: A Meg CCR trimix instructor who also is certified at the KISS CCR diver level (but not a KISS CCR instructor) is teaching a CCR trimix course with two students; one of the students is diving a Meg and one of the students is diving a KISS. Previously the standards also allowed the instructor to dive ANY CCR that he/she was qualified to instruct on. And the instructor was formerly allowed to train students with mixed units as long as the instructor was at least themselves certified at the user CCR level. The instructor is not teaching the basic operations of either unit, but how to dive trimix on a CCR.

Yes I hear the crows in the background squawking that the instructor may not know how to operate the students electronics.... **SHUT UP YOU FOOL!** They are qualified at the user level, proven proficient to operate, and my not be an instructor simply due to politics, or territory only.



A recent rEvo student who asked for training in a location where I tried to refer him to a good CCR trimix instructor was shot down as standards have changed. When I asked HQ to explain the reason why and how long ago the standards have changed, the reply was simply:

"RESA requires you now to be an instructor on the unit being used for class. Cave training is the only

exemption. RTC and all the training agencies do this now."

So the standards have changed due to RESA demands, however there is an "Exception" for Cave training. Now if this is not the Shit Hitting The Fan and the stink of the dive industry, then I am missing some key concept on training divers???? To have a CCR Cave instructor taking students with mixed models of CCR into a cave to train them on; DPV, Trimix, Underwater Modeling, etc. is acceptable. However a CCR Trimix instructor is not permitted in open water to have students of mixed ccr units in a course, as well as the instructor has to be an instructor on each unit???

Another example is the CCR diver who trained on a Prism2 and moved from west coast to center U.S. and wanted a CCR skills refresher. A local CCR instructor who was certified to teach on KISS and diver on Meg, JJ, rEvo other CCR was NOT qualified to work with this already certified CCR diver in the capacity of doing a basic CCR refresher? Now the P2 has the same electronics on 2 of the units the instructor is certified on, and only basic difference is a slightly different scrubber to pack? If you are so stupid to believe that this highly experienced CCR instructor could not benefit this divers request, then proceed with burying your head and do the ostrich thing as intelligent discussion is not in your realm.

Outcome?

So why does RESA equate to a bicycle for a fish? One of the issues (but not fault of RESA/RTC) is the plethora of different ccr manufactures, plus the variety by same manufacture such as the Meg Classic and Pathfinder, or KISS Classic, Sport, Sidekick, Spirit, Sidewinder, and rEvo manual, hybrid v1, hybrid v2, etc. Now throw in the six or eight other CCR models and you have a buyers market and an instructors nightmare! The manufactures of whom RESA supports are fighting for scraps in a tiny market?

While it may be viable for an instructor to train and own different CCR models by the same manufacturer, it is increasingly impractical to own and instruct using more than one brands of CCR's. At one time I owned 12 different models to give customers a choice. Ironically I see it as impossible for a CCR instructor to make it on only one unit?

"IF" there is a group of experienced professional rebreather instructors who have lived in the real world, day to day teaching and building a growing community of CCR divers, and If these people would get together to write a list of "Suggestions" on how to improve training, and if they would offer this advice to dive training agencies without stipulation, then I would say this is nice. There is after all a decade of knowledge that we have gained by analyzing ccr fatalities, as well as numerous professional rebreather forums/conferences where divers have met to discuss these challenges. Information is good as long as it is not a group of bullies forcing their ignorant views on the entire dive training industry.

If there is a group of rebreather manufactures who wish to change dive training agencies standards, who have already proven to manage technical and rebreather diving, then I would say to this Fascist group that they should take 100% control of in-house training of instructors to consumer, as well as 100% of the liability for the trained divers. And the dive training agencies should in turn, tell these Fascist bastards to have some balls and become their own training agency and by the way they will not share the insurance coverage....

There is Zero need for both of these entities in a healthy environment of technical dive training agencies that have quality upper management that keep current with best practices of safe ccr training. A technical diving agency that has any merit should have directors of training that keep abreast of all of the current discussion of safety in CCR teaching by attending rebreather forums, or meeting with rebreather safety advocates, as well as polling their members on safety in CCR diving.

Information on safer CCR practices is always welcome. Forcing people to conform by a ***movement, or regime that exalts state above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition*** is not

welcome or needed in this dive industry.

A Fish Needs A Bicycle, Like The Dive Industry Needs RESA and RTC!



(growing up in Midwest, I know when fertilizer is being spread)

So in closing I will tell George and all the others that the future does not look bright for new CCR divers, or any CCR divers looking for continued education.

If I were to tell future CCR divers what to look for in a CCR unit, it would not be scrubbers, counter lung location, electronics, etc.... no it would be to look at the manufacture and a training agency that would allow you to grow, and move from location to location without jumping through BS hoops to find a good CCR instructor.

And unfortunately I cannot assist you with your immediate goal, but I can congratulate you on completion of your CCR-FNB certification. Well earned!



(Front and Backside c-card)

Congratulations on earning your "CCR Fish Needs A Bicycle" certification! Your prompt payment will ensure prompt processing of your FNB-CCR c-card.

Just ask Gib.

Keep sending your questions to Ask Gib at gibanigav@hotmail.com

*Gib Anigav
Do as I say and Not as I do,
But Dive Safely!*

**Note ANY Name or Brand mentioned here is arbitrary and not used to single ANY person, or company. It is endemic of the entire dive industry*