

Should your members be interested in attending or being kept up-to-date with details of the symposium or be able to assist in identifying people interested in attending and/or presenting a paper could they please contact:

Mr Peter Harmond
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Your co-operation in this very important workplace health and safety initiative is greatly appreciated.

David Windsor
Chairman
Diving Industry Workplace Health and Safety Committee

The Committee at its last meeting decided that SPUMS would strongly support this symposium. SPUMS has already supplied labels for a mailing by the Conference Co-ordinator to all those who were on the SPUMS Journal mailing list in December 1993.

PERILS OF PELILEU

Alexandra, 201 Wickham Terrace
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Dear Editor

Diving on the edge of a drop off in a current that is likely to carry you away into deep water, away from the ledge, is generally associated with hazardous diving. Such a place is the Pelileu Wall and Pelileu Corner south of Palau.

To my knowledge a number of unpleasant incidents have occurred at this dive site and I believe that there are other incidents in the past that have not been reported. It is therefore appropriate to record the very real hazards of this dive site for future visitors to the wonderful diving of Palau.

Dr Chris Lourey and I were told of this near disaster, only a few hours after the divers were rescued, by Debbie Tabb, who had been diving at the Pelileu corner on the 20th March 1993 at about 1600. when she and her six companions, including the dive guide, were swept away.

The man in charge of the dive boat was unable to see them due to the sun in the west and, not having a radio and being nearly out of fuel, he returned to Pelileu for assistance.

Boats and a sea plane searched the area. The pilot flew up and down to Angur on several occasions without sighting the seven in the water, who had tied themselves together with their weight belts, blew their whistles, held up their coloured fins and put up a safety sausage which fell to pieces after half an hour. By an absolute fluke, the pilot was returning to Pelileu from Angur after giving up the search when, tilting the aircraft towards the west, he spotted a strobe from the camera of one of the seven divers who were being swept south-west towards the Philippines. They were picked at 1930 that evening.

The Filipino pilot later told me that he had no idea which way the currents were taking the divers but that he had found five other divers some months previously who had been swept as far south as the reefs immediately north of Angur Island in an area where the currents are so bad that the fisherman can fish there only two weeks each year.

He also told me that five American divers had been swept away from Pelileu and by chance the current had brought them ashore unaided near Blue Corner. There is no doubt that many other similar incidents have occurred at this dive site and perhaps other readers can add to this litany of near disasters.

The main lesson to be learnt from this story is that when diving in a third world country, boats are sometimes not equipped with radio or appropriate search procedures and that divers should be forewarned before entering such potentially dangerous dive sites.

William (Bill) Douglas

IS SCUBA DIVING SAFER THAN SWIMMING AND LAWN BOWLS?

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Dear Editor,

In the SPUMS Journal,^{1,2} we are told that "recreational scuba diving has a lower injury rate..... relative to swimming and bowling". I do not believe this any more than I believed "driving was more dangerous than diving" which had a run a few years ago.