

MARINELAB PROGRAMS: WE PUT SAFETY FIRST!

MarineLab has a strong safety component in our marine education programs. We've been operating since 1985, and are justifiably proud of our stellar safety record. Most of our schools have been coming for a decade or more; we have over a 90% repeat rate. We serve between 4,000 and 5,000 students per year. Every teacher is asked to complete an evaluation form, which asks them to rate all aspects of our program, including safety. We consistently receive an average of 4.9 (on a scale of 1 to 5) on our boat safety aspect.

STAFF

ALL instructors hold current certifications in:

- American Red Cross Water Front Lifeguarding
- CPR and First Aid for the Professional Rescuer
- Divers Alert Network Oxygen Administration

In addition, our senior instructors hold additional certifications:

- PADI Divemasters or SCUBA Instructors
- USCG Captain's Licenses (Ocean Operators or 50-ton licenses)
- American Red Cross Lifeguard/CPR/First Aid Instructor

All instructors are enrolled in a random drug testing program, whether they are Coast Guard certified operators or not. In addition, all staff undergo a complete background check, including a Level 2 screening and fingerprinting. MarineLab staff members go through several weeks of extensive training before being launched on their own as full-fledged instructors.

BOATS

The boats used by the MarineLab program are all Inspected Small Passenger Vessels and are manned in accordance with US Coast Guard requirements. We own five boats, which are captained and crewed by our staff, and we also use a local dive charter company. Their captains and crew are subject to the same background screening and certification requirements as our staff.

WATER SAFETY

As their very first water activity at MarineLab, our students participate in a swim test. This 'swim test' allows the instructors to see and assess each students' comfort level in the water, and provide additional attention if necessary. Students who are anxious or unsure are provided with ski vests for flotation. All students are equipped with inflatable snorkel vests that they may inflate as much or as little as they desire. In addition, these vests are brightly colored to aid visual tracking of the snorkelers. Students are paired with 'buddies' and this system is rigorously enforced throughout the program.

An introduction to proper snorkeling techniques, including clearing the snorkel, is also part of every MarineLab program. We pride ourselves on providing specialized attention to new snorkelers or non swimmers, and many students who started out afraid to put their faces in the water leave MarineLab with new confidence and enjoyment in the marine environment. They are now snorkelers!

Students are oriented to each snorkeling site before entering the water, and instructed to stay within 100 feet of the boats and the dive flag at all times. In most cases, at least one instructor stays aboard to act as lifeguard while others get in the water with the students, providing closer safety supervision while also guiding the students around the habitat and pointing out interesting organisms and plants.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If a school or school board wishes additional liability protection, they can be added to MarineLab's liability insurance policy as an additional insured, for the program time period only, at no additional cost. Please email Ginette Hughes at ginettehughes@mrdf.org with the school or school board name, address, and fax number or email address, and a certificate will be sent to you directly from our insurance agent's office.

References from other schools and teachers are available upon request.

GH/MyDocs/MarineLab/ProgramHandouts&Info/SafetyFirst.doc