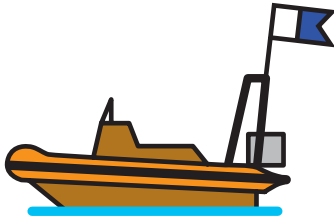
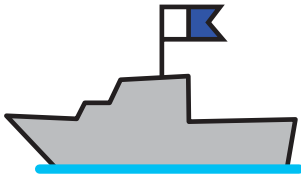
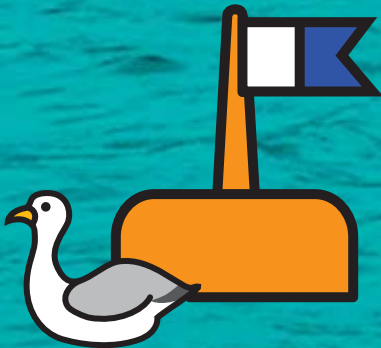


DIVERS DOWN



Vessels displaying the 'A' flag
have divers in the water

International
Code Flag 'A'



Buoys like these mean there are divers directly below

KEEP WELL CLEAR AT SLOW SPEED

'A' IS FOR DIVERS



Dive boats fly the 'A' flag to inform other vessels that they have divers in the water, but where? The divers are unlikely to be immediately under the dive boat.

When diving on wrecks, divers will descend a buoyed line to the wreck. Often the divers will attempt to return to this 'shot line' to ascend. If this is not

possible they will make a free ascent using a delayed surface marker buoy. This is typically a 2m long orange or yellow sausage shaped buoy that is inflated while underwater and let out on a thin line. The divers ascend this line but are now at the mercy of the tides and will be swept downstream from the wreck with the dive boat monitoring their position. The divers will be between 3m and 6m below this buoy while they are decompressing. If several pairs of divers have been dropped, the dive boat may be monitoring multiple buoys spread over half a mile down tide of the wreck.

Reef diving will often be undertaken using a surface marker buoy that is inflated before the dive starts and towed behind the diver for the whole dive. These buoys will often carry a small 'A' flag, but may show the American 'Sports Diving' flag, which is red with a white diagonal.

Once the divers are in the water they can be at the mercy of tides and currents, so can spread over a wide area. The dive boat will patrol the dive area and may manoeuvre to position itself between an oncoming vessel and divers in the water. As there may be multiple pairs of divers to protect, if you make a small course change, you may now be heading for another pair of divers and the dive boat will move to block again.

A wide berth at low speed and sharp lookout is much appreciated.

If you are unsure what a dive boat is doing, try giving them a call on **VHF16**.

For further information please visit www.torbay-bsac.co.uk



HM Coastguard



TORBAY BRANCH
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Lifeboats