

# IMCA ASSISTANT LIFE SUPPORT TECHNICIAN



**The Assistant Life Support Technician course is the IMCA pre-requisite to becoming a qualified Life Support Technician.**

## **Assistant Life Support Technician (ALST)**

Divers living in saturation conditions require constant monitoring and control by trained personnel outside of the deck compression chamber. The oxygen content of their breathing gas, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the pressure, temperature and humidity of their environment all need to be monitored regularly and functions such as feeding and sewage disposal need to be controlled from the outside by life support personnel.

The history of commercial diving has seen a very rapid expansion in the use of saturation diving techniques, with increasingly sophisticated equipment and larger chamber complexes being developed to meet the need for large numbers of divers to work at greater depths. This has greatly increased the responsibilities of those who control the chamber environment and consequently the knowledge that they must have of the physics, physiology and medical aspects of supporting people in high pressure environments.

## **Education and Qualifications**

Life support personnel come from a variety of different backgrounds, including highly skilled technicians from other industries, qualified nurses, former divers and some specially trained for the role. There are no pre-requisites to attend the course but an understanding of basic Mathematics and a good level of English language is needed.

## **Skills and Training Required**

The starting point and most junior grade is Assistant Life Support Technician (ALST), which refers to a person gaining experience. Before being sent offshore as an ALST, entrants other than divers with existing appropriate qualifications must have satisfactorily completed an IMCA approved Assistant Life Support Technician training course to satisfy IMCA guidelines.

The training will be delivered over a 9-day period with examinations on the final day.

Before going offshore, it is usually necessary to complete a basic offshore safety induction and emergency training (BOSIET) course. This generally includes first aid, safety at sea, the basics of fire, fire fighting and helicopter underwater escape training (HUET).

## Medical Fitness

Offshore workers must undergo and pass a special 'Top-Side' medical examination. These requirements may vary from country to country, but usually involve a medical leading to a certificate which may be valid for one or more years. The requirements are not unduly onerous for fit and active people but certain common conditions or previous injuries, can be a cause for failure. If in any doubt, interested persons should seek out a doctor knowledgeable about offshore standards, before they seek work or embark on a course of training.

## Working Conditions and Prospects Course Content

Once they have gained the relevant hands-on experience, qualified ALSTs may be considered for promotion to Life Support Technician (also known as chamber or panel operator) and ultimately to Life Support Supervisor. Full details of the minimum requirements for progression are set down in the publication IMCA Offshore Diving Supervisor and Life Support Technician schemes (IMCA D 013 as revised), available from IMCA.

It should be understood that contractors tend to give preference to the more experienced personnel and the newly qualified Assistant Life Support Technician may not find it easy to gain employment immediately following completion of the training course. A list of diving contractors will be supplied at the end of the course for you to begin your career search.



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