

DAN EUROPE SUISSE HOTLINE

1) Tasks

DAN EUROPE SUISSE offers a national hotline for diving medical emergencies. This hotline is served by a medical team, available 24 hours, 7/7 days all year. The team members on call give telemedical assistance to diving emergencies for all dive accidents in Swiss lakes, as well as dive accidents of Swiss divers abroad (usually DAN members). The assistance starts from the emergency call, is however continued during transport and recompression treatments if necessary, stops when a stable situation is achieved. A follow-up is then provided by other members of the DAN EUROPE SUISSE medical team.

2) Team

The Swiss medical team is composed of diving medicine physicians trained and certified to the EDTC/DMAC Level 2D "Diving Medicine Advisor" or higher. All doctors are experienced during numerous years of assistance and participating to international diving medical congresses and events.

DAN hotline doctors can be recognised by using the DAN Europe logo and the title "DAN EUROPE SUISSE Medical Member". It is strongly recommended that DAN doctors use this title to present themselves when speaking to hospitals, hyperbaric facilities or other institutions involved in management of a diving accident. This helps to identify them in medical reports and to draw back in case of need for further information.

The team: (updated 2017, for more details see homepage)

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3) Organisation

- On-call lists are produced 6 months ahead by DAN SUISSE office. A medical hotline team member is on call during one week from Monday 08.30h to next Monday 08.30h (example see annex 3)
- Our three national languages German, French, Italian and English are available for hotline calls, assured by one or more medical team members on call.
- As DAN members get a membership card with 2 hotline numbers (national emergencies 1414, international +3906 4211 8685) calls may come from both of these hotlines. Note that SUSV members have the same hotline numbers on their membership cards, without being registered DAN members.
- The DAN EUROPE SUISSE hotline phone number is 1414 (call centre of REGA, Swiss Air Rescue organisation). From there the doctors of the medical team are alarmed through mobile phone.
- Calls to the REGA hotline may come from the DAN members in need, from any divers in Switzerland, from rescue divers (Seepolizei, Pompiers...), from medical alarm centres 144 or 112, from emergency medical units of hospitals, exceptionally from the DAN EUROPE Central hotline (Roma).
- Calls from the European Central hotline in Roma to Swiss hotline doctors are usually organised as conference call with the diver. At the end of the talk with the diver the doctor gives a summary in English of what he has heard, concluded and what will go on after his talk (in our mother language) to the phone operator of the hotline. The European hotline in Roma uses a cascade system with subsidiary phone numbers for each country.
- Silent mobile phones are placed in DAN SUISSE office (4 mobiles, German, French, Italian, back-up, which serve as routers. The calls are deviated to the actual hotline doctor of the on-call list. This means REGA will generally not call the doctors individual phone number and therefore it is not possible to give alternative numbers to be called if not by our office personal (only working part time). Note that the doctors mobile will not display REGA number but "unknown caller". If a doctor cannot receive calls on his mobile, he has to contact REGA directly.
- A hotline call from REGA to a hotline doctor has to be answered either immediately which eventually enables a conference call with the injured diver. Otherwise the call may be "answered" by the hotline doctor calling 1414 back within 5 minutes. The doctor then calls the injured diver directly.
- Back-Up: In case there is no answer from the on-call hotline doctor within 5 minutes, REGA calls the back-up number. Back-up service is a second on-call doctor who only takes the call in a second instance when the primary doctor cannot be contacted.
- Medical record: The hotline doctor takes the accident history, actual symptoms and signs, decides whether this is an indication for immediate recompression, non-emergency recompression or whether the diver may wait on-site with normobaric oxygen and be checked within 2 hours by a second call. Eventually other decisions may be priority (instability of vital functions, important differential diagnosis to other diseases). Time, caller, patient name and contact, symptoms, dive history and decision is then noted on a standardised record form (downloadable from homepage/login).
- The involved hotline doctor calls the diver again either after a few hours if NBO treatment on-site, after about 24 hours if transferred to recompression chamber and/or hospitalised. Eventually repetitive calls are due until a stable situation of the injured diver is achieved. Then the medical record is sent within 2 days to the DAN SUISSE office.
- In case of referral to a recompression chamber or hospital the DAN hotline doctor sends a referral letter by e-mail or fax (standard letter, downloadable from homepage/login) as an official documentation of our referral (this is important as for future communication we want to be recognised as referral instance).

4) Special situations

- Insurance claims: If the caller is a DAN insured member and if the call produces medical treatment costs, the DAN insurance has to be informed immediately (at least within 2 days). Therefore transfer of (handwritten) protocols is very important. If the caller has not a medical emergency but another medical problem, that will involve his insurance, the case has to be noted and immediately transferred to the Swiss office (and further to DAN EUROPE), in order to open an insurance claim ticket.
- REGA will organise the transfer if the case is a Swiss dive accident. REGA will also inform the recompression facility in case the doctor decides that a transfer is necessary. International dive emergencies need to be managed through the DAN EUROPE hotline in Roma.
- REGA as rescue organisation sometimes manages dive accidents in a direct way if the case is severe (not interacting with DAN Hotline doctor). In these cases the DAN hotline doctor is informed as soon as possible, but at least the same day (preferably during the flight or during the flight back to the basis), in order to enable contact for the follow-up.
- Eventual calls from ambulance first aiders (144, ev. 112) or from hospital emergency rooms are managed the same way as diver's calls.
- During tunnel construction projects with hyperbaric hydro-shields or saturation diving operations special emergency hyperbaric teams are built up if the DAN team is contracted. These teams officially run as ad-hoc teams of DAN SUISSE. These doctors need to be ready to join the on-site hyperbaric chamber of the work site, may however eventually need back-up from more experienced dive medical advisors. These doctors may therefore call our hotline team as well.
- Follow-Up: After the acute situation a follow-up of our emergency cases is assured by another team. Interesting cases may be worked up scientifically and presented later on during a case discussion seminar. Hotline doctors who wish to follow the patient personally have to communicate that to the follow-up team (followup@daneuropesuisse.ch).

5) Further informations

- DAN Membership: to know whether a diver is a DAN member or not can be checked in the Internet through a protected website. This is generally done by the office personnel.
- Case history of divers treated abroad by other DAN hotlines may be available in the internet through the DAN international dive accident database MSCC (protected website)
- Recompression chambers: A list of all recompression and HBO chambers worldwide is available in the DAN International databank for restricted use. REGA has access to this list, so if in doubt ask REGA. Infos about chambers in and around Switzerland can be found on the DAN Suisse homepage.
- Medical examiner of divers: In case a diver asks for a contact to a diving doctor to be checked for resume diving after his/her accident, there is a list of qualified doctors at www.suhms.org. Please note that for resume diving assessments the first level competence "Medical Examiner of Divers" is considered to be not adequate, these divers should be checked by a "Diving Medical Physician" (Level 2D).

6) Medical code of practice

- Telemedicine: talks with a patient having a diving emergency have to be considered as “informative medical advice” independent whether it is to a patient, to his dive guide, local doctor or other organisation. This advice is given free of charge. The term “telemedical treatment” should be avoided as this would imply taking a lot more responsibilities, with consequences that the doctor can be sued for malpractice or other damage. Any claim for liability against a hotline doctor is however covered by DAN third party liability insurance.
- As guidelines for medical advice any internationally recognised guidelines may be used, in particular DMAC guidance notes, consensus statements of ECHM, standards of EDTC, statements of national societies (guidelines for management of dive accidents by SUHMS, GTÜM and ÖGTH) or internal rules of the team. DAN doctors give a discretionary advice according to their experience and competence.
- In cases with severe symptoms or impairment of functions, situations with difficulties to find optimal treatment facilities (special remote) the hotline doctor will automatically involve a competent specialist colleague to have a support or second opinion to his view. Such communications must be noted in the medical report.
- DAN hotline doctors are not paid for their medical communications or for being on call. They will however get a compensation for their charges and other allowances on a yearly fixed base, in particular the fee for a international congress participation and exceptionally extra communication expenses. Medical team members automatically get DAN silver membership.
- For continuous medical professional development and also as feedback and quality assurance of our service, case report seminars are organised periodically for the DAN SUISSE Medical Team (and other invited hyperbaric specialists). Interesting cases from the hotline are worked up as PowerPoint presentations for case discussions.

Find further documents on our homepage (user login):

1. The DAN Network
2. DAN EUROPE SWISS medical team
3. List of on-call DAN hotline doctors
4. Dive accidents protocol
5. Referral letter to hyperbaric or other specialised centre (d/f/i/e)