



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PACIFIC AIR FORCES**

24 August 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL ACTIVE DUTY AIR FORCE PERSONNEL AND
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE CIVILIANS ON OKINAWA

FROM: 18 WG/CC

SUBJECT: Water Safety Policy

1. From 2000-2022, there were a total of 42 water-related fatalities on Okinawa involving SOFA status personnel. Mishaps involved activities such as snorkeling, scuba diving, cliff diving and wave watching. The majority of these fatalities could have been prevented if personnel applied appropriate risk management by questioning if they had the right **gear**, a good **plan**, and the right **skills** (Check3 GPS) to participate in the off-duty water activity.
2. Successful mission accomplishment is not possible without the Air Force's most valuable resources, our Airmen and their families. Effective immediately, all active duty Air Force members and DoD civilians who are assigned or on official travel orders to Kadena Air Base must comply with the follow guidelines:
 - a. Before participating in water-related activities, personnel will check the official Okinawa sea conditions through Kadena.af.mil or Kadena Connect App.
 - b. Water entry is prohibited when local conditions result in beach/coastal area closure.
 - c. Personnel will use the buddy-system when swimming in areas without lifeguards.
 - d. Jumping/diving into open water from any surface higher than six feet above the water is prohibited (does not include areas such as swimming pools or water parks).
 - e. Scuba divers shall be certified for the dive activity or seeking certification with a qualified dive instructor, wear appropriate scuba gear and use the buddy system.
 - f. Free divers, scuba divers and snorkelers are prohibited from swimming/diving in any underwater caves.
 - g. Snorkelers at locations not supervised by lifeguards will wear an appropriately sized personal floatation device (PFD) or snorkeling vest and use the buddy system.
 - h. Surfers/body boarders will attach a leash from the user to the board and use the buddy system.

i. Personal watercraft operators and occupants will wear an approved PFD at all times. Operator must use a tethered kill switch/cord.

j. Personnel in sea kayaks will wear an approved PFD at all times.

3. Sea Conditions:

a. During SEA CONDITION ALL CLEAR, conditions are ideal for water activities, however hazards may still exist.

b. During SEA CONDITION CAUTION, hazardous conditions may exist. Exercise caution when entering the water.

c. During SEA CONDITION DANGER, life-threatening conditions exist. Water entry is prohibited for all activities except as designated in paragraph 5. Members shall stay clear of the shoreline/seawalls.

4. Sea Condition Danger Exceptions - personnel may enter the water under the following conditions:

a. Okuma: Commander/Deputy Commander, Detachment 1, 18 MSG determines allowable water activities.

b. Kadena Marina: Staff may allow unsupervised daytime swimming in designated areas only.

c. Torii Station: The Garrison Commander determines allowable water activities.

d. White Beach: The Commander, Fleet Activities Okinawa, determines allowable water activities.

e. Lifeguarded swim areas: Daytime swimming is allowed in designated swimming areas when the beach is open and lifeguards are present.

f. Professionally monitored water activities or athletic competitions supervised by qualified officials for specific activities (e.g. Dragon boat races, triathlons, sanctioned fishing tournaments, SCUBA class hosted by a certified dive shop).

5. Every Airman bears the responsibility of ensuring their decisions and actions do not negatively impact the mission or individual Line of Duty status. Activities not directly prohibited by this policy will be managed utilizing the PACAF High-Risk Activities Guide and in accordance with DAFI 91-202_PACAFSUP.

6. We encourage you to enjoy all activities available to you and your family, but please remember to apply personal risk management, plan your activity in advance and use good judgement at all times!

7. If there are any questions regarding this policy, my point of contact is the 18th Wing Occupational Safety Office. They can be reached at DSN 634-7233 or by email at 18wg.seggroundsafety@us.af.mil.

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