

# Monthly Safety Notice

March 2019

National Baromedical Services, Inc.

## Hyperbaric Staffing Perspectives

### Background

A frequently asked question is: *How many hours does it take a new staff member to be considered competent in order to work alone in the HBO department.*

### The Issue

The answer to this great question is based on what represents best practice standards. Both the Undersea & Hyperbaric Medical Society and the National Board of Diving & Hyperbaric Medical Technology recommend hyperbaric staff member certification, although no regulatory body mandates it. The earliest one can apply for CHT status is after three months equivalent full time employment in hyperbaric medicine, although we recommend challenging the certification exam after 12 months, the same period required to apply for CHRN status. This longer timeframe allows the prospective CHT to accrue more knowledge and skill, in order to approach testing with more confidence.

Newly hired employees should follow a designated orientation period and operational skills competency process, which includes attendance at an accredited 40-hour primary training hyperbaric medicine course, ideally occurring as near to the hire date as possible. The length of time to complete orientation depends on many factors. They include the department's census and acuity at the time the person begins employment. The individual's vocation (licensure), experience and aptitude play important parts in terms of what they are allowed to do and how fast they are able to learn. Whether the person is fulltime or PRN also plays a role in how quickly they are expected to pick up required skills. It is best to bring PRN staff into the department consistently and frequently during their orientation period to help them gain the knowledge and confidence needed to work in this unique setting; several days a week being preferred.

Based on ongoing evaluation and feedback of the new employee by a certified hyperbaric staff member and the hyperbaric medical director, new staff members may complete their clinical orientation and be considered competent in HBO in as little as several weeks and sometimes as long as six months. This

period is based on individual assessments throughout the orientation process.

**Bottom Line**

In Columbia, we maintain a minimum of two hyperbaric trained staff members plus a hyperbaric credentialed physician during normal business hours. Staff members are never scheduled to work alone. For urgent on-call hours, we treat one patient with one staff member, accompanied by a physician who is prepared to assist as needed. Occasionally staff require remedial training, additional review and/or skills updating. NBS provides annual and semiannual skills competency checklists depending on individual's need to assist and track in these areas. See the NBS team pages for these forms and skills videos.