

**Subject: Amendment of the Working Conditions Decree and Amendment of Offshore Medical Examination per 1 January 2017**

Dear NOGEPA doctor colleagues,

As you indicated during the annual NOGEPA doctor's refresher course, offshore employees are currently trained in the use of CA-EBS (Emergency Compressed Air Breathing System) during the four annual Safety Trainings. The CA-EBS is now mandatory for all offshore employees who travel by helicopter to an offshore installation. The system was implemented in all British helicopter flights; per May 1, 2015 it is also mandatory for all Dutch helicopter flights. It is a compressed air system and the replacement of the re-breather system. The reason for implementing this is that it gives more survival time in an emergency to get out of a helicopter which has landed in the water. Until now, this has only been done with a detailed explanation of the CA-EBS without the actual training for this (CA-EBS 'dry' training). A sub-optimal training.

Being a compressed air system, there are specific diving medical examination rules. As the training that is necessary for this is only intended for participants to learn to safely escape from an underwater object in a controlled environment of a swimming pool with the presence of divers, the legislator decided to change the requirements for this in the Working Conditions Decree per January 1, 2017. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-2016-341.html> (see Article 6.13). This makes it possible to practice the CA-EBS in a conditioned environment (CA-EBS "wet" training). This will only take place just under the surface. The training centers have been informed of this and are aware of the requirements they must meet.

This means that all offshore employees must undergo a lung-function examination prior to participating in a training course to establish that there is no increased risk in following the training. This entails that a full work-related medical examination by a certified diving doctor is not needed. This is sufficed by a lung-function examination which establishes that there is no increased health risk in following the training. The examination does not have to be performed by a certified diving doctor. A lung-function examination is designed to detect conditions which could lead to the expanding air during the ascent, damaging the lungs. Doctors who perform this lung-function examination can make use of the spirometry protocol which can be found on the 'Nederlandse Huisartsen Genootschap' (<https://www.nhg.org>), or the 'COPD & Astma Huisartsen Advies Groep' (<https://cahag.nhg.org>).

**From 01-01-2017 a lung-function examination must be conducted for every offshore examination** whereby a minimum of a FEV1, FVC and FEV1 / FVC ratio and flow-volume curve is performed. The case history must also be well discussed to check for the presence of (old) lung problems, asthma, COPD, medication etc., and this data must be well recorded in the medical files. Participation in a CA-EBS "wet" training is only possible if the participant has undergone the lung-function examination prior to the training, **and it has been established that there is no increased health risk in following the training**. This must be indicated in the PSL (Personal Safety Logbook) from 01-01-2017 (separately) with **Fit for CA-EBS "wet" training**. If an employee is medically unfit for participation in the CA-EBS "wet" training but is otherwise medically fit for working offshore, this must be indicated in the PSL (e.g. by filling: **Fit for offshore, but unfit for CA-EBS "wet" training**). This allows them to participate in a CA-EBS "dry" training and they can thereby meet the requirements for the trainings-criteria for offshore work.

Given the transition from 01-01-2017 (whereby there is insufficient time for offshore employees to be examined according to this method), it currently remains unclear when the trainings institutes will start with the CA-EBS "wet" training.

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