

# 8. Marine Sports Equipment

## 1. Definition of Category

Scuba diving and skin diving equipment, including those listed.

HS Numbers	Commodity
9020.00-000	Regulators, octopus rig
9304.00-000	Underwater guns
9305.90-029	Parts
9506.29-000	Buoyancy Compensators (BC), fins, masks, snorkel tubes

*Notes: (1) Scuba diving means diving with an oxygen tank, while skin diving means diving with no oxygen tank.*

*(2) In the Hs numbers above include products that is not treated in this guidebook, so statistics and graphs are not included in this section.*

### Note on Terminology

Regulator	Regulates the oxygen flow from the tank.
Octopus rig	Regulator reserve.
Buoyancy compensators	Jacket used to adjust buoyancy.
Fins	Come in full-fit models that slip on over the entire foot and strap-fit models that are held on by a heel strap.
Masks	Allow divers to see under water.
Snorkel tubes	Device used to facilitate breathing while swimming at or near the water's surface.

## 2. Import Trends

### (1) Recent Trends in Marine Sports Equipment Imports

There are no customs statistics that provide a unified picture of marine and diving equipment imports. Therefore, it is impossible to obtain accurate figures regarding volume imports or value imports. Industry sources claim that most imported diving equipment consists of scuba diving equipment. Most BCs and regulators are imported.

In recent years, diving has become a popular leisure activity among the young. Along with this, there has been a steady increase in imports of diving equipment. Along with a decline in demand in the market, following a peak in 1995, the imports have been showing a downward trend.

### (2) Imports by Place of Origin

The United States and Italy have led in marine and diving equipment exports to Japan. Especially, the U.S.A. products supposed have shared mainstream. Leading brands of diving equipment in both countries are shown as below.

U.S.A.: U.S.DIVERS, TAKNA, SCUBAPRO

Italy: MARES, CRESSI SUB

### (3) Imports' Market Share in Japan

According to the Japan Association of Underwater Exploration, almost all of the diving equipment on the market is imported.

## 3. Key Considerations related to Importing

### (1) Regulations and Procedural Requirements at the Time of Importation

In the marine sports equipment, importation of underwater guns is subject to provisions of the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law. The High Pressure Gas Safety Law applies to the importation of air tanks.

#### 1) Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law

Imports of underwater guns are subject to provisions of the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law. In order to protect the lives and health of both humans and animals, underwater guns are subject to import quotas. Imports other than those authorized under the quotas are not permitted. The Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry announces the approval of an import quota as needed. Prospective importers should follow those procedures in order to apply for an import quota.

**2) High Pressure Gas Safety Law**

The Law sets standards for gas containers and the composition of the gas. For safety and protection against high-pressure gasses, the Law requires inspection by the governor of the nearest local government. when air tanks are imported with the gas inside. For detailed information, please contact the High Pressure Gas Safety Institute of Japan, or the high-pressure gas regulation division of prefecture having jurisdiction over landing area.

As of July 1, 2000 pressurized gas containers that have been inspected by a designated inspection agency may be distributed in Japan. For details, contact the Safety Division, Agency for Nuclear and Industrial Safety, Agency of Natural Resources and Energy, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

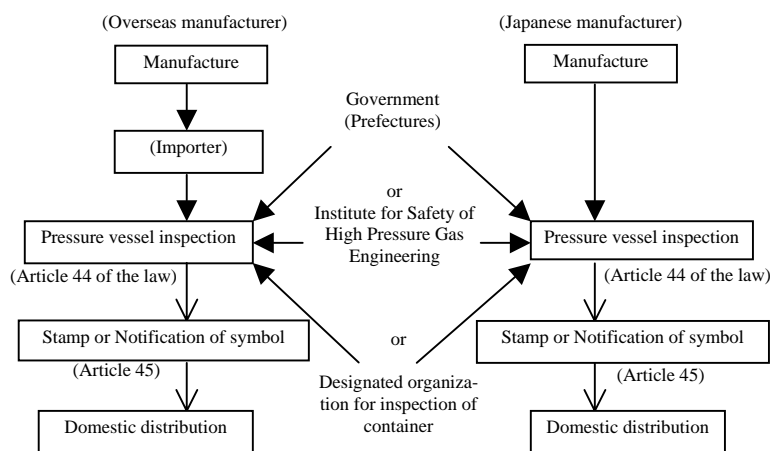
**(2) Regulations and Procedural Requirements at the Time of Sale**

For safety and protection against high-pressure gasses, the sale of air tanks is subject to provisions of the High Pressure Gas Safety Law. In addition, containers and packaging may be subject to provisions of the Containers and Packaging Recycling Law and the Law for Promotion of Effective Utilization of Resources. For more detailed information about the subject, scope, labeling method, etc., please consult the competent government agencies listed below.

**1) High Pressure Gas Safety Law**

Scuba diving air tanks are subject to slightly varying regulations governing 1) empty tanks, 2) pressurized tanks and 3) tank accessories (valves, etc.). Diving tanks are usually imported empty, so only these regulations will be discussed herein. Importers of empty air tanks must have the tanks inspected by a designated inspection agency before they can be sold. Tanks that pass inspection bear an imprint or label indicating they have passed. However, this regulation does not apply to tanks with a capacity of 1 dl or less or to tanks made by registered foreign manufacturers, which come already imprinted or labeled as having passed inspection.

**Fig. 1 Flowchart of the approval process (air tanks)**



**(3) Competent Agencies**

• Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law

Trade Licensing Division, Trade and Economic Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry  
 TEL: 03-3501-1511 <http://www.meti.go.jp>

• High Pressure Gas Safety Law

Safety Division, Agency for Nuclear and Industrial Safety, Agency of Natural Resources and Energy,  
 Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

TEL: 03-3501-1511 <http://www.enecho.meti.go.jp>

High pressure gas regulation division, prefectural government office

(For Tokyo area; High Pressure Gas Regulation Section, Monetary Aid and Guidance Division, Bureau of Environmental Protection, Tokyo Metropolitan Government)

TEL: 03-5321-1111

The High Pressure Gas Safety Institute of Japan

TEL: 03-3436-6100

- Containers and Packaging Recycling Law / Law for Promotion of Effective Utilization of Resources  
Recycling Promotion Division, Industrial Science and Technology Policy and Environment Bureau,  
Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

TEL: 03-3501-1511

<http://www.meti.go.jp>

Recycling Promotion Division, Waste Management and Recycling Department, Ministry of the Environment

TEL: 03-3581-3351

<http://www.env.go.jp>

## 4. Labeling

### (1) Legally Required Labeling

There is no legally required labeling. But under the Law for Promotion of Effective Utilization of Resources, when paper or plastic is used as a packaging material for wrapping of individual product items, or for labels, tags, external packaging or elsewhere, a material identifier mark must be displayed with information where the material is used.

< Example >



External packaging



Label

### (2) Voluntary Labeling Based on Provisions of Law

#### <JIS Mark>

The JIS mark may be attached to industrial products conforming to the relevant Japan Industrial Standard (JIS) established under the Industrial Standardization Law (JIS Law) and meeting standards of examination regarding technical production conditions required for maintenance of quality covering manufacturing facilities, quality control methods, etc. JIS applies to cylinders, bulbs, buoyancy compensators, regulators, etc.

JIS Mark



- Japanese Standards Association

TEL: 03-3583-8005

<http://www.jsa.or.jp>

### (3) Voluntary Industry Labeling

#### <SG Mark>

Scuba masks and scuba fins are eligible for SG (Safety Goods) Mark designation by the Consumer Product Safety Association. Products that comply with safety criteria established by the Association are eligible to display the SG Mark. The items inspected are the manufacture, appearance, resistance to impact, solubility in water, durability, material, labeling, etc. When consumers are injured during the use of a SG-approved product, each injured party is eligible to receive up to ¥100 million in damages. The guarantee is only valid, however, for personal injuries.

SG Mark



In order to receive permission to display the SG Mark, an application must be submitted to the Association and the product must be proven compliant with applicable standards. There are two methods for obtaining compliance certification: the lot inspection method, under which a test facility performs compliance testing on behalf of the Association, or the type approval system, under which Association approval is granted to registered factories. Lot inspection and factory registration may both be conducted abroad.

- Consumer Product Safety Association

TEL: 03-5255-3631

<http://www.sg-mark.org>

## 5. Taxes

### (1) Customs Duties

Following table shows customs duties on marine sports equipment.

### (2) Consumption Tax

(CIF + Customs duty) x 5%

Fig. 2 Customs duties on marine sports equipment

HS No.	Description	Rate of Duty (%)			
		General	WTO	Preferential	Temporary
9020.00-000	Regulator, octopus rig	Free	(Free)		
9304.00-000	Underwater guns	6.6%	5.4%	Free	
9305.90-029	Water sport equipment	6.6%	5.4%	Free	
9506.29-000	Parts	Free	(Free)		

Note: Refer to "Customs Tariff Schedules of Japan" (published by Japan Tariff Association) etc. for interpretation of tariff table.

## 6. Product Characteristics

People first took up diving as a sport in Japan during the 1960s, some 20 years later than in Europe and the United States. Because of this longer tradition, imported diving equipment has many original features and excellent performance characteristics.

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women divers, and they often look at the fashion appeal of diving equipment in addition to its quality and performance features. For example, at one time virtually all diving equipment was black in color, but nowadays equipment makers are using more different colors and color schemes, such as pink and yellow. This trend has heightened interest in imported diving equipment even more, as buyers covet its high fashion appeal as well as its high performance traits.

## 7. Domestic Distribution System and Business Practices

### (1) Domestic Market Conditions

According to Leisure White Paper published by the Institute for Free Time Design, the market scale of marine and diving equipment is ¥165 billion in 2000, and on the decline in recent several years. The population of divers (population engaging in the activity at least once per year) is estimated about 1.5 million and 10% of them are divers as professional, the remaining 90% are sports divers.

The Japan Association of Underwater Exploration reports that the number of entry-level C cards issued. (cards issued by various issuing authorities to beginners completing a certain number of hours of instruction), which serves as an indicator of the population of divers, has been about 70,000-80,000 each year for several years. The aggregate diver population is estimated at around 1.05 million. A majority of newly certified divers are women, and the increase in women divers has been the trend of late.

The Association reports that sales of diving equipment have moved at the level of around ¥8.6 billion in the past few years. Of this, the number of so-called "three piece sets" of masks, snorkel tubes, and fins sold has been remarkably high. This is due to the relatively low price and consequent ease of purchase compared with heavy equipment such as regulators or buoyancy compensators and due to the fact that they are basic essentials for any sort of diving. A complete set of scuba gear usually costs about ¥300,000 for mid range equipment and ¥400–500,000 for higher performance equipment.

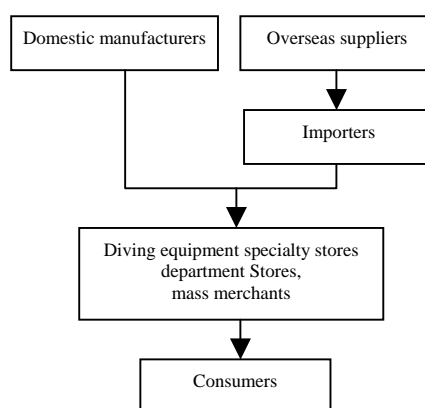
Purchasers of diving equipment in Japan primarily are young adult office workers in 20s and 30s. According to the Leisure White Paper, participation intention for diving in young adult is relatively high, and future market growth is expected. Intention is especially high in female teenagers (29.0%), male teenagers (20.3%), and men in 20s (17.2%).

### (2) Distribution Channels

Diving equipment is sold either through specialty channels or mass merchandiser channels. However, most diving equipment sales take place at specialty stores. Diving equipment distribution is characterized by the following patterns:

- 1) Scuba diving is a dangerous sport. As such, people need to receive formal instruction in how to put on and use the equipment. Most users sign up for such courses when they buy their equipment. The courses are sponsored either by manufacturers or retailers, and students receive hands-on instruction from specialists.
- 2) Most people buy skin diving equipment such as water goggles, fins and snorkel tubes at department stores or sporting goods stores.
- 3) Japanese-made products enjoy a commanding sales lead in masks, snorkel tubes and fins, with the ratio of domestic to imported products at roughly 10:1. Sales are split roughly evenly between domestic and imported goods in the areas of buoyancy compensators, regulators and gauges.

**Fig. 3 Distribution channels for diving equipment**



**(3) Key Considerations for entering the Japanese Market**

First-time divers in Japan usually follow purchase advice given by their instructors. This should be taken into account when developing marketing strategy. Comments and advice from store sales personnel also plays an important role in purchase selections. Prospective importers need to make sure sales staffers have been thoroughly trained and informed.

Many types of diving equipment require after-sales service, so importers need to have an adequate after-sales service program in place. Major exhibitions and trade shows in the industry generally precede the diving season by 2-3 months. Attending these shows can provide useful information about product trends in the upcoming season.

**8. After-Sales Service**

In most cases the importer assumes responsibility for both sales and after-sales service. Regulators, octopus rig and buoyancy compensators generally carry a one-year warranty. Manufacturers also have to be able to offer a continual supply of parts needed to perform periodic adjustments and maintenance.

**9. Related Product Categories**

Related product categories include water skis, wind surfing equipment and surfing equipment.

**10. Direct Imports by Individuals**

Direct imports of underwater guns and air tanks by individuals for their own use are subject to the same regulatory requirements as regular imports.

**11. Related Organizations**

- Association of Japan Sporting Goods Industries TEL: 03-3219-2041
- Japan Recreational Diving Industry Association (JRDA) TEL: 03-5276-3227
- The Sports Goods Importers Association of Japan TEL: 03-3265-0901