

Recreational diving instructor fined after falsifying HSE diving medical certificate

- Diving instructor used falsified medical certificate to seek employment
- Document was identified and reported by a local diving school
- HSE warns it will take action against misuse of safety-critical certification

A recreational diving instructor has been fined after falsifying a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) commercial diving medical certificate.

Stuart Elmes, of Bournemouth, falsified the certificate while seeking employment as a PADI instructor in March 2025. The document was identified by a local diving school and subsequently reported to HSE.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), supported by the Approved Medical Examiners of Divers (AMED) board, confirmed that the certificate had been falsified.

Commercial divers must hold a valid medical certificate issued by an HSE-approved doctor to confirm they are fit to dive. This is a legal requirement under the Diving at Work Regulations 1997 and is a critical safeguard to protect both the diver and others involved in diving operations.

Under Section 33(1)(m) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, it is an offence to make, or possess, a document that closely resembles an official document and is intended to deceive.

Stuart Elmes pleaded guilty to breaching Section 33(1)(m) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 at Bristol Magistrates' Court on 17 April 2026. He was fined £700 and ordered to pay £2,620 in costs and a victim surcharge of £280.

HSE Diving Inspector Christopher Booker said:

“Diving commercially is a high-risk activity. Being assessed as medically fit to work underwater, including when providing diver training, is an essential part of ensuring safety – not only for the individual but also for their students and colleagues.

“Stuart Elmes falsified an HSE diving medical certificate and used it to seek employment in the recreational diving industry.

“HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those found to be in possession of, or using, falsified fitness to dive certificates.”

This HSE prosecution was brought by enforcement advocates Rowena Goodwin and

Neenu Bains, supported by paralegal officer Michael Millman.

Further information:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We are dedicated to protecting people and places, and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Relevant guidance can be found here:
[Diving at Work Regulations 1997](#)
[Commercial Diving Approved Codes of Practice](#)
[Section 33 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
5. HSE does not pass sentences, set guidelines or collect any fines imposed. Relevant sentencing guidelines must be followed unless the court is satisfied that it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. The sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences can be found [here](#).