

New Technology Ensures Safer Work Environment for Divers

by Bend Weekly News Sources

For most people, underwater diving is strictly a recreational activity - a carefree swim through lush coral reefs. But for those who work in the field of underwater construction, diving is an activity that requires extensive training and experience so as to avoid dangerous, even fatal situations.

According to statistics from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, between 1989 and 1997 the average death rate for commercial divers was 40 times the national average for all workers, making it among the most dangerous occupations.

Commercial diving frequently involves moving large, heavy equipment such as pipes, beams and cables. But one company has developed a new technology that promises to make underwater operations safer and more productive while lessening reliance on divers.

The Aquatic Robot-120, produced by Aquatic Cellulose, features an enormous hydraulic arm that can perform a wide range of underwater tasks.

"In the energy sector, for example, teams of divers regularly work with cranes and other surface equipment to deliver, build and repair the underwater structures supporting onshore and offshore rigs," said Sheridan Westgarde, president and chief executive officer of Aquatic Cellulose. "Using the AR-120, a single operator can be employed to deliver a payload of over 5,100 pounds to the work site without diver assistance."

The AR-120 uses Tiger-Lynk, a new technology that enables an onboard operator to target, drill, weld, cut and manipulate large objects at depths up to 136 feet when the arm is mounted on a surface vessel or platform. In addition, the arm can be mounted on an underwater structure to work at depths of 400 feet, allowing it to assist divers with many of the deepest, most dangerous underwater jobs.

The AR-120 is scheduled for production this spring and will be available for sale or lease to a variety of industries, including oil and gas, timber and civil engineering.

For more information, visit www.valorenergy.com or call 503-502-5104. Aquatic Cellulose (pending name change to The Valor Corp.) currently trades under the symbol AQCI on the OTCBB.