

**ACTIVITY:** Diving

**CASE:** GSAF 2007.08.22

**DATE:** Wednesday August 22, 2007

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Cape Fear Shoals tank at the North Carolina Aquarium in Fort Fisher, 15 miles south of Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina, USA.

**NAME:** Bruce Pennington

**DESCRIPTION:** A volunteer diver at the Aquarium, he is 50– to 60-years of age, 5'8" tall and weighs about 160 pounds. He was clad in a black wetsuit and gloves, black fins, full scuba gear and black full-face mask. He had no injuries prior to entering the tank.

### **BACKGROUND**

**TIME:** 10h40 or 10h45

**NARRATIVE:** The diver had been in the Cape Fear Shoals tank for an educational program and had been in the water 10 minutes. There was a safety diver in the tank and a lecturer outside the tank. Pennington was conducting an educational program within the 235,000 gallon display tank. He was in the process of answering questions, when he rotated his hand behind him, and his hand came into contact with the shark. The shark reacted to the contact by biting the diver's right hand. The diver turned around, struck the shark with his left hand, and it released him.

The shark exhibited normal behavior after biting the diver; afterwards aquarium officials splashed the water in the tank to see if the shark would shown any unusual reaction but it did not.

**INJURY:** The diver sustained five puncture wounds and some lacerations to his right hand. The lacerations were the result of the diver pulling his hand away from the shark when it bit him. The injury was minor, according to aquarium officials.

**FIRST AID / TREATMENT:** Aquarium staff placed bandages over the wounds for compression to stop the bleeding. Then he was transported by private car to an urgent care facility: Medac Facility. The diver's hand required a few stitches.

**SPECIES:** The aquarium houses two sand tiger sharks, *Carcharias taurus*, a male and a female. It is not known which shark bit the diver. Both sharks were five feet in length.



**NOTE:** This is a provoked incident; it involved a captive shark.

**SOURCES:** WECT TV6, <http://www.wect.com/Global/story.asp?S=6979838>; Interview with Paul Barrington, Director of Husbandry and Operations at the Fort Fisher Aquarium.

