

**ACTIVITY:** Freediving  
**CASE:** [GSAF 2012.08.09](#)  
**DATE:** Thursday August 9, 2012  
**LOCATION:** Key Largo, Monroe County,  
Florida, USA. *N25 00.760', W080 28.863*



**NAME:** David Lowe, Sr.  
**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 56-year-old male, 5'10" tall and weighs 176 lbs. He was wearing a dark colored short-sleeve shirt, dark swim trunks, blue fins and a black mask with a snorkel. He also wore a wedding band on his left hand. He had no injuries prior to the accident.

**DESCRIPTION OF BOAT:** A 19-foot center console white-hulled boat.

### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** At 15h55, Homestead Air Force Base recorded partly cloudy skies and visibility of 10 miles. The air temperature was 88.9°F, dew point 75.4°F, humidity 64%, sea level pressure 29.97 inches (falling) and wind direction was East at 11.5 mph. At the accident site offshore, the sky was sunny, the air temperature was 89°F, and wind direction was East-to-Southeast at 12 mph.

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Gibbous, 51% of the Moon was illuminated; Last Quarter, August 9, 2012.

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was green. The estimated water visibility was 40 feet and the sea surface temperature was 86°F, measured. There was an East-to-West current and the sea was choppy (1' to 2'), but no channel was present.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Isolated patch reefs. There was fishing activity with manufactured bait, but no fish had been caught.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 1.2 miles

**DISTANCE FROM BOAT:** 14 feet

**DEPTH OF WATER:** 10 to 12 feet

**DEPTH AT WHICH THE DIVER WAS BITTEN BY THE SHARK:** 11 feet

**TIME:** 16h00

**NARRATIVE:** David Lowe, Sr. was freediving for lobster for about five minutes but found none. He went back to the boat and discovered that his son's fishing line was entangled on a small coral head. He dived down to the coral head, then felt the shark bite his finger and release it. As he turned, he saw a lemon shark swimming away and realized that his hand was bleeding.

He swam with his hand above the surface for about five minutes, then saw another coral head and decided to check it out. He looked around for sharks, and seeing none, began a descent. Then he observed the same lemon shark rapidly approaching.

"I stopped my descent and [the shark] immediately slowed down and passed under me slowly and swam off. I left the area because the shark clearly had developed a dangerous association between freedivers and food. . .The shark was apparently conditioned to associate a freediver descending to a coral head with the easy availability of food. It likely assumed I was going to spear a fish which it could snatch. . .The first attack I was willing

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to brush off as an accident possibly caused by the smell of bait in the water. However, after reflection, I realized the shark had approached from *up current*. Finally, after I carefully searched for sharks prior to my next dive, I see this same shark immediately and quickly approach me as I was descending.”

**INJURY:** The diver sustained minor lacerations to the little (pinky) finger of his left hand. The lacerations were about 1/8 inch apart. No tissue was removed by the shark.

**FIRST AID:** When the diver returned home (by boat), he administered first aid, which consisted of two large bandages and antibiotic. He did not seek medical treatment at a hospital.

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a lemon shark about four to five feet in length.

**SOURCE:** David Lowe, Sr.

