

Valhalla Missile Silo

History

The US Air Force built twelve structures in the steamboat mountain range of West Texas near Abilene in which they housed ICBMs aimed at the USSR during the cold war. These missiles were 10 feet in diameter, 82 ft long, and weighed 260,000 lbs with the capability of traveling 11,500 miles at 15,000 mph. The three engines, two boosters and a sustainer were fueled by liquid oxygen and RP-1 fuel, generating 389,000 lbs of thrust. After only two years, the missiles were removed and the silos were sold for salvage. The Atlas missiles were modified and subsequently used to launch the Mercury Astronauts and over 175 other payloads into space over the next 20 years. Building the silos required moving 37,500 cubic yards of earth and pouring of 7,847 cubic yards of concrete around 1,288 tons of steel reinforcements. The silo construction (4-10 ft thick concrete with 1-4 inch rebar on 9-20 inch centers) was to allow this site to withstand a nearby nuclear strike and still be able to fire its missile at an enemy. Since being decommissioned, this silo has slowly filled with ground water seeping through the cement walls.

This is Adventure Diving

To really make this a fun and enjoyable dive you should:

- 1) already have prior deep diving experience, or be in an advanced or master class with this as your deep dive
- 2) be correctly weighted with the gear you will be wearing to dive – a peak performance buoyancy specialty might be in order
- 3) be comfortable donning and doffing your scuba gear in the water – a practice session in the pool may help
- 4) make prior dives in cool water
- 5) be in moderately good physical shape to carry your dive gear to the dressing area and to climb down and up the stairs to get to and from the water – use the stairs instead of the elevator for a few weeks before you come

Diving Procedures

There is a floating platform with a stairway for staging divers. Each diver carries his or her own personal diving gear. This insures the diver has all equipment available when entering water and has hands free to climb stairs.

Divers don gear, do final buddy check and make a fun dive according to their dive plan.

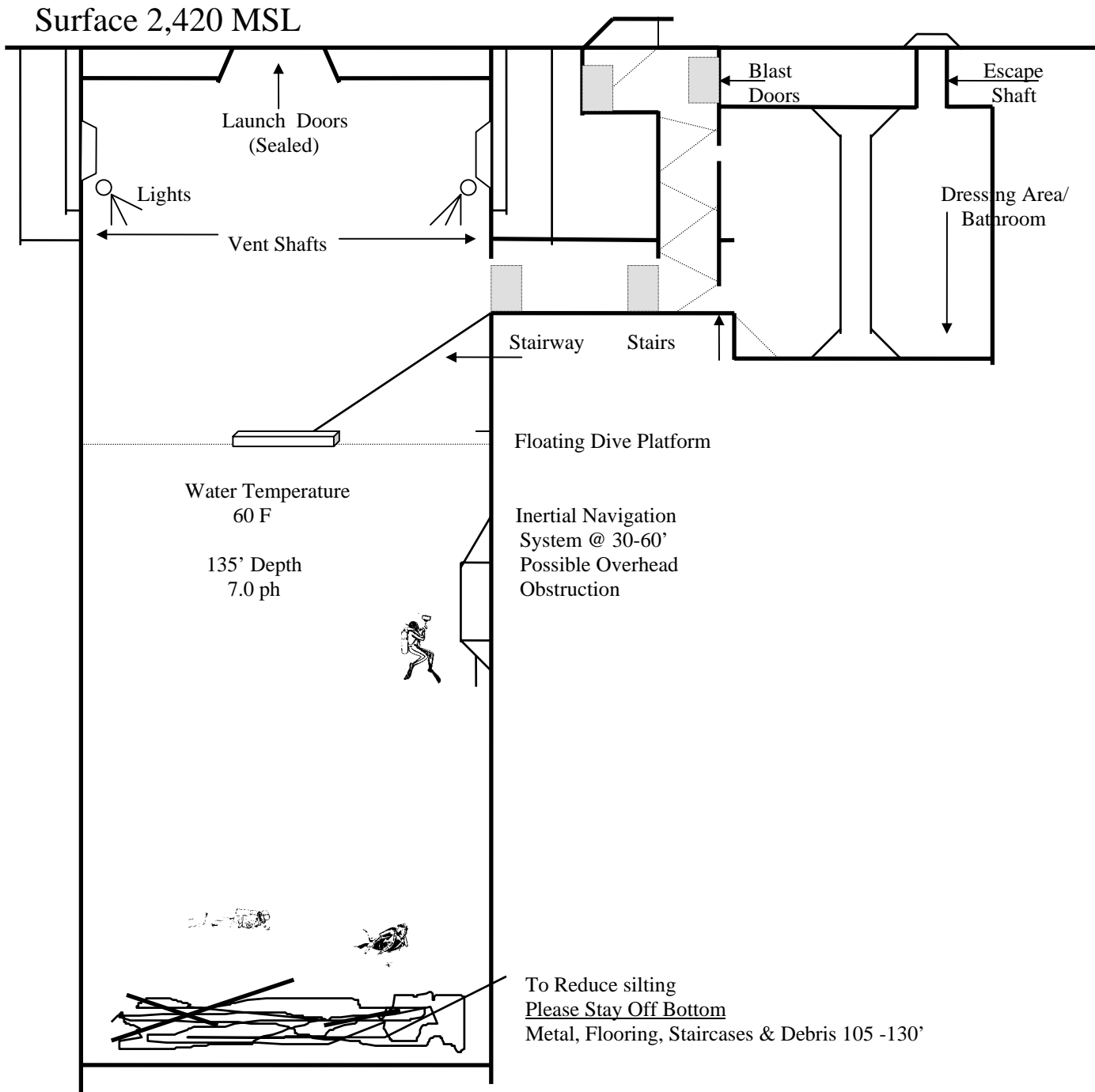
Divers complete dive, doff scuba and exit platform by climbing the stairs.

Diving Conditions

The water is fresh, clear and cool, 58⁰-60⁰F, 130 ft deep and crystal clear. The silo is 60 ft in diameter. Everything from the dressing areas to the electric gear winch, lighting systems and the actual dive area is 50-70 ft underground. The ambient air is a constant 60⁰F air temperature. Divers must climb down a 30 ft ladder to get to the water and back up to get out. There is an electric crane for the diving gear. There is very little ambient light underwater, so be sure to bring a bright primary light as well as backup light and personal marker light for each diver.

Dive Valhalla

Orientation Map



In Norse mythology, Valhalla was the great hall of fallen heroes, who were taken to heaven by the Valkyries, popularized by Richard Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' (you know – the helicopter assault scene from 'Apocalypse Now')