

# Bringing *Alvin* Back on Board

'SWIMMERS' ARE KEY LINKS BETWEEN SUB AND SHIP | by Cherie Winner & Lonny Lippsett. Photos by Chris Linder

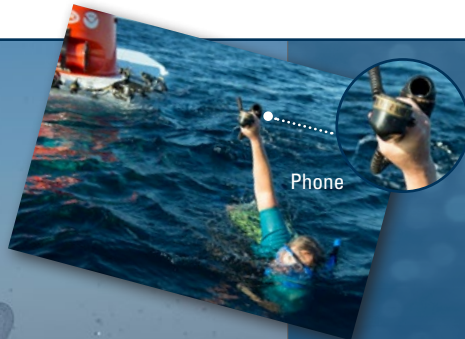
1

Some crew members of *Atlantis* are trained to be 'swimmers,' who assist in recovering *Alvin*. They ride a small boat to meet *Alvin* when it surfaces. They take a sound-powered phone, two safety lines to secure *Alvin's* front basket, and a yellow sea anchor. The boat stands by.



2

A swimmer carries the phone, which cannot get wet, and plugs it into a jack inside *Alvin's* red-orange sail to talk with the pilot in the sealed sphere below. The swimmer directs the pilot to steer toward the ship, gets information about items on the basket that might need special handling, and—perhaps—communicates what's on the dinner menu.



3

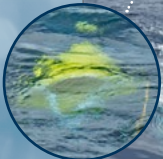
The swimmers attach two safety lines to rings high on *Alvin's* face and carabiners on the front of the payload basket. The lines are needed to support the heavy basket when it is out of the water. Then the swimmers inspect the basket, loaded with specimens brought back from the seafloor, to make sure everything is ready for recovery.





4

The swimmers attach the tow line to *Alvin's* stern, then get back on top of the sub. The sailor driving the small boat throws them a bright yellow sea anchor. This parachute-like device slows down the sub as it is towed toward *Atlantis*, to keep it from plowing into the ship.



Sea Anchor



Tail Line

5

When *Alvin* reaches the stern of the ship, the swimmers attach the stabilizer line and the heavy lift line. They jump off as *Alvin* is lifted from the water.

6

The A-frame and winch lift *Alvin* onto the deck, where technicians will secure it so that passengers can disembark. The swimmers make their way to the small boat, which returns them to the ship the same way they left it—via ladder.

